

# The Scribbler



**Little Known Stories**

**As collected (and sometimes told)**

**by Sam Newman**

# Table of Contents

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<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>2</b>
--------------------------------	----------



<b>Forward .....</b>	<b>6</b>
----------------------	----------

A Collection of Short Stories for Your Reading Pleasure.....	6
--	---

Thoughts on Remembrance, Freedom and Courage.....	7
---	---



<b>How We Remember .....</b>	<b>9</b>
------------------------------	----------

The 2009 Youth Leaders Pilgrimage of Remembrance .....	9
--	---



The 2013 Youth Leaders Pilgrimage of Remembrance .....	13
--	----

Countdown to D-Day Ceremonies.....	17
------------------------------------	----

An Amazing Display by the British .....	19
---	----

Honouring the Unknown Soldiers of WWI.....	20
--	----

Chaplains of WW II .....	21
--------------------------	----

Farewell Dear Gladys.....	22
---------------------------	----

Daddy's Poem .....	22
--------------------	----



.....	24
-------	----

Peace Day and the Fallen 9000 Project, by Jamie Wardley.....	24
--	----

My Chocolate Soldier .....	25
----------------------------	----

True Patriot Love .....	27
-------------------------	----

My Pal, Charley Fox, DFC With Bar, CD .....	27
---	----

Have I Told You Lately That I Love You.....	28
---	----

The Veteran on the Canadian \$10 Bill.....	29
--	----

The Inspiration Behind "Hug a Vet" .....	30
--	----

Pilgrimage to Beaumont Hamel, with thanks to Fred Wood.....	30
---	----

Two Visits I Didn't Want To Make .....	32
--	----

The Grand-Père of Vimy.....	33
-----------------------------	----



**War Stories..... 33**

“Brotherly Love” by Elinore Florence ..... 33

Out of the Dawn, Condensed from True Stories of D-Day written by Henry Brook..... 35

The Italian Campaign..... 35

Mustard Gas..... 36

Great Escape Tunnel Revealed in 2011 after 67 Years..... 37

How Britain's Wealth Went West ..... 37

Battle of Britain and Small French Village of Maisontiers..... 38

The Battle of Britain – the Canadians ..... 39

From the Ruhr Valley in 1944 – 18,000' Without a Parachute..... 40

Defuse the Magnetic Mines ..... 41



..... 42

Canada's Covert "Luxury Fleet" ..... 42

Figures ..... 43

The Famous Lancaster Bomber ..... 43



..... 45

Operation Manna..... 45

The Submarine that Sank a Japanese Train ..... 45

Remembering the Caribou and Her Gallant Crew..... 49

Charlie Brown, B17 Flying Fortress..... 50



..... 50

It Was The U.S. That Started The War With Japan and Not The Other Way Around!..... 53

The Last of the “Dambusters” .....54



..... 55

6 Boys and 13 Hands – A Must Read.....	55
Leave It to a Female Resistance Member to Trick the Gestapo.....	57



**Stories of Interest ..... 60**

John Goheen Honoured By Dominion Command .....	60
John Goheen, Principal-Pilgrimage of Remembrance Guide .....	60
Printed with permission of Amanda Sage.....	60
<i>Kickass Canadians article reprinted, March 19, 2015 .....</i>	<i>60</i>
My Grandfather's Watch, Written by Alec Dreichel .....	65
The Blue Max and the Little Boy.....	66
After Flight 77 Hit the Pentagon on 9/11.....	67
The Sandpiper .....	68
Bayeux Tapestry .....	69
The French Shore Tapestry Update (2013).....	70
Over 100 Years of Flight in Canada .....	71
Told to an Army Aviator Who Takes a Trip Down Memory Lane .....	72
The Double Sunrise:.....	72
Qantas's Secret Perth–Ceylon Wartime Service .....	72
WW II B17 Survival Story.....	73



..... 75

Canadians Help Make World A Safer Place.....	75
Bring Down United Airlines Flight 93 .....	76
Existing Tunnel at Casa Loma.....	78
All There Is To Know About Monopoly.....	78
The Wooden Bowl.....	79
Three Trees.....	80
Dad and Cheyenne .....	81



**Did You Know ..... 83**

An Unusual Award (the Queen's Crocheted Scarf) .....	83
A Little Known Town in Ontario.....	84
An Old Pub in the Marble Arch in London, England.....	85
Urine to Tan Animal Skins.....	85
Ken Plourde from Athabaska, Alberta.....	85
My Pilot's Log Book, by Sam Newman .....	85
War Heroes – A Dog, Pigeons and a Goat!.....	88
Taps.....	89
The Wedding Gown That Made History .....	90
Bless the Lady Plumber .....	91
Extraordinary Coincidence .....	92
Cannon Balls.....	92
Guts vs. Balls.....	92
Landing at a Hidden Military Base.....	93
Caterpillar Club (Cat Club) .....	93
It's What You Scatter That Counts .....	94
The Doolittle Raiders.....	95
Military Pay.....	97
 .....	99
The Stories Behind the Phrases .....	99
What Happened To The WWII Movie Stars? .....	102
 <b>Poems, Songs and Humour.....</b>	<b>104</b>
In Flanders Fields.....	104
A Poem Entitled 'Uncle John'.....	105
What Are You Guarding, Man-at-Arms? .....	106
The Green Fields of France by Eric Vogle .....	107
“You Could Not Know” by Jean Stoner .....	107
Recruiting Sgt Song .....	108
The Clock of Life .....	109

Scottish Love Story ..... 110

 ..... 110

Ship High In Transit (SHIT) ..... 110

Need a T-33 to De-Ice a Runway? No Problem..... 111

The Real (???) Story Behind the Apollo 11 Moon Mission..... 112

The Final Inspection ..... 113

Freedom of the Press..... 114



## Forward

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### A Collection of Short Stories for Your Reading Pleasure



Sam Newman, author

**H**ow did this project get started, you may ask? Well, in the fall of 2008, yours truly made application to be considered for a Provincial Candidate’s position, who would ultimately partake in the Legion’s Pilgrimage of Remembrance during the summer of 2009. It was my intention to plan something in advance that would, hopefully, grab the attention of everyone partaking in this odyssey to France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. The aim of the Pilgrimage, in short, was to provide us with memories to last a lifetime and heighten our understanding of what the term REMEMBRANCE really meant. I’m sure that both of those thoughts were in our minds, as we crossed Europe’s Graveyards, Cenotaphs, Memorials and Museums, thanks to John Goheen, our Tour Guide.

My thought was to augment the experience, by telling little known stories concerning the two European conflicts. In researching these stories, other tales turned up, which I felt may have some relevance to wartime, shipping, aviation or simply just ‘Grunt-Stuff’ so they were included as well. I started by seeking out only ‘True Stories’ but, despite all my efforts to keep them accurate and totally correct, others of a questionable nature reared their presence and they slipped into the pile, for their humour and entertainment. Simply put, this collection was meant to entertain and educate whoever listened to them. I hope you all enjoy them as much as I have enjoyed putting them together.

My appreciation goes out to my wife, Cathy, for her many computer skills, hours spent keeping me sane and free of bungles, not to mention her support for this project. To both

of my daughters, Tammy and Debbie, who have inspired me to achieve two aims – that of writing the story of my life and to recount some of the stories concerning past wars and conflicts that rarely are read in our history books anymore. In actual fact, my life story is still a work in progress, so it will be printed in Scribbler #2. To the Legion Comrades and friends that I journeyed with over in the Normandy Beaches during 2009 and 2013 who really helped me to understand what REMEMBRANCE was all about and, finally, my sincerest THANKS goes out to Linda Kohut, a Pilgrim like myself who was on the Legion Youth Pilgrimage Odyssey in 2013 with us, who has offered many, many hours of personal time, scads of ideas and re-writes for the production of the *Scribbler* (where they were necessary) and for too many other reasons to enumerate upon.  
Your Cordial Scribe, Sam

## Thoughts on Remembrance, Freedom and Courage

**I**t was suggested that I take some time to introduce my collection of stories with a personal introduction as to why they were of interest and chosen by me for this collection and make some remarks concerning Remembrance.

While somewhat hesitant in my initial reaction to this recommendation, I realized that a large percentage of my followers in this project are fellow pilgrims from overseas Remembrance Tours, former servicemen, family and friends who have been part of my military and paramilitary life for many, many years. It is my rationale, therefore, to comply and to add comments on Courage and Freedom as well. It may surprise you to read my thoughts as they pertain outside the military umbrella. In many parts of the world, there is a pause on the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month. As it has been and should be, many Canadians at home and abroad make it clear with two minutes of silence that they are unified in their awareness and appreciative of the service and sacrifices made by Veterans, past and present. The silence is a tribute to those men and women who have courageously helped to protect the values and freedoms that we enjoy as Canadians. Not all nations enjoy freedom, democracy and respect for humanity as we do in Canada. These legally entrenched principles have come at a tremendous cost.

During the past 100 years, some 1.5 million Canadians have worn the uniform of the Canadian Forces in conflicts overseas. More than 110,000 have not come home. During WWI, from 1914 to 1918, almost 620,000 Canadians, nearly 10% of the population at that time, joined the war effort. More than 66,000 people gave their lives. During WWII, from 1939 to 1945, Canadians fought in Southeast Asia and Europe, helping to liberate Italy, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. More than 40,000 were killed and another 55,000 were wounded. To all those who have served on Canadian Forces operations in other countries, during WWI, WWII, the Korean War and others, we owe our peace, our freedom to express ourselves, the right to participate in cultural, religious and political activities, the ease to come and go as we please and to pursue a safe and happy life. Thank You.

This may not strike you as being related to the Military directly but, perhaps, a personal letter of mine to an Editor some years ago, who was involved in the World's Largest Air Show, might help you to understand just what FREEDOM can mean to an average individual across the country. This instance has been brought about in the world of

Aviation, a topic near and dear to my heart. Interestingly enough though, I must admit, comments were not meant to reflect on the Military, but the mere thought that the Freedoms we all experience and enjoy throughout our lives were provided by all who served, in the name of PEACE. Please read on ...

Dear Editor: I feel compelled to sit down and write this for your readers. Forgive its' length, but I've been unable to shorten it because every bit of what I am feeling and writing seems to solidify my feelings towards the gentleman I am writing about. I was both a first time visitor and a Member Services volunteer for EAA Air Venture at Oshkosh. As a 34-year veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces, I had heard of it for years. I retired in 1993, but spent ensuing summers supervising Air Cadets training to receive their pilot's license. After my first visit, I now know that Oshkosh is the place and Air Venture is the event! It is awesome, incredible and exhilarating. It is something you must see in person to experience and understand the dynamics. I really hated to see it come to an end, even after having spent all of two weeks there. I digress. It's the defining moment I'm writing about. I wandered into the EAA Founder's Gallery Museum one day. I thought it was just another Museum! The doors were unlocked but the lights were off. My inner-most self kept saying perhaps I shouldn't be in there, yet something compelling invited me to have a look around. I was alone and let me say, I literally soaked up the moment and the opportunity! It was truly a step back in time. This was what the grassroots of flying was all about.

From the first sign which read: "Flying in itself is NOT inherently dangerous - but, like the sea, it is terribly unforgiving of any complaisance, carelessness or neglect." That sign set the tone. Instinctively, I knew that I was meant to be in that location, at that moment. I must have spent several hours studying the walls which were filled with pictures, salutes to fly-ins, seals' plaques, decals, logos et al. I found a "Huggins" airplane motor mounted on a pipe ramp; a red Baby Ace N9050C stabilizer and wing struts across the walls in various sizes. It was a sort of private workshop, complete with appropriate memorabilia and even a stone which depicted "Paul's Park." There was a blue Acro sport biplane designed by P.H.P. and now owned by the EAA Air Museum in Franklin, WI. There were many more pictures, ribs, certificates, citations, newspaper clippings and wall presentations, including an autographed "Best Wishes, Paul" picture plaque of the famous Blue Angels in a fly-pass over Mt. Rushmore and there was even an autographed picture from our own Canadian Snowbird Aerobatic Team. As time pressed on, I realized that all of these tributes belonged to the founder (who I had only read about) and 1<sup>st</sup> Chairman of what has become the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA,) Mr. Paul H. Poberezny. I definitely was walking in what felt like hallowed halls and defining what Aviation was all about. Although I was unaware of it, the best was yet to come. I picked up a plasticized scroll. At the top, over a picture of a gentleman dressed in an EAA crested jacket were these words:

FREEDOM is what EAA is all about ... (Amongst other important words, it goes on...)

FREEDOM to create and build ... to dream ... to fly ...

FREEDOM is something that is often taken for granted ... until it is lost.

FREEDOM is a precious gift that has been given to us by our forefathers and by all who served, and died, in wars fought in its name. Yet, there are those who would chip away, erode and destroy this most basic human right and restrict our ingenuity and inventiveness, take away our ability to move freely across our borders or dull

our senses and blur our view from the top.

I couldn't read any more! My heart had been touched and my tears were gushing. I certainly hadn't noticed that a very stately gentleman had joined me in my solitude. He may have been there for some time and he may have asked what I was doing there, but I don't rightly remember. I took it upon myself to explain who I was, how I wandered in and how consumed I was with the treasure-trove of memorabilia that I had discovered and the effect that it had on me. I feel certain that I repeated myself enough times to let this person really know how I valued Mr. Poberezny's efforts for what he had done and what he meant to aviation. I went on and on about what I thought of the dozens and dozens of tributes that were here, in the wood-burned signage depicting "The Great Room." Like an answer to a mystery stage play, the solution to a puzzler or the final wedge dropped into the building of a pyramid, the DEFINING MOMENT arrived when that aging gentleman placed his hand on my shoulder and quietly inquired if I would like him to autograph this scroll for me. WOW, a hundred times over!! I now have met Mr. Aviation personally. I have sensed what has motivated him over the years to achieve and to build what he has accomplished. And, to you, Mr. Paul H. Poberezny, EAA - 1, from one Veteran to another, I salute and thank you! You made my long wait to get to Oshkosh worthwhile. But then as you, yourself, wrote, "The price of freedom is not measured in time, but in commitment!" **Sam**

Mr. Paul Poberezny quietly passed away 22 August 2013. His death has been mourned by many, but we all know his spirit will last a lifetime and so (God willing) will Freedom.



## How We Remember

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### The 2009 Youth Leaders Pilgrimage of Remembrance



One could never anticipate the surprises in store for the 31 persons, who gathered at Toronto Airport for our flight to Paris, France on the 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2009.

This Odyssey would take us all, as others had before, through Northern France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, before returning (dead tired) to Canada, two weeks later.

**2009 Menin Gate Legion Party**, Photo courtesy Sharon Adams/Legion Magazine

Leading our group was the Chef de Mission and Dominion Command 1<sup>st</sup> VP, Gordon Moore and his wife Katie, our tour guide John Goheen from Port Coquitlam, BC (on his 7<sup>th</sup> tour since 1995,) our Administration Officer, Danny Martin and staff writer/photographer Sharon Adams. The Pilgrims, whose areas they represent are in brackets after their name,

were Stephen Lemarec (BC/YT), Stephanie Farrer (AB/NT), Brenda Fredrickson (SK), Myles Penny (MB/NT), Mary Van Ruyven (ON), Daniel Demers (QC), Brian Vessey (NB), David Andrew (NS/NU) and Jeffrey Noye from PE. They were all selected from a competition as being the best candidates to bring the message of Remembrance back home to Canada's youth. It became readily apparent early on that everyone was, indeed, enthusiastic about the Odyssey they were embarking on. Joining them were an assortment of guests, all of who had their own reasons for connecting with this group - 16 year old Jacob Durocher and his great Uncle, Robert Peters, both from Valleyfield, QC and his grandfather, Stuart Peters from Morrisburg, ON, Anetta Lozo from Medicine Hat, AB, Ed Fewer (a repeater) from Grand Falls, NL, Donnalee Noye, Mother of Jeff, from PE, Cornelia and Jack Hatcher from Lower Sackville, NS, Marie-Christine Monty, companion of Daniel and Ena and Gary Newman all from Trenton, ON, Richard (Dick) Thomas from London, ON and his son, James, from Lucan, ON, Ken Plourde from Athabasca, AB, Perry Holland from Trenton, ON, Joseph Van Ruyven, husband of Ontario rep Mary and, lastly, this author, Sam Newman from London, ON.

We undertook quick training sessions for the onslaught of Legion parades coming up. We shared in supper-time stories about the War years, where we travelled and we kept all the local pubs patronized until bewitching hour nightly with our songs, our hilarity, our gabbing, our impromptu talent shows and our copious drams of sustenance! The highlights of our trip were numerous, but suffice to say that both Bernières and Courseulles-Sur-Mer were high on our list, especially on Day 2.



Left - Sam Newman and Dick Thomas at the Juno Beach WW II Veterans Memorial

Day 3 highlights were spots like Juno Beach, Hell's Corners, St. Constant and Authie's Orchard. Of course, our mascot, Dick (beloved by all,) got pushed around Europe in his wheelchair, in fine fashion!

Day 4 - We were at the Bény-sur-Mer (Canadian) Cemetery, Chateau d'Audiou, Café Gondrée, Verrières Ridge (which was the key to defences south of Caen,) and surrounded by fields and poppies, while Day 5 we moved on to Dieppe where John provided a comprehensive orientation on "Operation Jubilee." Why any of the Allied Forces ever got sucked into that operation, nobody will ever know. Of the 4,963 Canucks who embarked for this operation in 1942, 907 died of wounds and more than 1,900 were taken prisoner. The highlight of the day was our evening of reflection, on what should'a, could'a and did'a happen that fateful day. We all joined our Tour Guide, John, on the Dieppe Beach the next morning at 0520 to honour (very honourably at that hour) our Comrades who had fallen years before. During Day 6, we enjoyed our lengthy stop at Beaumont-Hamel, to pay tribute to the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and on into Arras.

Day 7 - We were at the famous, and imposing, Memorial of Thiepval, that commemorated 72,000+ British and South African men who fell on the Somme. We followed this with a

visit, lecture and tour of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in Beaurains. A presentation offered a wonderful overview of the 1,700,000-plus men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the two WWs before the tour. After dinner that evening, our bus driver offered rides to the Arras Air Memorial and the eerie 'Execution Post.' A typical light European drizzle added to the dreariness of the occasion.

Day 8 – We visited some lesser known WWI Battle sites, such as the Le Quesnel Memorial (part of the Amiens orientation,) the Hillside, Warvillers and Méharicourt Cemeteries. The last one is where P/O Mynarski VC (of our Canadian Lancaster aircraft fame is buried.) Later, we visited the Drury Memorial, Burlon Wood and Upton Wood before returning to Arras. We were profoundly touched with the fact that during WWI, there were 54,000 Canadians who gave their lives in France and Belgium alone.

Day 9 – While we started off at the French Military Notre Dame de Lorette Cemetery with more than 62,000 graves in it, our day virtually was devoted to Vimy Ridge. As the billings read 'Majestic and Beautiful,' it truly came to life as we approached it from a distance. A formal Legion Ceremony was held and multitudes of pictures were taken. We had a chance meeting with the Director General International Operations with Veterans Affairs Canada, Ms. Nathalie Bédard and then enjoyed lunch, pictures and conversations with the Nijmegen Marchers with our own Canadian Forces personnel. We visited the Cabaret Rouge Cemetery, the original resting place of Canada's Unknown Soldier, prior to arrival in Ypres.

Day 10 – Well, we were given a day off to do with as we pleased. Many toured the Oude Veemarkt, the Tourist Bureau, St Martin's Cathedral and the ever-popular "In Flanders Field" Museum, before enjoying the Menin Gate memorial as spectators and the park surroundings. We ALL knew that we would be the centre of attention at the Formal Ceremony the next night!

Day 11 – This day, we visited a whole host of sites associated with the WWI Ypres Salient – sites such as Essex Farm, Voormezele Cemetery, Kitchener's Wood (where John McCrae wrote his famous poem, "In Flanders Fields,") St Julien (Brooding Soldier,) Hill 62 memorials, Hilltop Ridge, Vancouver Corner and Gravenstafel Ridge. We toured the famous Hoge Crater, covered the Passchendaele Memorial and the Crest Farm. Our final stop was saved for the Tyne Cot Cemetery, the largest of the Commonwealth Cemeteries. The highlight of our whole trip had to be our participation at the famed Menin Gate Ceremony that evening. Forgive me if I elaborate somewhat here but, as I took great pains to point out in my scrapbook (that was put together for me by my Granddaughter, Sarah,) I will never ever forget that night! Here's how I described the unforgettable moment...

Following supper, we participated in the famous Menin Gate Ceremony. Gord laid the Wreath and, with a hastening heartbeat, yours truly recited the Act of Remembrance in front of ~2,000 onlookers. Truly, a night we will all remember. We were proudly and musically declared the VIPs for the evening by the Volunteer Fire Brigade Buglers, a lone Piper, a stringed ensemble and, of course, by the presence of our Royal Canadian Comrade Legionnaires and Pilgrims. Except for the years of German occupation during WWII, this ceremony has taken place every night since 1929. The Menin Gate, itself, speaks a silent message about the nature of war. It is a Memorial to the 54,332 names

of the Allied soldiers who fell in Belgium and have no known grave. Their names are inscribed on the walls of the Memorial and include nearly 7,000 Canadians, three of whom have been awarded Victoria Crosses. Over the two staircases leading up from the road that runs beneath the gate is the inscription "HERE ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF OFFICERS AND MEN WHO FELL IN THE YPRES SALIENT BUT TO WHOM THE FORTUNE OF WAR DENIED THE KNOWN AND HONOURED BURIAL GIVEN TO THEIR COMRADES IN DEATH." We certainly had much to reflect upon!

The following days seemed somewhat anti-climactic. Physically and mentally tired, we covered the Leopold Canal and the para-drop into Arnhem. We carried out a ceremony at the Adegem Cemetery. Our next stop was the Canada-Poland Museum, where we received a royal welcome and an interesting tour.

Day 12 to 14 – We conducted one more ceremony at the Bergen Op Zoom Cemetery. We visited the Oosterbeek Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, the John Frost Bridge for a market garden orientation and lunch, followed by a ceremony at the Holten Cemetery. It was our second last night, so you can just imagine the routine we followed. The last day consisted of a ceremony at the Groesbeek Cemetery (about 10 kms southeast of the Dutch town of Nijmegen,) where we performed our last formal ceremony (with gusto, I might add!) We then headed downtown for a bit of R & R in Amsterdam, the last opportunity for snapshots and precious souvenirs. Our last supper together followed our previous customary process, but with one difference. The change was that each of the Pilgrims got up and shared their thoughts on their experience for the past two exhausting weeks, after being immersed in the dark consequences of hatred and strife. I sincerely believe that we all felt the same, in that, touring the Museums, Memorials, Battlefields, Cemeteries of WWI and WWII, et al, was a somewhat life-changing event for all of us. Little doubt, we were all heading home with a deeper appreciation of the sacrifices others made for our freedom and for the unquestioned precious nature of life.



L – R: Belinda and Linda

- *"Freedom without Peace is agony and Peace without Freedom is slavery and we will tolerate neither. This is the truth we owe the dead."* (Governor General of Canada, David Johnston Remembrance Day, Parliament Hill, 11 Nov, 2014)
- *"It's not whether you get knocked down; it's whether you get back up."* (Vince Lombardi)
- *Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy.* (Norman Schwarzkopf)
- *"There's more than one way to look at a problem and they may all be right."* (Norman Schwarzkopf)



**2009 Pilgrimage Group and Canadian Forces Nijmegen Marchers at the Vimy Memorial,**  
Photo courtesy Sharon Adams/Legion Magazine

**History of the Nijmegen March** – The first Four Days March took place in 1909. Participants could start from fifteen different places in the Netherlands. They had to walk 140 km in four days, 35 km per day. The March was organised by the Dutch League for Physical Education. On March 1<sup>st</sup>, there were only 306 male participants, ten of whom were civilians.

**Now** – International Four Days Marches Nijmegen has grown into the largest multi-day walking event in the world. More than 42,000 participants walk for four days in Nijmegen and its surroundings, where they, depending on their age and sex, walk a total of 120, 160 or 200 kilometres towards the Via Gladiola and towards the – now royally approved – Four Days Marches Cross.



## **The 2013 Youth Leaders Pilgrimage of Remembrance**



Photo courtesy Sharon Adams/Legion Magazine

**W**e each have our own feelings as to how we viewed the recent Legion's 2013 Pilgrimage of Remembrance. In my own fashion, I'd like to share with each of you, the people, the places, the sounds, the tastes, the smells and, perhaps, the thoughts that will reside in my memory bank for a long time to come. There is no order of importance and no particular reason why I am writing in this fashion, but rather a sharing of my feelings which have been scribbled in my Journal of Life! Hence... The **SCRIBBLER!**

Firstly, my memories of the Pilgrims who were chosen by each of the Provincial Commands all stand out as being wonderful representatives to return to their provinces and carry the torch that the Legion keeps talking about. Travelling were Shaun (BC,) Alec (AB,) Lane (SK,) Linda (MB,) Belinda (ON,) Tom (QC,) Jean Luc (NB,) Tom (PE,) Kathleen (NS) and Selby (NL.) I love y'all, of course, with the three spouses who accompanied them, Helen #1 (NB,) Donald (NS) and Helen #2 (NL.) You added so much class and support to your mates.

Secondly, it's always interesting to hear the reasons from the interested participants as to what made them come along for this Mission Pilgrimage – Rita, James, Allan, Chuck, Percy and Betty. All of you, too, had much to contribute to the success of this trip. So sorry Ed Fewer was not able to stay with us longer! Thirdly, we all know the Pilgrimage required lots of organization, research and details to be ironed out before, during and following a trip of this magnitude. So, to round out our impressive list of participants, HAT's OFF to Sharon, John, Bill, Bill, Donna and, lastly, our Chef de Mission, Dave and his wife Vera. Thank you all for your contributions to this incredible experience! Needless to say, high on the list of unbelievable moments for all has to be Alec's ordeal with his Grandfather's phenomenal pocket watch and how it suddenly came to life at the appointed hour, nearly 1100 to the minute, (together with the fact that it is still running!)



Tour guide John Goheen, Bill Maxwell, Dave Flannigan and Tom Irvine at Juno Beach



Tour guide John Goheen pointed at shrapnel along our path

Perhaps, too, high on the list for many reasons to each of us, might have been our March-in to the Menin Gate among the dozens, if not hundreds of spectators; not forgetting the blast of the Buglers and the stark beauty of the Arch itself. We'll well remember the country sides of both France and Belgium and the treasures and artefacts they still hide. Who can ever forget the ever-present red poppies standing at attention in the wind, displaying their warm welcome to outsiders or the other inviting flowers in front of and adorning many of the homes in the host countries? They were spread into the Roundabouts, each with their interpretation of beauty and significance, for all of us to view as we travelled!

There were so many individual moment worthy of note – Shaun's professional manner in handling the RED SASH responsibilities of the Sgt at Arms, Sharon's incessant desire for that perfect KODAK MOMENT in order to bring her future articles alive as we read them in the Legion Magazine, my recollection of Donna, Rita and Chuck rising to the call in aid of my

sudden and mysterious ankle injury in Dieppe and, harkening back to Operation Jubilee, can you ever forget the cliffs, the stones and the resulting and conflicting assessments of the value of that intended raid? More so, the 0520 “Toast to Fallen Comrades,” provided by John Goheen, will be hard to ever forget.



Sam and Tom throw a wreath dedicated to the Canadian Navy Veterans at Dieppe



Juno Beach Memorial

We will be forever indebted to James for his augmentation of details, books and maps to support John, our tour guide’s, copious notes. So many special moments ~ the pride of Rita with her father’s old leather Dog Tags throughout this trip; the infectious laughter of our Ontario Pilgrims – as if to say “Don’t Worry! Be Happy! All is well!” and will we ever forget Linda’s line of red, sticky Poppies, strewn across two countries as long as the Maginot Line?

Solemn moments will certainly be remembered at Hell’s Corners, the Abbaye d’Ardenne, Béný-Sur-Mer Cemetery, the Hindenburg Line, the Canal du Nord, the Somme, the Sunken Road, Passchendaele, Beaumont Hamel and the Brooding Soldier at St. Julien’s Memorial. So, too, will we remember the shrapnel, rocks and other artefacts we all had safely tucked away in our suitcases when we headed back to Canada. There is little doubt in my mind that Lane would make the TV Series “American Pickers” look like novices with his display of prowess in and about the French and Belgium Farm Yards.



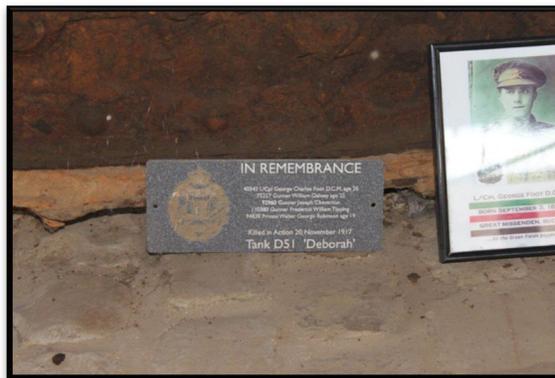
This was a somber moment of reflection for the Canadian soldiers who were executed in the woods behind the Chateau d’Audrieu in Normandy.

Now, on to some of the happier moments – What was really neat was the seemingly unlimited supply of drinking water supplied on the bus, not to forget the ‘cold ones’ reserved for the endings of our hot and humid days. You have to admit that our breakfasts,

with freshly baked croissants, home-made jams, scrambled eggs, ham, cheese and fresh fruit (in most locations,) were darn tasty throughout our two week excursion. That respite got us through the day, regardless of what our intake consisted of. Then there were the ceremonies we conducted and the excellent accompanying canned music provided by Donna. Might it be timely to update the required tunes? Lastly, other moments for all of us, will undoubtedly revolve around the hundreds of pictures we ALL took... one of my favourites? A tribute to “DEBORAH” (my buddy Chuck’s fiancée at the time) THE TANK!



The restorer, M. Flesquières,  
in front of Tank D51-DEBORAH



An acknowledgment to WWI MK4 tank  
- D51 DEBORAH

Well, to sum it all up, VIMY RIDGE is bound to always sit high on Canadian’s lists of favourites, as it evokes so many emotions relating our Fallen Comrades.



Long-time friends, Chuck and Sam,  
pay respects at Vimy



Chuck and Sam, picking out some Canadian  
pins for their Vimy Guide

No doubt, we’ll all recall many more of these distinguished and extraordinary red-letter moments as time creeps up on us. If nothing else, I implore all of you to make sure the message continues to get circulated when you’re out in the field, the towns, the conventions, the schools and at the Legion Halls: Remember and keep remembering our guys and gals who now serve, have served and continue to serve their country.

 *“Time has a wonderful way of weeding out the trivial.” (Richard Ben Sapir)*



Left: Sam with "Red Sash" saluting the Pilgrimage Colour Party

For me, this was my very first opportunity, after 34 plus years of Regular Force Service, to wear the 'RED SASH,' with pride.

Ranking high on my list of special moments was the opportunity to lay a wreath at the resting place of Pilot Officer Andrew Mynarski VC with Chuck, John and Dave at my side.

Below: Three local Dutch citizens join a Legion wreath laying ceremony and pay their respects at a roadside memorial in Eede Netherlands



## Countdown to D-Day Ceremonies

**A**n unknown writer pens the following: This evening I will drive onto the Ferry to travel the route of our soldiers, to the Beaches of Normandy. The men who travelled on this journey 70 years ago were cold, wet and some seasick crossing this expanse of water on open Landing Craft. I have met some UK veterans over the past 24 hours – a couple were actually Veterans of the D-Day landing on Gold Beach. They are, respectively, Joe Cattini, 91 and Denys Hunter, 90. Both served in the same Regiment. Despite the loss of many buddies they have a lively happy demeanour. **Bravo Zulu** to these two brave men. Today, a few original Dakotas will be taking off from Lee on Solent carrying over 100 Paratroopers. They'll be dropped along the beaches of Normandy to commemorate Jumpers of WWII. I've decided to share with you some not so common facts of D-Day, 1944.

- D-Day is simply the army's way of talking about a particular day....It means THE Day- a lot like saying H-Hour the exact time the attack begins.
- The Germans had built an Atlantic Wall along the west coast of Europe from Norway to

Spain. Thousands of slave labourers and POW's used millions of tons of concrete and steel to construct the defences.

- To plan for D-Day, BBC ran a phony competition asking listeners to send in holiday snaps of beaches in France. It was actually to gather intelligence on suitable beaches.
- Planners wanted D-Day to take place with a full moon and flood tides at dawn. Only a few days were available and June 5<sup>th</sup> was selected. Due to inclement weather, it was delayed till June 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Low flying spitfires took thousands of photos of the beach defences, to be analyzed in the UK, while mini subs collected soil samples at night.
- From March 12<sup>th</sup> on, Britain banned travel to Ireland to stop any leaks on invasion date.
- Fake Armies were set up in Kent, approx. 100 miles from Hampshire. This fake army was led by US General George C Patton. This was intended so the Germans would see Calais as the destination of attack. It worked so well that the Germans kept troops around Calais many days after the D-Day attack, fearing that a second wave would land near Calais, the shortest distance between France and England.
- General Dwight D Eisenhower was the overall commander. Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery was in charge of all ground forces on D-Day.
- The weather forecast was so bad that German Commander, Erwin Rommel, went home to Germany for his wife's birthday. He was in Germany when the Allies landed.
- The French resistance carried out 950 acts of sabotage to France's railways on June 05 and 06, slowing the German reinforcement to a crawl.
- Lancaster Bombers dropped vast amounts of aluminum to confuse German radar and make them think the invasion was taking place much farther north.
- Thousands of dummies dubbed Rupert, were parachuted in to further trick the Germans.
- British Intelligence set up a network of fake agents to feed misinformation to the enemy. The Germans paid well for information and the funds went into British Coffers.
- A large rehearsal for D-Day was held in Devon, in April 1944. Nearly 1000 US Soldiers were killed when their ships were sunk by a German Ambush.
- In total, 23,000 men parachuted into Normandy during D-Day.
- Only 15% of all airborne troops were dropped in the correct drop zone.
- Germany's Luftwaffe was outnumbered 30 to 1.
- The German airmen did not shoot down one allied aircraft on D-Day.
- 156,000 troops landed that day – 73,000 US troops and a combined Canada/UK force of 83,000 Commonwealth troops.
- The 5 beaches were named, from East to West – Sword, Juno, Gold, Omaha and Utah. Our Canucks landed at Juno, the Brits at Sword and Gold while the USA had Omaha and Utah.
- It was the largest sea invasion in history, involving 7,000 ships.
- Both the naval and aerial bombardments failed to destroy any of the beach defences. On all of the five beaches, the first wave of troops had to fight their way to shore.
- Prime Minister Winston Churchill said he would board HMS Belfast to observe the landings. When King George VI told him he would join him, the PM backed down for the safety of the King.
- At 0400 06 June 1944, midget submarines surfaced along the beach fronts to shine lights and transmit a radio signal to mark where the invasion was to take place.
- Many men were violently seasick in the landing craft and frozen by cold wet spray.
- Among the Allied troops were groups of free French, Poles, Belgians, Czechs, Greeks,

Dutch, Norwegians, Aussies and Kiwis.

- German Jews who had escaped and fled persecution in Germany fought for the Allies in the #10 Commando Unit.
- Tanks with skirts and special propulsion systems allowing them to swim to shore were prepared. On Omaha, they were sent out too early in rough waters and most sank with their crews.
- 900 Dakota aircraft dropped the Paratroopers.
- British infantry men received 3 pounds fifteen shillings a day pay while the US soldiers received 12 pounds per day.
- Last, but by no means least – French Police raided a brothel on 07 June 1944. The ladies had set up in wrecked landing craft. Bless 'em all.
  - I hope these odd facts enhance your appreciation of the sacrifices these soldiers, sailors and airmen experienced.



## **An Amazing Display by the British**

**W**orld War I, known at the time as the Great War, was thought to be the war that would end all future wars. All sides suffered an incredibly high number of needless deaths and the war devastated an entire generation. In fact, the sheer amount of destruction and death has only been eclipsed by WW II. Since it ended, all countries involved have held memorials to remember their fallen dead who sacrificed their lives for the good of their country. This fact is all the more so in England, where nearly a million people lost their lives. What they've done to commemorate their fallen soldiers is truly beautiful, while also helping us understand the true scope of these soldiers' sacrifice. Even a hundred years later, we should not forget their incredible acts of heroism. The moat that surrounds the Tower of London has long stood empty and dry. But now, what may look like gushing blood from its very walls is actually something beautiful.



**An Amazing Poppy display by the British at the London Tower Bridge**

The summer of 2014, the moat has been filled with 888,246 red ceramic poppies, one for

each British and Colonial soldier who perished during WWI. For the past few weeks, a team of 150 volunteers has been placing red ceramic poppies one by one around the Tower. The last poppy will be symbolically planted on the last day of the installation: November 11, Armistice Day. Each evening, the Last Post will be sounded and a selection of names of the dead read out loud. It's a stunning and sobering commemoration that befits the Great War. Regardless of why their countries went to war, we should never forget the selfless acts of these brave men.

 We can truly say that the whole circuit of the earth is girdled with the graves of our dead – I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of Peace upon the Earth through the years to come, than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war. (King George 5<sup>th</sup> – Flanders, 1922)



## Honouring the Unknown Soldiers of WWI

**D**id you know that Canada repatriated the remains of an Unknown Soldier from France in May 2000 and laid them to rest at the National War Memorial in Ottawa? The idea originated as a millennium project of the Royal Canadian Legion and was coordinated through the government by Veterans Affairs Canada.

The Unknown Soldier was originally intended to represent all war dead, whose remains had not been identified, a common problem along static WWI battlefields, frequently churned by artillery and bogged down in mud. Since 1920, a single Unknown Soldier in London's Westminster Abbey had represented the unidentified war dead of Canada and other Commonwealth states. The original ceremony, presided over by King George V, had included many of the British Empire's Victoria Cross winners and a group of 100 women, each of whom had lost their husband and all their sons during the war. France and the United States followed Great Britain's example in 1921, as did numerous other countries in subsequent years. These tombs and memorials gradually assumed broader significance, becoming sites of memory and mourning for all war dead and for civil ceremonies of broadly based remembrance instead of simple military commemoration.

In 1993, Australia marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the WWI by repatriating from France the remains of its own Unknown Soldier, the first Commonwealth Country to have done so since 1920. He was buried in the Australian War Memorial's Hall of Memory in Canberra. Canada followed the Australian example in 2000 at the suggestion of the Royal Canadian Legion and other groups. A single set of remains was selected from among Canada's 6,846 unknown WWI soldiers for return to Canada and re-interment at the National War Memorial in Ottawa. The Unknown Soldier ultimately came from a cemetery near Vimy Ridge and was flown home to lie in state in the Parliament Hall of Honour from 25-28 May 2000, where thousands filed past to pay their respects.

This could be the story of a man I never knew and yet I know all about him. He is dead now and he lies in a tomb, perhaps of polished marble, whose splendour would surprise him.

And people come from everywhere to stand with their heads bowed, their eyes serious, their hearts filled with mourning for this man they never knew. Because he wore a uniform when he died, they call him "The Unknown Soldier." I think he was a good soldier, though fighting was never his business. He was a man of peace, I'm sure, though he never told me. He was born on a farm in SK – or was it a coal miner's cottage in NS, a tenement in ON, a condo in BC, a duplex in QC. I can't be sure as I stand here with my hat in my hand, reverent at the grave of this man I never knew. I don't know his name or his business, whether his grammar was good, his accent like mine, what books he read, what church he went to, which way he voted or how much money he had. Was he a poet, bookkeeper, truck driver, surgeon, lumberjack, errand boy, student? Was he telling a joke, cursing his Sgt or writing his family when the bullet came? I certainly don't know, for when they picked this man from among all our nameless dead, he was lying quiet in a closed coffin. But I do know he is deserving of honour and respect. Whoever he may be, I feel sure he must have believed, as I do, in the equality of man, the promise of man, the duty of men to live justly with each other and with themselves. That is why I stand here, silently saluting this grave, reverent at this tombstone of a stranger who might have been my brother, father, son, countryman or friend.

He fought and died in France, in WWI. He represents thousands whose names are carved on a memorial on France's Vimy Ridge battlefield. Canada's Unknown Soldier was originally buried in the Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery in Souchez, France. In May 2000, he was disinterred and placed in a casket, made of the wood of a silver maple for his journey back to Canada. Earth, from his French grave, as well as from each of the Canadian Provinces and Territories, was poured on the grave topped by a golden Eagle feather. The body now rests in a sarcophagus made of Quebec granite at the base of the National War Memorial in Ottawa. Canada's Unknown Soldier was buried on the afternoon of 28 May 2000, in a televised ceremony. The site is now an important focus of commemoration, especially in the national Remembrance Day service held at the National War Memorial on 11 November yearly.



## Chaplains of WWII

I came upon an article in the SPECIAL Remembrance Day newspaper for the London Diocese, containing an iconic photograph that was used as part of their vocations promotion for our Diocese. It depicted a scene from D-Day minus 1 in 1944. In it, a priest is celebrating Mass on the hood of a jeep, surrounded by soldiers of every rank preparing for what would be the famous Allied Invasion. For some, although they didn't know it at the time, it would be the last battle they would fight. I found out there were 15 such priests from the Diocese of London who served as Chaplains during the WWII; some were overseas throughout the campaign, others with Regiments in Canada. In various ways, they ministered to the spiritual needs of soldiers and support workers throughout that horrible time. Many of these Chaplains chronicled their visits to the theatre of war as they met and encouraged those serving the troops. Their diaries and photographs from various places where battles had raged to actual burial locations where Canadian soldiers lay contain many stories of valour and sacrifice and are true Canadian treasures, yet today.

Amazingly enough, from decades ago until recent times, while defending values associated with democracy, freedom, justice and peace, in their hearts, men, women, Chaplains and soldiers alike, knew they also served God, who taught us that “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” For this reason, their names are written not only in records somewhere with the Department of National Defence, but also in the Book of Life.

Just this past Remembrance Day, 2014, had great significance, as this year marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of WWI and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WWII. The National War Monument in Ottawa, first dedicated on 11 November, 1939 by King George VI, was re-dedicated by his granddaughter, Anne, the Princess Royal, to commemorate conflicts and wars not previously inscribed; namely in South Africa and Afghanistan. More sobering, though, were the recent events of soldiers being killed on our own home turf, including one while he stood guard at that very memorial. In remembering all these brave men and women, we dedicate ourselves to the same causes of freedom, justice and peace.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM



## Farewell Dear Gladys

In Springdale NF, there was a woman who wore a different uniform, who served a different Army, Navy and Air Force, a woman many CAF members knew by her written words. This woman, 91 year old Gladys Osmond, known as “Dear Gladys” to many soldiers, peacefully passed away 14 January, 2015, with the Commander of 9 Wing, L Col Kevin Toone and the Wing Ops O, Capt. Carl Squires at her bedside. A commissioned Salvation Army Captain and Minister, Ms. Osmond wrote her first letter to a Canadian soldier serving overseas in 1983 and founded the Granny Brigade, a group that has written to countless CAF personnel serving in all parts of the world. Ms. Osmond wrote over 400,000 letters to CAF members spanning three decades and her dedication to writing the troops remained an important part of her day. She had made a promise to herself that as long as she had eyes, the use of her hands and as long as her brain still worked, she would be writing to soldiers. When a soldier wrote back, Ms. Osmond would place a star on her map of the world which hung on her bedroom wall. Her reason for letter writing to deployed troops was so they did not feel forgotten or alone. Ms. Osmond’s devotion and dedication to soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen of this country, was like no other. The author of “Dear Gladys... Letters from over there” holds the Order of Newfoundland, among many other awards and commendations including Canada’s ‘Caring Canadian Award.’



## Daddy's Poem

Her hair was up in a ponytail, her favourite dress tied with a bow.  
Today was Daddy's Day at school and she couldn't wait to go.  
But her mommy tried to tell her, that she probably should stay home,

Why the kids might not understand, if she went to school alone.

But she was not afraid; she knew just what to say.  
What to tell her classmates of why he wasn't there today.  
But still her mother worried, for her to face this day alone.  
And that was why once again, she tried to keep her daughter home.

But the little girl went to school eager to tell them all.  
About her dad she never sees, a dad who never calls.  
There were daddies along the wall in back, for everyone to meet,  
Children squirming impatiently, anxious in their seats.

One by one the teacher called a student from the class  
To introduce their daddy, as seconds slowly passed.  
At last the teacher called her name, every child turned to stare.  
Each of them was searching, for a man who wasn't there.

"Where's her daddy at?" She heard a boy call out.  
"She probably doesn't have one," another student dared to shout.  
And from somewhere near the back, she heard a daddy say,  
"Looks like another deadbeat dad, too busy to waste his day.  
The words did not offend her, as she smiled up at her Mom.  
And looked back at her teacher who told her to go on.  
And with hands behind her back, slowly she began to speak.  
And out from the mouth of a child, came words incredibly unique.

"My Daddy couldn't be here, because he lives so far away.  
But I know he wishes he could be, since this is such a special day.  
And though you cannot meet him, I wanted you to know,  
All about my daddy and how much he loves me so.

He loved to tell me stories. He taught me to ride my bike.  
He surprised me with pink roses and taught me to fly a kite.  
We used to share fudge sundaes and ice cream in a cone.  
And though you cannot see him, I'm not standing here alone.

'Cause my daddy's always with me, even though we are apart  
I know because he told me, he'll forever be in my heart.  
With that, her little hand reached up and lay across her chest.  
Feeling her own heartbeat, beneath her favourite dress.

And from somewhere here in the crowd of dads, her mother stood in tears.  
Proudly watching her daughter, who was wise beyond her years.  
For she stood up for the love of a man, not in her life.  
Doing what was best for her, doing what was right.

And when she dropped her hand back down, staring straight into the crowd,

She finished with a voice so soft, but its message clear and loud.  
"I love my daddy very much, he's my shining star.  
And if he could, he'd be here, but heaven's just too far.

You see he is a Canadian soldier and died just this past year,  
When a roadside bomb hit his convoy and taught Canadians to fear.  
And sometimes when I close my eyes, it's like he never went away."  
And then she closed her eyes and saw him there that day.

And to her mother's amazement, she witnessed with surprise.  
A room full of daddies and children, all starting to close their eyes.  
Who knows what they saw before them, who knows what they felt inside.  
Perhaps for merely a second, they saw him at her side.

"I know you're with me Daddy," to the silence she called out,  
And what happened next made believers, of those once filled with doubt.  
Not one in that room could explain it, for each of their eyes had been closed.  
But there on the desk beside her, was a fragrant long-stemmed rose.

And a child was blessed, if only for a moment,  
By the love of her shining star,  
And given the gift of believing,  
that heaven is never too far.

 *"Forget injuries; never forget kindness." (Confucius)*



## **Peace Day and the Fallen 9000 Project,** by Jamie Wardley

In the Fall of 2014, Andy Moss, from "Sand in Your Eye" and I developed the idea of the Fallen Project to mark Peace Day. The objective was to make a visual representation of 9000 people drawn in the sand which equates the number of Civilians, Germans Forces and Allies that died during the D-Day landings, 6<sup>th</sup> June during WWII as an example of what happens in the absence of peace.

**O**n that day, we had sixty to seventy confirmed volunteers that had travelled from around the world to help. We knew that this was not enough to complete the project in the 4.5 hours that we had but, at 1500, when we were about to begin, we were overwhelmed by the hundreds of people that turned up to help. Andy and I then began to explain the task ahead and together did a demonstration on how to make a stencil in the sand. When we lifted the stencil, I realized that we had just made together the first of the Fallen, a representation of a person that once lived. This person had parents, family friends and had died prematurely due to a conflict and we were marking his passing. When I make a sculpture or a drawing in my imagination, that person is, for a moment, very much

there. I will often find myself talking to them to see what they are thinking and how they are feeling; there becomes a connection between me and them. The person that we had drawn was very present indeed; we had made a connection and I was overwhelmed and Andy Moss had to continue.



After that, hundreds of people took stencils and rakes in hand and embarked on drawing the 9000. The Peace Day project had finally begun in earnest represented by the people of the world.

Of those people that were there were my mother, partner and friends. This is poignant and when a person loses their life, these are the people that are affected. What was profound were the people that turned up I had never met. They believed in the same thing we believed in – a statement of Peace. Monika Kershaw was there remembering her son and his colleagues that died in Afghanistan and even wrote in their names beside them. George, a veteran, who was on the D-Day beaches was also there and embraced the importance of the project as demonstrating the result of conflict. There were a group from Israel that drew together people from Germany, Finland and as far as Chili. During the day, I was running up and down the cliffs, taking photographs. What I found is that in this region, there are many relics and monuments to the war, but it is always difficult to visualize what the actual human loss was. On Peace Day, we quietly and harmoniously drew 9000 people in the sand so that people can understand the loss with their own eyes. This was a quiet day with a very loud statement. The message of the Fallen is now travelling the globe; those people that lost their lives are no longer with us, but on Peace Day, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2013, they spoke. Thanks to all those who helped give them a voice.



## My Chocolate Soldier

**I**N 2012, the Winnipeg Free Press invited its readers to submit their best story about the paper. The memory project was called Your Lives, Our Pages. What follows is Maria Rogalski's response. It ran in the paper and was later shared with the Legion 215 Ladies Auxiliary by Shirley Geldart, their avid storyteller.

I owe a great debt to The Winnipeg Free Press because it was instrumental in bringing about an incredible story that made my dream come true. It was August 25, 1945, my 12<sup>th</sup> birthday, just months after the end of WWII. A kind hearted British soldier went out of his way to fulfill my birthday wish. Having fled the Russian regime, we were

refugees in Germany, living with four other refugee families on a large farm in Schleswig-Holstein, Northern Germany. Our home for our family of four consisted of one room we shared with a pet chicken. It provided us with fresh eggs to round out our meager diet of corn meal porridge, eaten hot for breakfast and sliced cold and fried for lunch and supper. I'd watched a British soldier eating some chocolate while he waited in his jeep for his officer to return. I was desperate to taste some of that unattainable luxury. One of the refugee ladies knew some English and helped me memorize a simple request. On the day of my birthday, I gathered up my courage and, with my pet chicken on my arm for moral support, I stepped up to the jeep and solemnly declared, "Today is my birthday, please give me chocolate." With the help of his wristwatch, holding up three of his fingers, he made me understand that he would return. Although nobody in the house believed he would, he went out of his way and brought me some chocolate that afternoon, proving that even amidst the enmity of war, there is room for individual love and kindness.

Many frightening memories of the war are fresh in my mind – huddling in cellars during air raids, passing burning villages on our flight from the advancing Red Army and seeing men hanged on crudely made gallows at the side of the road. That is why this single chocolate soldier memory stands out for me. We immigrated to Canada five years later and many years after that, I realized how significant this act of kindness was by a former enemy soldier. I wanted to find him to thank him and let him know how much it had meant to me.

My search started in 1983, entering my story, "Looking for My Chocolate Soldier," in the annual Winnipeg Free Press non-fiction contest. It won first prize and was published. Eventually that, and some letter writing including a letter to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, resulted in a London newspaper, the Daily Mirror, picking up the story and publishing it with the headline, "Help me trace my chocolate soldier." It was there that the grandchildren of Cornelius O'Sullivan of Beddau South Wales read the story and exclaimed, "Grandpa, that's got to be you." He had told them this story many times over the years. The incredible had happened. After a ten-year search, almost fifty years after his gift of chocolate, I had found my chocolate soldier.

Through the generosity of the BBC, I met him and his family to thank him personally, in perfect English this time. Our meeting was broadcast on British television. We attended the Remembrance Day Service at the Cardiff Cenotaph and visited Willows High School in Cardiff, in the area where he grew up. This led to the students of Willows High writing and publishing a book about our story entitled, "My Chocolate Soldier" with all proceeds going to the school library. Two years later, on May 8, 1995, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWII, I was present at the book's launch, held at the Cadbury Chocolate Company in Birmingham, England. It was a Cadbury Chocolate bar that the special soldier had given me. In fact, the Cadbury Chocolate Company donated 100 Cadbury chocolate bars for me to give to the students when I went to the book launch. To have our paths cross for the second time in our life, half a century later, under different circumstances, miles away from the place of our original meeting is incredible indeed. I thank God for that. Sadly Cornelius O'Sullivan has since passed away, at age 72. For the last 14 years, this amazing story has been shared at many Manitoba schools for their Remembrance Day assemblies, encouraging the students to work for peace, accept each other regardless of nationality or

colour and to remember to be kind. All this happened because the Winnipeg Free Press published the Chocolate Soldier story. Thank you... may you continue publishing the news with integrity for another 140 years.



## True Patriot Love

**C**ailin Mulvill was an eighteen-year-old student at St. Theresa's RCSS in Belleville, Ontario. She had been deeply moved by the Repatriation Ceremonies held at 8 Wing Trenton and expressed her compassion and empathy for the families of fallen soldiers in an essay titled "True Patriot Love," which was submitted to the A&E TV network's contest 'Lives that Make a Difference.' She made such an impact that she was awarded the \$5,000 first prize by the judges. This was her story...

You don't know her. She has never made a television appearance. She has never been in a magazine. She is in her late 50's and she spends her days in her rocking chair. She could be from a big city; she could live in a small town. Her house is comfortable, but something is missing. Everything is in place – the framed picture of a young man in uniform, placed atop the mantle – the photo album at her side... yet, the room feels empty. With each rock of the chair she gazes out the window at the Canadian flag on her front lawn. The flag is faded and ripped, but flies powerfully through the wind, not afraid to show its pride. The flag reminds her of her beloved son – strong passionate and loyal. The flag has been lowered to half-mast. I wonder if this woman knew that each small sacrifice she made for her son would better prepare him to make the ultimate sacrifice for his country. Did she know that each time she demonstrated the importance of peace, pride and justice she was raising a brave young soldier? Was she aware that when she hugged her son goodbye, she held in her arms the strength that it takes to stand up for an entire nation? She wipes away tears each time she witnesses a coffin being carried out of the plane. On top of each coffin is something familiar – a Canadian flag. That same flag, vibrant and luminous, now flies in her front lawn. For years to come, she will continue rocking and gaze out the window, knowing that she has made a difference.



## My Pal, Charley Fox, DFC With Bar, CD

**I** first got to know Charley Fox when we were both members of the 427(London) Wing of the Air Force Association of Canada. We were working together on a Committee to raise \$40,000 to build a monument to a George Cross recipient by the name of LAC Spooner. Prior to around 1999, I'm not sure that I knew who this gentleman was or what he did during the war or even that he was one of the Veterans who had a hand in changing the course of history. I did eventually learn that this gentleman had an impressive war record. Fox trained a hell of a lot of pilots in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP.) He flew three sorties with 412 Fighter Sqn on D-Day, 06 June 1944. He destroyed

some 153 enemy vehicles and reputedly damaged the staff car of Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, wounding him in the attack. Rommel, Commander of German Ops in Normandy at the time, was later implicated in a plot to assassinate Hitler and committed suicide.

What I did learn about Charley over the ten years or so that I knew him, was that he was a man who was always thinking about the service of others. Whether he was talking about who he kept the faith with or who his long ago wingmen were or just saying thank you, Charley put others first – a rare trait in today's society. I have witnessed Charley's "One Man only" ability to give running commentaries for Air Shows for three hours non-stop. I've witnessed him in malls with such a luminary as the famed Historian Terry Cops from Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, not miss a beat in recounting episodes of WWII and explain to his listeners what the war was really all about – he brought the stories alive to youngsters – and he loved to be with those who would listen to his vignettes of the war as he brought them alive. He was one who truly promoted heroic examples and hoped that he would help to carry the torch to future generations of young Canadians.

Following six years of post war service with the RCAF Auxiliary, he retired from Military life only to return as Honorary Colonel of 412 (Transport) Sqn, located in Ottawa. He was undoubtedly one of the busiest Air Force speakers available and did his level best to cede to everyone's invitation. On more than one occasion, we sat in conversation sipping our scotch-on-the-rocks together. He died in a car accident in October, 2008, returning to London after attending a meeting of the Harvard Association. We sorely miss our buddy Charley – We Will Remember Him – and I'll hoist another drink each Remembrance Day, for old time sake!

 *"The most important political office is that of the private citizen." (Louis Brandeis)*



## **Have I Told You Lately That I Love You**

Joe Murray is from London, Ontario and is currently teaching at the Canadian College in Lanciano, Italy. This is his story that has appeared in the London Free Press.

My father was a vet of WWII. He fought in the battles of Normandy and helped in the liberation of Holland. My grandfather fought in WWI and stormed Vimy Ridge. As a result, I have always worn a poppy and honoured the vets who fought and died for our freedom. For me, the focus on November 11<sup>th</sup> has always been for the vets. This past week, I was reminded it was not only the soldiers who suffered but their families as well. I am currently living in a small town, Lanciano, a 20-minute ride from Ortona, the scene of a battle which lasted eight days in December 1943. We lost more than 1,300 Canadians, with many more wounded. Most are buried in the Moro River Cemetery overlooking the town. I was visiting that cemetery when one of the grave attendants came over to me and spoke to me about a specific grave. As my Italian is limited and the Italian spoke no English, I thought at first he told me that a wife was buried in the cemetery. I assumed someone had brought the ashes of a loved one to

scatter with their father, brother or husband. He kept pointing to a grave and kept saying 'moglia' which means wife and mimicked an old person with a walker approaching the tombstone. I then understood that a wife had come to visit her long dead but not forgotten husband. I approached the grave and, in front of the headstone, was a picture encased in plastic – a picture of a young soldier named Reuben and his beautiful wife. The photo was taken in the early 1940's, prior to Reuben shipping out to Italy to fight for his new family and freedom where he was killed during the Battle of Ortona. He is buried along with his fallen comrades. His wife had made a final journey to say goodbye. She arrived to pay her respects, exactly 67 years to the day of Reuben's death, so she had to be in her late 80's. She brought a little bit of Canada with her – piles of maple leaves! Along with the picture mentioned was another one showing his children. Even more heart-rending were the handprints of his grandchildren, encased in plastic, with a message for their grandfather. I reached down to look closer at the picture and turned it over to see if there was a name. It was then that I saw the inscription: "Have I told you lately that I love you?" It was at this point that my eyes became quite moist. I realized that love was unending and could last an eternity. I wear a poppy for Reuben, his family, his wife, his grandchildren and for all his comrades that lie in foreign fields. I left the Moro River Cemetery a more humble and wiser man.

 *"Mincing your words makes it easier if you have to eat them later." (Franklin P. Jones)*



## **The Veteran on the Canadian \$10 Bill**

**I**f you look at the back right hand side of a Canadian \$10 bill, you will see an old veteran standing at attention near the Ottawa War Memorial. His name is Robert Metcalfe and he died in 2008 at the ripe young age of 90. That he managed to live to that age is rather remarkable, given what happened in WWII. Born in England, he was one of the 400,000 members of the British Expeditionary Force sent to the mainland where they found themselves facing the new German warfare technique – the Blitzkrieg. He was treating a wounded comrade when he was hit in the legs by shrapnel. En route to hospital, his ambulance came under fire from a German tank, which then miraculously ceased fire. Evacuated from Dunkirk on the HMS Grenade, two of the sister ships with them were sunk. Following recovery, Metcalfe was sent to allied campaigns in North Africa and Italy. On his way, his ship was chased by the German battle ship, the Bismarck. In North Africa, he served under General Montgomery against the Desert Fox, Rommel.

Sent into the Italian Campaign, he met his future wife, a Lt. and Physiotherapist, in a Canadian hospital. They were married in the morning by the Mayor of the Italian town and again in the afternoon by a British Padre. After the war they settled in Chatham, ON where he went into politics and became the Warden (chairman) of the county and on his retirement he and his wife moved to Ottawa. At the age of 80, he wrote a book about his experiences.

One day out of the blue, he received a phone call from a government official asking him to go down town for a photo op! He wasn't told what the photo was for or why they chose him. "He had no idea he would be on the bill," his daughter said.



## **The Inspiration Behind "Hug a Vet"**

**Y**ou may have noticed that I wear a pin on my blazer – a poppy and under it the words "Hug a Vet." Perhaps you would allow me to tell you of the story behind this pin. There was a vet born in Petrolia in 1921. He attended High School in Chatham and, shortly after graduation, he enlisted in the RCAF. He eventually ended up taking Air Crew training for a pilot, but was reassigned to the role of a Bombardier and was assigned to the crew of a Stirling Bomber. He completed a tour of operations over Europe, laying sea mines, bombing operations, towing troop gliders during the D-Day assaults and afterwards in the famous battles around Arnhem in the Netherlands. He also participated in dropping both agents and supplies into France. He volunteered for two extra missions and, on the second one, his aircraft was shot down by a German Intruder aircraft as they were making their landing approach. It crash landed and caught on fire. One crew member was killed, several were badly burned and he, along with the pilot, jumped from the cockpit hatch to the ground, receiving serious back injuries that lasted a lifetime.

This gentleman was an extremely proud Veteran and was very active in our Royal Canadian Legion, where he served as Branch Service Officer, and enjoyed volunteering for speaking engagements. He was excellent at it! He felt it was an honour to share his stories with the youth of today and the High School students in particular listened in rapt attention as this WWII Vet described his wartime experiences of bombing raids over enemy territories, enduring ferocious anti-aircraft fire, blinding searchlights and enemy night fighters. At one of his last speaking engagements before his death, he spoke to High School students and remarked that Veterans were rapidly becoming an extinct species. He had the nerve to suggest that as recognition of their service to Canada, it would be a nice gesture if people "gave them a hug" whenever they met. To his astonishment, well over 200 teenage students lined up to give him a hug after he finished his presentation.



## **Pilgrimage to Beaumont Hamel,** with thanks to Fred Wood

**O**ne is never quite prepared to visit Beaumont Hamel. For those Newfoundlanders of a certain generation, this is hallowed ground. Step on its green sod, climb the little hill to the bronze caribou, run your eyes over the gentle downhill slope, study the scarred earth now softened by grass and wonder "Such a peaceful place. Could this possibly have been a scene of so much agony and death?"

It's the first of July, 1916. At 0915, close to 800 men of the Newfoundland Regiment rose

from their trenches, along St. John's Rd. into a hail of machine gun and shell fire. Caught in their own barbed wire, few even made it into No Man's Land, let alone close to their objectives. Some made it halfway to a clump of trees that collectively became known as the Danger Tree. Here they fell. At the end of the day, the Regiment had suffered 233 killed, 386 wounded and 91 missing. Only 68 answered roll call the next day. On this first day of the great battle of the Somme, 20,000 men of the British Empire would die in the single worst day in the history of the British Army. Could we do what they did? If one remembers the opening scene from the Steven Spielberg movie "Saving Private Ryan," you probably have asked the same question. What kind of courage does it take to charge down the landing ramp onto a beach and into a hell of bullets and shellfire, a scene of horror and certain death or charge 'over the top' like the Newfie boys did that July 1<sup>st</sup> morning, so long ago? It must have been likened to a sleet storm of steel, in which the soldiers tucked in their chins like they were tackling a driving winter storm while crossing the barrens back home. Some of the visitors to Beaumont Hamel, on any given day, struggle with their emotions, some weep, some just shake their heads in disbelief at the courage and the senselessness of it all. And, as you follow the young Newfoundland guide on what must be her dream summer job, you walk through the 'No Man's Land' of long ago towards the objective that day in 'Y' Ravine. You walk past the blooming remnants of the 'Danger Tree.' It was the point of furthest advance. At the bottom of the slope you see the final result of that day, the 'Y' Ravine Cemetery. You are staggered by the familiar names: AYRES, SNOWs, MERCERs, WHITEs, PARSONs PORTERs – there were 14 sets of brothers there that day. You are comforted by the immaculate care and beauty their final resting places are shown by the citizens of France. I guess it is the least that could be done!



Memorial to the Battle at Beaumont Hamel

Newfoundlanders enjoy visiting Beaumont Hamel because they wish to pay respects to their fellow Newfies, for such a heavy loss of life. They prove that the simpler values of courage, comradeship, responsibility and service to one's country are all lessons that we can take from their sacrifice. This place called Beaumont Hamel does them justice, as does the poem by John Oxenham on a bronze plaque there on a stone framed by magnificent Newfoundland pine trees.

There are two other cemeteries at Beaumont Hamel; there are great statues to the fallen; there are sheep used to keep the grass mowed. Why sheep, you ask? In most of Northern France, it is still dangerous to walk or drive tractors in many of the fields with so many unexploded shells and munitions lying buried in the soil! And the poppies (oh ... you've got to see those poppies!) they're considered weeds even; they dance on their high bending stems in a light breeze along the ditches and edges of the fields – You are struck by the singing birds and one's mind goes back to the words written by John McCrae "In Flanders Fields" – "and in the sky, the lark still bravely singing flies, scarce heard amid the guns below." You stand at attention back at the Memorial erected to great fanfare in 1925. Your party lays a wreath, you pose for pictures and you drift away in thought as the bugler plays 'Last Post.' You begin to realize why Newfoundlanders must make this pilgrimage to this corner of

France. It's the same reason why many Canadians travel to Vimy, Ypres, Dieppe or Juno. Nations were forged in those locations or at least a collective consciousness of who they are as a people and culture. You soon recognize one thing: As sure as the rocks, trees, ponds, bogs and hills of Newfoundland and Labrador are home, so too is this tiny piece of the French countryside nestled amid the great European farms of Northern France. Those men of the Newfoundland Regiment, from tiny out-ports to the streets of old St. John's, were who the Newfies are today – proud of where they were from, proud of what they did, proud of how they lived their lives and with whom they lived them.

Tread softly here –  
Go reverently and slow,  
Yea, let your soul go down upon its knees,  
And with bowed head and heart abased,  
Strive hard to grasp the future gain in this sore lode.  
For not one foot of this dank sod  
But drank its surfeit of the blood of gallant men  
Who for their faith, their hope, for life and liberty  
Here made the sacrifice.

Here gave their lives and gave right willingly, for you and me.

There are younger men wearing Legion berets these days. They are regular forces from yet another foreign war, being called upon once again by their country. They are retired personnel, peace-keepers, descendants of the veterans of the Great Wars. Oddly enough, children of this generation are showing a renewed and gratifying interest in the sacrifices of past generations. They participate in elaborate school assemblies on November 11<sup>th</sup>. They construct Memory Walls in their classrooms and lastly they know WHY they wear the poppy. Now all that remains is – that pilgrimage to France.



## Two Visits I Didn't Want To Make

**A**s part of the NATO commitment Canada engaged in the 1950's and 60's, I was fortunate enough to be stationed at Air Division HQ in the mid 60's. I was only in my late 20's, newly married with two children and an eagerness to put my career ahead of everything in those days. I simply didn't travel to see what I am now seeing, almost 45 years later. It wasn't until my daughter had finished Military College and was stationed over in Germany in the early 90's that my wife and I began our tours of Europe with a much different mission in our minds – an eagerness to step out into the world of real history and find out what life was really like during the War years. We made our own pilgrimage to both Natzweiler-Struthof (West of Strasbourg) as well as Dachau (northwest of Munich.) There were many other concentration camps, as you know, but a wee bit of information about one of them, Dachau, might give you just a slight glimpse of what life then could have been like. In 1933, when first built during the Nazi era, it was first a training centre, then a model camp for the SS in the perfection of the inhuman concentration system for the extermination camps of Auschwitz, Treblinka and the like. Originally planned to accommodate 5,000 prisoners, on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1945 the Liberators discovered more than 30,000 survivors of 31

nationalities. In twelve years of existence, 206,000 prisoners were registered and, although 31,951 deaths were registered, the total numbers, including the victims of individual and mass executions and the final death marches will never be known. A letter to the Editor following that trip caught my eye and is preserved in my scrapbooks at home. I read this letter twice, feeling his feelings as he saw the graveyards from Calais to Paris, where so many young people were laid to rest. I agree with his advice...

If you want kids to remember, then send them to Europe and see the Canadian Maple Leafs on the headstones, the ages of those who lie buried there, many of their own age – then they will remember! While in Europe, I would beg them to visit the Nazi Concentration and death camps, Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau or the twenty-three other camps I have not listed. They will not see graveyards and they will not see headstones, because so many went up in smoke or were buried in mass graves. Six million Jews and five million non-Jews ended their lives in these camps after torture and starvation. I hope they too will also be remembered!

 *"Age is a question of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter." (Satchell Page)*



## The Grand-Père of Vimy

**D**id you know – for many years, when Canadians got off the train near Vimy Ridge, they would be met by an elderly Frenchman who would wait at the station just in case any Canadians showed up and needed a ride to Vimy Ridge Monument. A one-man welcoming party, he became an impromptu tour guide, driver and general friend to any who needed him. He never asked for anything in exchange and wouldn't accept it either. Our Veterans Affairs Minister, Greg Thompson, presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the people of Canada, many of whom he served. He was 85 years young, known as The Grand-Père of Vimy when he died. He was Georges Devloo and he will be missed.



## War Stories

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### "Brotherly Love" by Elinore Florence

**F**or almost 100 years, a story has circulated in our family about how my grandfather, Charlie, was saved from certain death on the battlefields of France during the Great War by his younger brother Jack. My maternal grandfather, Charles Edward Light, was a devoted family man and I knew him well, since he lived into my adulthood. Charlie was one of nine children. After finishing school, he worked for his father, Frederick Walter Light, the postmaster in Battleford, Saskatchewan. Sorting the mail was a dull occupation for a young man. Just one month after war was declared in September 1914, my 21-year-old grandfather was on his way to France, expecting to make short work of the Germans.

"I'll be home for Christmas!" he cheerfully told his anxious mother. The paper that he signed told the tale, since it reads as follows: "I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany, should that war last longer than one year." Charlie was soon joined by his brother Jack, who lied about his age and enlisted on April 1, 1915. He had just turned 17. Apparently this was not uncommon – if you looked full-grown and your parents didn't object, the armed forces were happy to have you. When Charlie learned, to his dismay, that his little brother had joined up, he "claimed" him – that is, he requested the authorities that Jack join his unit as a family member. This was allowed in WWI, in the belief that it improved morale. This practice was stopped in WWII since several family members were sometimes wiped out in a single battle. The two boys spent the balance of that long, dreadful war serving together in a famous Canadian cavalry unit based out of Edmonton, called Lord Strathcona's Horse. My grandfather always said he joined the cavalry because he hated marching in the mud. He soon discovered one major drawback – your horse comes first. He spent many weary hours feeding and grooming his horse after a long day in the battlefield, while members of the infantry trooped off to bed.

Like most Canadians, his years there were fraught with peril. But it wasn't until April 1, 1918 that he received several serious wounds that almost cost him his life. In what was the last great cavalry charge of the WWI, Lord Strathcona's Horse, led by Lieutenant Gordon Flowerdew (who was killed and received the Victoria Cross posthumously in honour of his actions that day) recaptured a section called Moreuil Wood and the smaller area called Rifle Wood to the north. In the nearby heavily-forested Rifle Wood, the cavalry dismounted and engaged in fierce hand-to-hand combat with fixed bayonets. A shell exploded behind Charlie and fragments of shrapnel pierced his lower back and kidney. Now, here's where his brother, Jack, comes in. According to Jack, he lost sight of his older brother in the battle and found him face-down and unconscious, lying on the ground in a huge pool of blood. Frantically, he ran through the gun smoke and the exploding shells in search of the medics. When he found them lifting another wounded soldier onto a stretcher, he screamed: "My brother is wounded! Over here! Come and take my brother! He's dying!" The medics refused, since they already had their man. At this point, Jack lost his head and drew his service revolver from his holster. Training it on the two medics, he screamed: "You come and take my brother now or, by God, I'll blow your heads off!" The terrified medics abandoned their hapless victim and hurried off at gunpoint to find my grandfather. They loaded him onto the stretcher and bore him away. He was transported to a field hospital and then shipped back to a hospital in England, where he spent forty-nine days recovering from his terrible wounds. So did this really happen? The story was told often by Jack in the years that followed. Since Charlie was unconscious throughout, he couldn't comment. Some are skeptical that you could get away with brandishing a revolver at the medical corps, even in the heat of battle. I'm convinced the story is true. The bond between the brothers was a powerful one. I believe Jack, like many of us, would have risked being court-martialed if his brother's life was hanging in the balance. I expect the medics were far too busy saving lives to worry about one soldier more or less, especially when they saw the sorry state of my grandfather.

Both brothers survived the war. Jack escaped unscathed and Charlie healed and returned to

the front once again, where he remained until the war ended in November 1918. Charlie returned to work in the post office (an occupation that now didn't seem quite so boring) and eventually became the postmaster himself, a position he held until his retirement. He also married his boyhood sweetheart Vera Scott, who had written to him throughout the long war years, beginning her letters, "Dear old pal!"



### **Out of the Dawn**, Condensed from True Stories of D-Day written by Henry Brook

**T**housands of soldiers and civilians witnessed the D-Day landings. But in their memoirs, commentaries, books and interviews, they all seem to share one memory more distinct than all the others. It was their first sight of the Allied Fleet, 5,000 ships scattered across a stormy sea. When people saw the fleet, they knew they were part of something that would change world history. On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944, the fleet delivered close to 175,000 men, smashing their way through the Atlantic Wall at the cost of thousands of lives. By June 12<sup>th</sup>, the five beach heads were secure and receiving a flood of supplies. On June 27<sup>th</sup>, the Allies took Cherbourg and on July 9<sup>th</sup>, the British finally battled their way into Caen. By the 25<sup>th</sup> July, the Allies had landed an army of 1,450,000 fighting men in France while the German Armed Forces (they were called the WEHRMACHT) ranks were in tatters, their AirForce and Navy nowhere to be seen. The German retreat from Normandy was long overdue. Although Hitler's soldiers kept fighting during the relentless pursuit into their homeland, final defeat in Berlin, 11 months after D-Day was never seriously in doubt. The Allies made mistakes. They underestimated the difficult terrain of the Normandy Bocage (which was the landscape of Normandy made up of small fields and high hedge rows, making it difficult to cross) and at times it looked as though they were losing the energy displayed in their initial attack. Their achievements had been dazzling. In one of the most remarkable espionage achievements in history, they had duped the Germans into believing the invasion would come at Calais. Their planning and intelligence work for a mission involving many troops was unprecedented. They met every technical and organizational challenge bravely. It was an amazing and momentous day for the whole world. There was nothing more impressive than the sight of that fleet, looming out of the grey dawn.



### **The Italian Campaign**

**W**hile the Italian Campaign only lasted 20 months for the Canadians and they got comparatively little recognition for what they accomplished, never-the-less, more than 93,000 Canadian troops fought in Italy. They faced some of the harshest conditions and fiercest fighting of the WWII. On June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1943, the assault on Sicily was one of the largest seaborne operations in military history. This seemingly insignificant victory took more than four weeks, but with control of Sicily, the Allies had secured the Mediterranean Sea for Allied shipping. By September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1943, following the victory in Sicily, the Allies landed on the mainland and began the crawl to northern

Italy. One of the most difficult battles was in Ortona. Three Canadian soldiers were awarded the Victoria Cross during the Italian Campaign – Ernest “Smokey” Smith, John Mahony and Paul Triquet. For “Bravery in the Field,” Tommy Prince was awarded the Military Medal. As the Americans stole the show and garnered all the glory, after 20 months of fighting, they were quietly and unceremoniously sent to the Netherlands (February 1945) to be re-united with the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army. Canadian casualties, during the Italian Campaign totalled more than 26,000, nearly 6,000 of which were fatal.



## Mustard Gas

**M**any people today know that mustard gas was used during WWI, following its introduction by Germany in 1917. We have been assured by many sources, military and civilian alike, that no poison gas was used during WWII. Strictly speaking, that must be so. The operative word, however, is USED. Never-the-less, mustard gas did make its appearance outside of containers on 2 Dec, 1943 in the harbour of Bari, Italy and caused horrific damage. At 1930, German JU88's appeared over the harbour at 150 ft and dropped their bombs. 17 ships were sunk and the port was devastated. A nurse later reported seeing intense need among the injured for water. They were complaining of intense heat, began stripping their clothes off. Patients confined to bed were trying desperately to nip their dressings and bandages off – there were blisters as big as balloons and heavy with fluid on their young bodies. A nurse by the name of Aikens pursued this story after the war; records were NOT to be found. In a graveyard located close to that action, officials found easily 1,000 dead – more like 2,000 – and not even a memorial.

A 50 year blackout finished in 1993 to permit publication of some of the bombing details. Under the headline "Mustard Gas Horror at Bari," it revealed that one of the ships moored in Bari Harbour, a US Liberty Ship named 'John Harvey,' had been carrying a top secret cargo of 2,000 x 100 lb mustard bombs. The John Harvey had blown up. The ship had broken loose from her moorings and began drifting across the harbour as the crew and medical experts on board tried to stop the flames from reaching the cargo. The ship bore down on the tanker, 'USS Pumper' and, just when it was feared the burning ship would inevitably hit the tanker, the John Harvey blew up and disappeared completely. A direct quote from a Post Script, page 212 of Tyrer's, Sisters-in-Arms...

The mustard gas had been brought from the U.S. to back up Pres. Roosevelt's promise that if poison gas was used against American and Allied troops, he would reply in kind. Its presence in Bari was top secret. It was meant to have been off-loaded by the time the raid happened, but the Port Authorities did not give the John Harvey priority, expecting it to wait its turn. The ship's Captain was unable to discuss the reason for the urgency!



## Great Escape Tunnel Revealed in 2011 after 67 Years

*A story of courage and determination from POW camp LUFT III Western Poland*

Untouched for almost seven decades, the tunnel used in Paul Brickhill's account of the Great Escape has finally been unearthed. The 111-yard passage nicknamed "Harry" by Allied prisoners was sealed by the Germans following the audacious breakout from this POW camp. Despite huge interest in the subject, encouraged by the film in which Steve McQueen starred, the tunnel remained undisturbed over the decades because it was behind the Iron Curtain and the Soviet authorities had no interest in its significance. But at last, British archaeologists have excavated it and discovered its remarkable secrets. Many of the bed boards which had been joined together to stop it from collapsing were still in position. The ventilation shaft, ingeniously crafted from used powdered milk containers known as KLIM TINS, remained in working order. Scattered throughout the tunnel, 30 feet below ground, were bits of old metal buckets, hammers and crowbars used to hollow out the route. A total of 300 prisoners worked on three tunnels simultaneously – Tom, Dick and Harry. For most of their length, the tunnels were 2 feet square. It was on the nights of March 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of 1944, that the allied airmen escaped through Harry. Barely a third of the POWs were in fake German uniforms and civilian outfits and carrying false identity papers. Those were meant to slip away before #77 escapee was spotted. Only three made it back to Britain. Another 50 were executed by firing squad on the orders of Hitler, who was furious after learning of the breach of security. In all, 90 boards from bunk beds, 62 tables and 76 benches, as well as thousands of items (knives, forks, spoons, towels and blankets) were squirreled away by the Allied POWs to aid the escape plan, right under the noses of their captors. Believe it or not, no Americans were involved in the actual operation. Most were British, others from Canada, Poland and Australia. The latest dig (Aug, 2011) over three weeks, located the entrance to Harry which was originally concealed under a stove in Hut 104. The team also found another tunnel called "George," whose exact position had not been charted. It was never used as the 2,000 prisoners were forced to march to other camps as the Red Army approached in January, 1945.



## How Britain's Wealth Went West

At 1700, 02 July 1940, seventeen days after Paris fell to the Nazi blitz, a special train pulled into Bonaventure Place railway station in Montreal, QC. The train carried secret cargo under the code name of 'FISH' and it was the biggest financial gamble ever made by any nation in peace or war. It was later learned that the 'fish' were a very large portion of the liquid assets of Great Britain. They were cleaning out their vaults in case of invasion and the Bank of Canada was taking virtually everything Britain possessed which would be turned into money. Two weeks earlier, when the fall of France threatened Great Britain with imminent invasion, Winston Churchill had called his Cabinet into secret session and had decided to transport 1,800 Pounds worth of securities and gold to Canada. A far-sighted move at the outset of war made the whole gamble possible as all British citizens in the UK had to register all the foreign securities they owned. This was commandeered by Churchill and Cabinet. There were vast profits brought to Britain by

generations of world traders and investors, together with tons of Britain's accumulated gold. It was risky – in June 1940, 57 Allied and neutral ships totaling 349,177 tons had been sunk in North Atlantic alone. Secret trains and a gathering of destroyers took on 2,229 heavy bullion boxes – so heavy they bent the angle irons beneath the magazines floors. 488 boxes of securities, the value of over 100 million pounds was committed in just one shipment, to the hazards of war in the North Atlantic. This was continued throughout July. I encourage you to pursue more reading about this episode in history. Extreme precautionary measures were the order of the day for weather, the North Atlantic, the gold trains and the assurance company's 24-story, block-long granite building. A terrific thunderstorm deluged Montreal and, when discovered by the building's staff, the intruding water was lapping at the heavy struts two feet off the floor before emergency pumps kicked in. This and other stories can be found in Volumes 1 and 2 of "Secrets and Stories of the War," a selection of articles of WWII. Perhaps never before, have so many kept so great a secret so incredibly well. Thousands of ships personnel, hundreds of dock workers and over 600 people were involved in Security Deposit's clandestine services.



## **Battle of Britain and Small French Village of Maisontiers**

**I**t simply cannot be overstated. In the summer of 1940, Great Britain was well and truly up against the wall. Its army, decimated in France, was lucky to be pulled from the jaws of total annihilation on the beaches of Northern France. With the army licking its wounds and the Royal Air Force enduring heavy losses in France, the population of Great Britain fully expected that there would soon be door-to-door fighting in London, in York or in Kent. While the RAF, Navy and Army steeled themselves for coming fight, the ordinary people of Great Britain were readying themselves as well – for a fight to the death on sacred British soil. In anticipation of a Nazi invasion on British beaches, the British government had printed a poster which was to be posted in the event the Germans came ashore. It said in simple large letters beneath the King's crown, "Keep Calm and Carry On." It wasn't used and only surfaced 65 years later to become a phrase for stick-to-it-iveness.

Though disaster was just over the horizon, there was one last battle to be fought – a battle like no other in history. This was the Battle of Britain. The Battle, the aircraft and the nearly 3,000 men who flew in the defense of Great Britain live today as unparalleled icons of courage and determination in the face of almost certain defeat. Its inspirational effect on Great Britain and the hundreds of thousands of young men and women who, upon hearing the story, would enlist in the RAF, RCAF, RAAF, RNZAF and SAAF is unquestionable. It not only stopped the advance of the dark stain of Nazism, it turned the tide. It is the story of a courageous few and a steadfast country. The part played by Canadians, while small in numbers, was great of heart. We stood shoulder to shoulder with other pilots of the British Commonwealth, occupied Europe and America. The summer of 1940 is the stuff of legend.



## **The Battle of Britain – the Canadians,** by Lt Gen (ret'd) William (Bill) Carr, CD

**B**y 18 June 1940, the Germans had overrun all of Western Europe. France had finally surrendered and the British had evacuated their remaining troops through Dunkirk in a remarkable across-the-Channel withdrawal made possible particularly by fleets on boats and small ships from the UK, largely manned by civilian volunteers. The RAF was able to provide the control of the air essential to safe passage. Facing reality about the oncoming fight, Churchill stated:

Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. The whole might of the enemy will soon be turned upon us. Let us so spare ourselves that men will say 'this was their finest hour.' It was to be a battle of survival for Britain. The fact is that, in 1940, fewer than 3,000 young airmen changed the course of history and established the foundation upon which democracy would be built to achieve its final victory in Europe.

The purpose of this article is to tell how they did it. The Battle of Britain is unique in that it is the first and only time that airpower alone defeated a major threat to a nation's very existence. Following Dunkirk, the Germans mounted their air campaign aimed at eliminating Britain's ability to ward off a cross-Channel seaborne invasion. By late summer 1940, the German operation, code-named Operation SEA LION, was to follow immediately after the Luftwaffe had gained control of the air and destroyed other threats. It is generally agreed the Battle of Britain can be divided into four stages: The first stage was from 10 July to 7 August, where the Luftwaffe attempted to destroy the RAF's radar towers, which it knew were vital to Britain's air defense tactics. Simultaneously, German bombers were bent on destruction of Britain's ability to fight back by neutralizing its defenses, crippling its infrastructure and breaking civilian morale. Despite the German raids, RAF Bomber and Coastal Commands were indeed active in attacks on the French Ports from which the German invasion fleet could be launched. This fact has been somehow overlooked.

From 8 August to 6 September, during stage two, the Luftwaffe mistakenly believed it had destroyed much of the RAF early warning radar capability. Now, they aimed to destroy the RAF on the ground by bombing its airfields. Naturally, this put further pressure on the RAF. However, the RAF's ongoing success in the, until then, mainly daylight air war, confronted the Luftwaffe with such aircraft and aircrew losses that, by October, the Luftwaffe had largely switched to night raids. One of these early bombing raids had killed civilians in London. The result was dramatic to both sides. Hitler had specifically directed that attacks against civilian targets were not to be carried out; he believed that, eventually, the British people would sue for peace and he hoped to be seen to have no fight with the British people. On the other hand, the British reaction to this raid on London was to bomb Berlin. Hitler raged over this unexpected counterblow by the British and ordered attacks by his bombers on civilian targets in the UK. This changed everything and led to the third stage of the battle which ran from 7 September to 5 October. The Blitz began.

This change in tactics by the Germans was a mistake for other reasons, but it did relieve the pressure on the RAF airfields. To reach industrial targets and built-up areas, Luftwaffe Bombers and their Messerschmitt Bf-109 escorts were forced to operate close to the limits

of their range and were, thus, inhibited in their freedom to manoeuvre in their own defence. Added to this problem for the Germans was the growing availability to the RAF of rudimentary airborne intercept radar. German losses became intolerable. This was the fourth phase. The battle didn't end in a finite way, but rather ran down because Hitler was finally convinced that Air Superiority over the Channel to defend the invasion fleets from air attacks could not be gained and defeat of the RAF and his dream of negotiating a peace were unachievable. On 21 October, Hitler put off Operation SEA LION and ordered his forces and their materiel, which had been amassed for the invasion, to be withdrawn from Western Europe and dispatched to the Russian Front.

Of the 2,962 allied pilots engaged in the Battle of Britain, 2,421 were RAF (and Fleet Air Arm,) 117 were Canadian, 141 were Polish and a further 210 were from ten other countries. 515 of them, including 29 Canadians, were killed. Four of the Fighter Command Squadrons which took part in the Battle had links with Canada. The link was evidenced in each of these units' badges. No. 73 Squadron, flying Hurricanes, had a Canadian contingent, No. 92 Squadron, flying Spitfires, was a Canadian unit in the WWI, No. 242 Squadron, flying Hurricanes, had a Canadian Moose head in its badge. The future No. 401 RCAF Squadron arrived in the UK on 21 June 1940 with its own Hurricanes, as No. 1 RCAF Squadron.

 *"Keep high aspirations; moderate expectations; and small needs." (H. Stein)*



## **From the Ruhr Valley in 1944 – 18,000' Without a Parachute**

**A**t 21,000 feet, the rear gunner of a Lancaster bomber is a cold and lonely place, separated from the rest of the crew by two sets of doors and 12 yards of fuselage. It's cramped, little more than a shell for the body of a gunner clad in bulky flying clothes. There's no room to wear a parachute – only the harness; his chute pack is stowed in the main fuselage, a few feet inside the 2<sup>nd</sup> door and separate from the packs of the rest of the crew. In an emergency, the gunner had to leave his turret, get his chute pack, hook it onto the harness and then bale out, hoping that the trailing radio aerial would not cut him in two! Being a "tail end Charlie" was rated by the allies as a "hazardous occupation."

As the Lancaster aircraft, in which WO Nicholas Stephen Alkemande flew as gunner, approached Berlin on the night of 24/25 March, 1944, many long fingers of search lights probed the sky. After the 4,000 lb high explosive bomb and three tons of incendiaries were hurtled toward earth, they turned for home. They were somewhere over the Ruhr when a series of shuddering crashes raked the aircraft from nose to tail. Two cannon blasts exploded on Nicholas' turret ring mounting. The Plexiglas blister shattered and vanished, one large fragment slicing into his leg. The tail end was on fire, as he heard the pilot yell "bail out, bail out." He flicked open the turret doors to grab his chute, but he was too late as the case had been burnt off and the lightly packed chute was springing out, fold after fold, and vanishing in puffs of flame. Quickly, he hand-rotated his turret abeam, flipped the doors open and, in an agony of despair, somersaulted backward into the night! He must

have blacked out! In slow stages, his senses returned. He saw an awareness of light, which gradually became a patch of starlit sky. The light was framed in an irregular opening that finally materialized as a hole in thickly interlaced boughs of fir trees. The rear gunner was lying in a deep mound of fallen branches under some brush, heavily blanketed with snow. Flying boots had disappeared and his clothes were scorched and tattered. Attached to his collar was the whistle for use in case of ditching at sea to keep crew members in contact with one another. After discovering he had survived the jump, he kept repeating to himself, "Here is one man who is happy to become a POW." He kept whistling and shots grew closer. The story could end there, but really deserves to be told as well----

Eventually, he was rescued by the Germans and brought to a hospital. The sum of his injuries were burnt legs, twisted right knee, deep splinter wound in his thigh, sprained back, slight concussion and a deep scalp wound. He also suffered from first, second and third degree burns on the face and hands. Through an interpreter, he was asked the usual probing questions. Among others, they wanted to know where he had hid his parachute. In the eyes of the Germans, only SPIES dropping into enemy territory commonly concealed their chutes, whereas airmen falling out of sky battles did not. After bursts of frustrating rage on the Germans' part and Alkemande's assertion that he had NOT used a parachute, they left him alone to heal some wounds. He was finally led into the office of the Kommandant of Dulag Luft, where he was congratulated on jumping from a blazing bomber some 6,000' in the air without a parachute – a very tall story!

The airman stated he could prove it. The wreck of the Lancaster and the burnt remnants of the parachute pack could be found just forward of the rear fuselage door. They could examine his parachute harness – it had never been used! Hours later, they returned with his parachute harness. The snap hooks were still in their clips and the lift-webs still fastened down on the chest straps. The Kommandant soberly took in these facts and in perfect English said "Gentlemen! A miracle – no less!" He was assailed with handshakes and vociferous good wishes as the Kommandant offered his hand and said "Congratulations my boy, on being alive! What a story to tell your grandchildren."

The next day, the WO could see that Luftwaffe authorities had been busy. On the 'K's desk lay some pieces of scorched metal, including the D-handle of a parachute ripcord and a piece of wire that would be the ripcord itself. "We found it where you said it would be. To us, it's the final proof." The authorities marched the WO into a POW compound where some 200 Allied flyers were assembled and a Luftwaffe Officer recounted his story. Following liberation in May, 1945, RAF Intelligence confirmed the records, found the reports of the strange adventure to be true and included them in the official records of the RAF.



## Defuse the Magnetic Mines

**W**ithin hours after Great Britain had declared war on Nazi Germany, 03 September 1939, Hitler ordered his Kriegsmarine to launch a max effort to strangle the islands by sinking ships that were resupplying the British. During the next two

weeks in London, Churchill became steadily more concerned about the success of the German blockade. Reports informed him that 114 British and Allied merchant ships had been sunk by U-boats, surface commerce raiders and a revolutionary type of explosive known as magnetic mines. Dropped by parachute or laid by U-boats, these mines made it almost impossible for a ship to pass anywhere nearby without the underwater device being drawn to the ships and exploding. The Germans "sowed" 100's of these devices off the coast of England. Within three months, 59 merchant men were sunk by magnetic mines. Playing it cagey, the Germans issued communiqués boasting mighty feats by the U-boats, implying that torpedoes, not a new secret weapon, were sinking ships wholesale. But, the gods of war were smiling on the British on 22/23 Nov 1939. A German bomber dropped a magnetic mine in the Thames estuary, landed on a mud flat and was discovered at low tide after dawn. Royal Navy scientists and technicians rushed to the site. Having never seen one, they ensured that the lethal device was rendered safe so its secrets could be uncovered and counter measures taken.

LCdr Ouvry, knowing he was undertaking a highly perilous task, volunteered to defuse the mine. He was connected to a radio several hundred yards onshore by a throat microphone and he calmly described the action he was taking, so if things went wrong, the next fellow to take subsequent action would know 'what NOT to do'. He succeeded in disarming Hitler's secret weapon and the device was rushed to a scientific laboratory to discover its secrets and create counter measures. All of this, including Ouvry's feat, were kept 'MOST SECRET.' Ouvry was later decorated with Distinguished Svc Order, for gallantry, as had it not been for him, the impact of the magnetic mines could have been disastrous for Britain. Two techniques were developed - a Wellington bomber would fly over the shipping lanes with huge doral hoops which produced a strong magnetic field. It would detonate the mines where it flew. They also began "degaussing" ships as a protective measure, which involved stringing a cable around a vessel, passing electric current through it, which neutralized the ship's magnetic field - thus preventing the ship from drawing up any mine over which it might pass. By the spring of 1940, the Royal Navy had won the secret war against Hitler's magnetic mine threat!

• *"You miss 100% of the shots you never take." (Wayne Gretzky)*



## Canada's Covert "Luxury Fleet"

**E**arly in July 1941, British intelligence learned, probably through ultra- intercepts, that the Germans were preparing to make a bold move. They would land troops and establish bases on two islands off the coast of Canada and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The huge Gulf, as you know, becomes a river that carries large ships hundreds of miles inland through the cities of Quebec and Montreal into Lake Ontario and beyond. If the Nazis succeeded in this scheme, more than 3,000 miles from their closest naval base in Western France, they might succeed in blowing up key facilities along the St. Lawrence that would block passage for long periods of time or create other mischief damaging to the Canadian

War effort. Already hard pressed, the RCN did not have the ships to patrol the Gulf of St. Lawrence and its approaches, as German intelligence knew. However, U-boat Commanders were perplexed by the sudden expansion in the number of Canadian vessels patrolling around the strategic Gulf. Even when a U-boat torpedoed and sank the Raccoon, a Canadian Navy vessel guarding the Gulf, German intelligence did not realize that it had the key to the secret in its hands! Actually, the Raccoon was a converted American luxury yacht, one of the fourteen similar ocean-going vessels that had suddenly become part of Canada's coastal defence system.

A few weeks earlier in Washington, Pres. F.D. Roosevelt had been briefed on the German threat to the Gulf of St. Lawrence region. Because the US was still technically neutral, Roosevelt turned a blind eye to a maceration hatched to strengthen Canada's Navy. The fourteen yachts had been "requisitioned" from their American owners, turned over to Canadian civilians, who in turn sold them to the Government. In this fashion, the US had not provided direct aid to a belligerent! On reaching Canada, the yachts were denuded of their luxury trappings, which were replaced by communications equipment and sub detection gear. This restructuring permitted the "luxury fleet" to summon genuine warships whenever a U-boat or German surface raider was discovered. Throughout the war, the Canadian luxury fleet continued to expand. Canadian Navy Officers, dressed in civilian clothes and masquerading as wealthy businessmen visited marinas in the US to pick out suitable ocean going yachts to augment their fleet. No more was heard about German plans for installing bases in the Gulf of St. Lawrence region.



## Figures

When the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was terminated, 31 March 1945, you may be surprised to know that the plan produced:

- 131,553 pilots, navigators, bombardiers, wireless operators, air gunners and flight engineers, of which 72,835 were Canadian.
- There were 107 flying schools and 184 ancillary units; over 11,000 training aircraft of all types with thousands of instructors involved in the massive effort.
- The RCAF celebrated its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary 01 April, 2014.



## The Famous Lancaster Bomber

**D**id you know that the Lancaster Bombers were built in Canada? For many Canadians, this bomber aircraft was a symbol of Allied victory and for many in Southern Ontario, that symbol became a part of their every day workweek. At its peak of production in 1944, a force of 10,000 workers (¼ of them women) laboured at the Victory Aircraft plant in Malton, Ontario, during the war to produce 430 Mark X Lancasters. These bombers were sent directly to Bomber Command's #6 Group in England, which was

composed entirely of RCAF Squadrons and personnel. Eventually, the plant was producing one plane per day with its four powerful Merlin engines. The 'Lanc' was arguably the heavy bomber of the war. It wasn't as well armed as the US B17 Flying Fortress, but with a 14,000 pound bomb load, the 'Lanc' packed a heavier bombing punch; about 2 ½ times more than the B17. It also carried the famous "Dam Buster" bombs used against targets in the Ruhr Valley in Germany and the same aircraft was instrumental in defeating the Nazi industry on the ground during the peak years of WWII.

We Pilgrims travelled on to Warvillers and Méharicourt Cemetery – the resting place of Pilot Officer Andrew Mynarski VC, whose name is synonymous with the Lancaster that flies out of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum (CWHM) in Hamilton, ON. Mynarski was a gunner on a Lancaster when his aircraft was attacked by enemy fighters over Cambrai, France. As the aircraft crashed in flames, Mynarski went to the escape hatch, where he saw the rear gunner trapped in his turret. Mynarski crawled through the flames to reach the gunner, setting his parachute and clothing on fire. He was unable to release the gunner because both the hydraulic and manual release levers were broken. When all his efforts failed, Mynarski went back to the escape hatch, saluted the trapped gunner and jumped, but died as a result of his burns. The rear gunner miraculously escaped death and lived to tell of Mynarski's heroism. As a result of this story, the CWHM has dedicated their Lanc and it is referred to as the Mynarski Lanc.



Sam recounts the story about the famous Lancaster Bomber, piloted by P/O Andrew Mynarski VC, at the original Crash Site. Mynarski was awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery!

Below, (left to right) Chuck, Sam, Dave and John at Mynarski's crash site.



❁ *"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world."*

*(Margaret Mead)*



## Operation Manna

In April 1945, the Canadian Army had liberated much of the Netherlands, but 120,000 well-armed enemy soldiers were cut off in the Western part of the country. The Allies didn't have enough troops available to conquer the area without terrible losses. After making the decision NOT to invade, the Allied Commanders faced the problem of how to help the 3.5 million Dutch citizens who were starving after four years of occupation. The Dutch first heard of the plans for "Operation Manna" on 24 April when it was announced by the BBC. 29<sup>th</sup> April, the Dutch heard the BBC announce "Bombers of the RAF have just taken off from English bases to drop food supplies to the Dutch population in enemy occupied territory." It was a memorable day for Bomber Command aircraft as well. Although there had been discussions with Germans, an agreement to allow the Lancs to drop the food supplies had NOT been finalized and, on the first day, the Germans were manning their anti-aircraft guns as the bombers flew over, so low that they could have been easily shot down. But the Germans held their fire. The DZ approaches were made at very low altitude in order not to damage the food any more than necessary as it was dropped in gunny sacks without chutes. One Canadian pilot recalled flying by a windmill and saw people waving at us from balconies. We had to look up to wave back. They all had something to wave with. One of the roofs had "Thank you, Tommy" written on it. A total of 3,100 flights were made by Bomber Command and an additional 2,200 by the American AF which joined the operations on 01 May. Operation Manna ended with Germany's surrender 08 May. Although over 11,000 tons of food was dropped in the ten days of operation, some 20,000 people died of starvation. FYI – the Yanks dubbed it "Operation Chowhound."

• *"Fools live to regret their words; wise men to regret their silence." (Will Henry)*



## The Submarine that Sank a Japanese Train

Thirty-nine years ago, an Italian submarine was sold for a paltry \$100,000 as scrap. The submarine, given to the Italian Navy in 1953, was originally the USS Barb, an incredible veteran of WWII service with a heritage that should not have been melted away without any recognition. The USS Barb was a pioneer, paving the way for the first submarine to launch missiles and it flew a battle flag unlike that of any other ship. In addition to the Medal of Honour ribbon at the top of the flag identifying the heroism of its Captain, Commander Eugene 'Lucky' Fluckey, the bottom border of the flag bore the image of a Japanese train locomotive. The USS Barb was, indeed, the submarine that SANK A TRAIN! It was 18 July 1945 in Patience Bay, off the coast of Karafuto, Japan. It was after 0400 and Commander Fluckey rubbed his eyes as he peered over the map spread before him. It was the 12<sup>th</sup> war patrol of the Barb, the 5<sup>th</sup> under Commander Fluckey. He should have turned the submarine's command over to another skipper after four patrols, but had

managed to strike a deal with Admiral Lockwood to make a 5<sup>th</sup> trip with the men he cared for like a father. Of course, no one suspected when he had struck that deal prior to his 4<sup>th</sup> and should have been his final war patrol, that Commander Fluckey's success would be so great he would be awarded the Medal of Honour. Commander Fluckey smiled as he remembered that patrol. Lucky Fluckey they called him. On January 8<sup>th</sup>, the Barb had emerged victorious from a running two-hour night battle after sinking a large enemy ammunition ship. Two weeks later in Mamkwan Harbor, he found the mother-lode... more than 30 enemy ships. In only 5 fathoms (30 feet) of water, his crew had unleashed the sub's forward torpedoes, then turned and fired four from the stern. As he pushed the Barb to the full limit of its speed through the dangerous waters in a daring withdrawal to the open sea, he recorded eight direct hits on six enemy ships. What could possibly be left for the Commander to accomplish who, just three months earlier, had been in Washington, DC to receive the Medal of Honour?

He smiled to himself as he looked again at the map showing the rail line that ran along the enemy coastline. Now his crew was buzzing excitedly about bagging a train! The rail line itself wouldn't be a problem. A shore patrol could go ashore under cover of darkness to plant the explosives – one of the sub's 55-pound scuttling charges. But this early morning, Lucky Fluckey and his officers were puzzling over how they could blow not only the rails, but also one of the frequent trains that shuttled supplies to equip the Japanese war machine. No matter how crazy the idea might have sounded, the Barb's skipper would not risk the lives of his men. Thus the problem... how to detonate the explosives at the moment the train passed, without endangering the life of a shore party? PROBLEM? If you don't search your brain looking for answers, you'll never find them. Even then, sometimes they arrive in the most unusual fashion. Cruising slowly beneath the surface to evade the enemy plane now circling overhead, the monotony was broken with an exciting new idea: Instead of having a crewman on shore to trigger explosives to blow both rail and a passing train, why not let the train BLOW ITSELF up?

Billy Hatfield was excitedly explaining how he had cracked nuts on the railroad tracks as a kid, placing the nuts between two ties so the sagging of the rail under the weight of a train would break them open. "Just like cracking walnuts," he explained. To complete the circuit [detonating the 55-pound charge,] we hook in a micro switch and mount it between two ties, directly under the steel rail. "We don't set it off... the TRAIN will." Not only did Hatfield have the plan, he wanted to go along with the volunteer shore party. After the solution was found, there was no shortage of volunteers. All that was needed was the proper weather – a little cloud cover to darken the moon for the sabotage mission ashore. Lucky Fluckey established his criteria for the volunteer party:

- No married men would be included, except for Hatfield
- The party would include members from each department
- The opportunity would be split evenly between regular Navy and Navy Reserve sailors
- At least half of the men had to have been Boy Scouts, experienced in handling medical emergencies and tuned into woods lore.
- Finally, Lucky Fluckey would lead the saboteurs himself.

When the names of the eight selected sailors were announced, it was greeted with a mixture of excitement and disappointment. Members of the submarine's demolition squad

were: Chief Gunners Mate Paul G. Saunders, USN; Electricians Mate 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Billy R. Hatfield, USNR; Signalman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Francis N. Sevei, USNR; Ships Cook 1<sup>st</sup> Class Lawrence W. Newland, USN; Torpedo man's Mate 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Edward W. Klingsmith, USNR; Motor Machinists Mate 2<sup>nd</sup> Class James E. Richard, USN; Motor Machinists Mate 1<sup>st</sup> Class John Markuson, USN; and Lieutenant William M. Walker, USNR.

Among the disappointed was Commander, who surrendered his opportunity at the insistence of his officers that, as Commander, he belonged with the Barb, coupled with the threat from one that, "I swear I'll send a message to ComSubPac if the Commander attempted to join the demolition shore party." In the meantime, there would be no harassing of Japanese shipping or shore operations by the Barb until the train mission had been accomplished. The crew would 'lay low' to prepare their equipment, practice and plan and wait for the weather.

It was July 22, 1945 Patience Bay, off the coast of Karafuto, Japan. Waiting in 30 feet of water in Patience Bay was wearing on the patience of Commander Fluckey and his innovative crew. Everything was ready. In the four days, the saboteurs had impatiently watched the skies for cloud cover and the inventive crew of the Barb had crafted and tested their micro switch. When the need was proposed for a pick and shovel to bury the explosive charge and batteries, the Barb's engineers had cut up steel plates in the lower flats of an engine room, then bent and welded them to create the needed digging tools. The only things beyond their control were the weather and the limited time. Only five days remained in the Barb's patrol. Anxiously watching the skies, Commander Fluckey noticed plumes of cirrus clouds, then white stratus capping the mountain peaks ashore. A cloud cover was building to hide the three-quarters moon. So, this would be the night.

It was **MIDNIGHT on July 23, 1945**. The Barb had crept within 950 yards of the shoreline. If it was somehow seen from the shore, it would probably be mistaken for a schooner or Japanese patrol boat. No one would suspect an American submarine so close to shore or in such shallow water. Slowly, the small boats were lowered to the water and the 8 saboteurs began paddling toward the enemy beach. Twenty-five minutes later, they pulled the boats ashore and walked on the surface of the Japanese homeland. Stumbling through noisy waist-high grasses, crossing a highway and then into a 4-foot drainage ditch, the saboteurs made their way to the railroad tracks. Three men were posted as guards, Markuson assigned to examine a nearby water tower. The Barb's auxiliary man climbed the tower's ladder; then stopped in shock as he realized it was an enemy lookout tower – an OCCUPIED enemy lookout tower. Fortunately, the Japanese sentry was peacefully sleeping and Markuson was able to quietly withdraw to warn his raiding party. The news from Markuson caused the men digging the placement for the explosive charge to continue their work more quietly and slower. Twenty minutes later, the demolition holes had been carved by their crude tools and the explosives and batteries hidden beneath fresh soil. During planning for the mission, the saboteurs had been told that when the explosives were in place, all would retreat a safe distance while Hatfield made the final connection. BUT IF the sailor who had once cracked walnuts on the railroad tracks slipped or messed up during this final, dangerous procedure, his would be the only life lost. On this night, it was the only order the sub's saboteurs refused to obey and all of them peered anxiously over Hatfield's shoulder to be sure he did it right. The men had come too far to be disappointed by a

bungled switch installation.

**1:32 A.M.** Watching from the deck of the submarine, Commander Fluckey allowed himself a sigh of relief as he noticed the flashlight signal from the beach announcing the departure of the shore party. Fluckey had daringly, but skillfully, guided the Barb within 600 yards of the enemy beach sand. There was less than 6 feet of water beneath the sub's keel, but Fluckey wanted to be close in case trouble arose and a daring rescue of his saboteurs became necessary.

**1:45 A.M.** The two boats carrying his saboteurs were only halfway back to the Barb when the sub's machine gunner yelled, 'Captain!' There's another train coming up the tracks! The Commander grabbed a megaphone and yelled through the night, "Paddle like the devil!" knowing full well that they wouldn't reach the Barb before the train hit the micro switch.

**1:47 A.M.** The darkness was shattered by brilliant light and the roar of the explosion! The boilers of the locomotive blew, shattered pieces of the engine blowing 200 feet into the air. Behind it, the railroad freight cars accordioned into each other, bursting into flames and adding to the magnificent fireworks display. Five minutes later, the saboteurs were lifted to the deck by their exuberant comrades as the Barb eased away, slipping back to the safety of the deep. Moving at only two knots, it would be a while before the Barb was into waters deep enough to allow it to submerge. It was a moment to savour – the culmination of teamwork, ingenuity and daring by the Commander and all his crew. Lucky Fluckey's voice came over the intercom. "All hands below deck not absolutely needed to maneuver the ship have permission to come topside." He didn't have to repeat the invitation. Hatches sprang open as the proud sailors of the Barb gathered on her decks to proudly watch the distant fireworks display. The Barb had sunk a Japanese TRAIN!

On 02 August 1945, the Barb arrived at Midway, her 12<sup>th</sup> war patrol concluded. Meanwhile, United States military commanders had pondered the prospect of an armed assault on the Japanese homeland. Military tacticians estimated such an invasion would cost more than a million American casualties. Instead of such a costly armed offensive to end the war, on 06 August, the B-29 bomber Enola Gay dropped a single atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima, Japan. A second such bomb, unleashed four days later on Nagasaki, Japan, caused Japan to agree to surrender on August 15<sup>th</sup>. On 02 September 1945, in Tokyo Harbour, the documents ending the war in the Pacific were signed.

The story of the saboteurs of the U.S.S. Barb is one of those unique, little known stories of WWII. It becomes increasingly important when one realizes that the eight sailors who blew up the train near Kashiho, Japan conducted the ONLY ground combat operation on the Japanese homeland during WWII. Eugene Bennett Fluckey retired from the Navy as a Rear Admiral and wore, in addition to his Medal of Honour, four Navy Crosses – a record of heroic awards unmatched by any American in military history. In 1992, his own history of the U.S.S. Barb was published in the award winning book, *Thunder Below*. Proceeds from the sale of this exciting book have been used by Admiral Fluckey to provide free reunions for the men who served him aboard the Barb and their wives. P.S. He graduated from the US Naval Academy in 1935 and lived to age 93.



## Remembering the Caribou and Her Gallant Crew

The Thanksgiving dishes were barely put away on October 12, 1942 when the 2,222-tonne Newfoundland car ferry SS Caribou departed North Sydney, NS, on a scheduled trip to her home port of Port aux Basques, NL. "The night was dark with no moon," recorded the officer of the watch in the log of Caribou's Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) escort, the "one-stacker" Bangor-class minesweeper HMCS Grandmère. Caribou was carrying 237 that night – 191 passengers and a crew of 46, as well as a belly full of livestock, cargo and rail cars for her owners, the Newfoundland Railway. 118 of the passengers were Canadian, American and British military personnel making their way to bases in Stephenville, Argentia/Marquise, Torbay, Gander and St. John's on the Island and onto Happy Valley, Goose Bay in Labrador. Among this group was Nursing Sister Agnes Wilkie, RCN Voluntary Reserve, returning for duty in St. John's.

A quiet transit was expected and passengers settled in for the night in their bunks and cabins below decks. Lurking in the vicinity was the Nazi submarine U-69. With 16 kills totalling 69,000 tonnes, Kapitan Lieutenant Ulrich Graf was anxious for one more hit before U-69 finished her patrol and headed home to Lorient, France. Shortly before midnight, the submarine spotted two ships travelling at 10.5 knots on the horizon. Despite the darkness, visibility was clear. To Graf, the Caribou, "belching black smoke," looked like a 6,500-tonne freighter and her escort a "two-stack destroyer." As described by historian Michael Hadley, in "U-Boats against Canada," the misidentification of the size and type of both ships was a problem systemic in the Kriegsmarine. It cost the Newfoundland ferry her life. At 0321, the ferry was ripped by a torpedo fired by U-69. Hit in the engine room where the boilers also immediately exploded, Caribou began sinking fast. Despite the heroic efforts on the part of the crew and passengers, only one lifeboat could be launched and the rest of the survivors fell into the frigid water, clinging to overturned lifeboats and bits of wreckage. In less than five minutes, Caribou slipped beneath the waves.

Grandmère carried out a quick depth charge attack against the submarine, which attempted to escape under the sinking ferry and an exhaustive search for U-69 proved fruitless. It was nearly three hours before the minesweeper could return to look for survivors. For many it was too late. By then, of the 237 passengers and crew of the Caribou, only 101 could be recovered – 136 men, women and children were lost to the most devastating attack in Canadian waters during WWII. Caribou's Master Ben Taverner and his sons Harold and Stanley, perished as did several other father-son teams working as crew. Agnes Wilkie drifted away in the night to become the only Canadian nurse casualty of enemy action during WWII. Fellow traveler Bride Fitzpatrick of the Newfoundland Merchant Navy was the only female of her service to die during the war.



## Charlie Brown, B17 Flying Fortress

This is a story about a WWII USAF B17 Bomber which was badly shot up with one engine dead, the tail, horizontal stabilizer and the nose shot up. It was truly ready to fall out of the sky! Charlie Brown, a BF Flying Fortress skipper who was attached to the 379<sup>th</sup> Bomber Group at Kimbolton, England flew this famous B17, nicknamed "Ye Olde Pub." It was in a terrible state having been hit by flak from fighter aircraft. Their compass had been badly damaged and they were flying deeper over enemy territory instead of heading back to their Air Base in England. After flying over an enemy airfield, a German pilot by the name of Franz Steigler was ordered to take off and shoot down the B17. When he got near it, he couldn't believe his eyes. In his own words, he had never seen a plane in such a bad state. The tail and rear section was severely damaged and the tail gunner wounded. The top gunner's remains were all over the fuselage; the nose was smashed and there were bullet holes everywhere. Despite having plenty of ammo, Franz flew to the side of the B17 and looked at Charlie Brown, the pilot. He could see he was scared and struggling to control his damaged and blood-stained plane. Aware that the Americans had no idea where they were going, Franz waved to Charlie to turn 180 degrees. He then escorted and guided the stricken plane to and slightly over, the North Sea towards England. When Franz landed, he told his CO that the plane had been shot down over the sea and never told the truth to anyone. Charlie Brown and the remainder of his crew told all at their briefing, but were ordered never to talk about it.

More than 40 years later, Charlie Brown wanted to find the Luftwaffe pilot who had saved him and his crew. Following years of research, Franz was found. He had never talked about the incident, not even at post war reunions. The two pilots met in the USA at a 379<sup>th</sup> Group reunion, together with 25 people who are alive now, all because Franz never fired his guns that day. You'll be further surprised to hear that Charlie Brown lived in Seattle, Washington while Franz Steigler had moved to Vancouver, BC after the war. When they finally met, they discovered they had lived less than 200 miles apart for the past 50 years! Franz Steigler passed away 22 March 2008, while Charlie Brown passed away 24 November 2008.

 *"Sometimes your best investments are the ones you don't make." (Donald Trump)*



## A Pilot's Story of Sheer Horror (or Nevermore)

By Cdr. Dave DeLance, submitted by Trevor Spencer

I realize that once again this story is about an American Navy pilot flying a C9, one of those with two jet engines either side at the tail end of the plane. But, in essence, its story time again, so bear with me while I tell this tale. Since I have spent time in Japan, Phuket, Thailand and into the Philippines during my service career, this story does have meaning for me! Anyone who has spent time at NAF Atsugi, Japan, knows all about ravens. There are thousands of them, cawing loudly from the golf course to the flight line, all day

long. As the story goes, the Navy Cdr. swears he heard one of these ravens whisper "Never More." This Navy Cdr. has spent 20 years in the Navy Reserves, but also flies as an airline Captain on Civvy Street – almost 50% of his time. He spends months each year in either Japan or Italy, flying cargo for the Navy. Recently, he was tasked to fly from Atsugi to Phuket, remain overnight, fly a leg to pick up a SEAL platoon, return to Phuket, remain overnight and return the SEALs to Guam. The entire mission went fine all the way back to Phuket on the 2<sup>nd</sup> night. Gas started to be an issue when we had both of the SEAL Detachment Crews and their combat cargo aboard. That extra weight limited the amount of fuel we could carry to about 30,000 lbs (4½ to 5 hrs flying.) Along the way, our instruments indicated that three tropical depressions were beginning to stir things up in the Far East. One North and West of Korea – it wasn't a factor. One was sitting just to the West of the Philippines and slowly drifting towards Manila. The 3<sup>rd</sup> one, named SAMOI, was spinning up to North East Guam and sliding North West. Its projected track would keep it 200 miles north of the island. It was forecast to accelerate soon to super typhoon status. Now, worried about the weather, the Cdr made several long distance calls to the scheduler and various weather agencies around the area. They managed to identify an alternate airport for Manila and so decided to press on with the mission. They figured they would beat the first typhoon into Manila with a day to spare.

Well, with the SEAL team on board, they departed Phuket airport early morning. About 200 miles into the flight, the first thunderstorms started to appear and they switched on the weather radar. It didn't work! It had tested fine on the ground and it tested fine in the air, but it wouldn't show them the storms. They made the only decision they could safely make and returned to Phuket. Ninety minutes later, back on the ground safely, they found the broken wire. Again, they fuelled up the aircraft, starting off now more than two hours late. The weather in to Manila was dicey but manageable. They used the radar to skirt the worst of the storms in from the West and they found clearer weather as they approached the field. That leg took 3 hours 40 minutes and they landed with 6,500 lbs of fuel, just above the legal limit of 6,000 lbs. Again, they refuelled. They were losing daylight and it was now dusk in the Philippines. The next weather check indicated a slight chance of rain later that evening in Guam, but no real problems were reported to be imminent. The next leg of the journey was estimated at 3 hrs, 20 minutes, so they were confident they would have fuel to spare.

There were two major airports on Guam, even though it is a small island. That's important for a C-9 because almost every time they were to fly to this island, they didn't have enough fuel to fly anywhere else. That was definitely true that night. The Cdr. told his crew members that the next leg of the trip was business as usual, legal by every naval aviation regulation and he would have flown it with his family in back of him. They took off in the deepening twilight, manoeuvring to avoid the storms that the radar was picking up with increased frequency. A commercial pilot who had just taken off from Guam told them they should have no problems. They pressed on, oblivious to the havoc Samoi would soon unleash. They approached Guam at 2200. The field had closed due to the worsening weather. There was NO automatic weather broadcast, but the approach control was still up and running. They arrived overhead with 7,500 lbs of gas, about what they had expected, but certainly not enough to be able to go elsewhere! Typhoon Samoi had slowed and moved south. Counter clockwise, swirling bands of severe thunderstorms began to fill in

on its back side. Though the storm centre was 150 miles to the North, the typhoon encompassed an area 600 miles across and 1,200 miles long. Both airports in Guam have long, dual runways that run from Northeast to Southwest. The wind that came roaring in with those backfilling storms was almost straight out of the West, at times reaching 80 knots. Those treacherous winds prevented the crew from shooting an ILS approach. On the other hand, a precision approach would have placed them well outside the tailwind limits for the aircraft. They then tried a third approach, a set up for the TACAN 24, non-precision approach to Anderson AFB. It comes in over the ocean, crosses a cliff several hundred feet high and touches down on the runway atop the cliff, less than ½ mile from the edge. On a clear day, they say it can be a real eye opener! But on a night like it was, it could kill you. One wind shear downdraft at the wrong time and not only would you NOT clear the cliff, one might never see it ever coming! Picture yourself pulling your car to the side of a road during a heavy downpour and I think you might well relate to the weather conditions that night. NOW – imagine yourself moving at 150 mph and not being given the luxury of stopping!

Apparently the rain was horizontal. They could not see 3 feet ahead, let alone the ½ mile that is required to land from that speed. On the first approach, an 80 knot wind shear took their speed from 150 to 230 knots in 2 seconds. A go-around was mandatory. The second approach featured a little less wind shear. The radar was showing nothing but RED on the 30 mile scale. The Navy, or for that matter anyone else, doesn't normally fly through RED, let alone land in it. According to Approach Control, they had been over the end of the runway both times, but the crew never saw a thing. Fuel was now reported at 5,000 lbs.

They had to start bending the rules because they had to get closer to the ground to have any chance to land. They opted for a downwind ILS, landing in the opposite direction. They began the approach with the auto pilot locked on the ILS, despite the out-of-limit winds. The GPS showed a 40 knot tail wind (the limit is 10,) but as the pilot stated, he was out of ideas. At around 250 feet off the deck, they got the one that trainers always throw at you in the Simulator – the minus 40 knot wind shear! One can instantly lose the airflow over the wings that keep you airborne. The aircraft can stall and fall and there is nothing one can do about it. Their airspeed went to around 100 knots. They would have died if it had dropped to 95. The pilot clicked off the autopilot and shoved the throttles to the stops trying to initiate the textbook wind shear recovery on the edge of control. They actually saw runway lights at one point but they couldn't land with that combination of airspeed, wind shear and visibility. They would have crashed on the runway. They went around again. They got clearance to Guam International, 20 miles away. The fuel was pegged at 4,400 lbs. The pilot declared minimum fuel. Approach asked for "Souls on Board" and they knew that was so they could tell the rescue teams how many bodies to look for. The Controller reported that his radar showed the weather getting worse. They were cleared for their 4<sup>th</sup> approach and VOR/TACAN 24 (another non-precision approach to Guam International.) So far, all the approaches had been backed up by the co-pilot using home-made GPS approaches and he was calling out centerline deviations. The pilot had been flying real instruments, not computer generated ones.

Approach Control called the position of the actual terrain obstructions to the pilot and gave them unofficial help for center line, although he did not actually have precision radar and

could not legally do it. The pilot recognized his calls for what they were and started cheating 50 to 100 feet on the descent altitudes. They still couldn't see anything forward and were forced to go around again.

The TACAN (DME) went out of service during the go-around, so they were cleared for the NDB (at best, approximate) approach to runway 24, the only one left for them to use. The fuel gauge read 2,800 lbs. Going around is not recommended below 1,500 lbs in that aircraft, because the deck angle may cause the engines to flame out. The aircrew turned on all of the fuel tanks, even the empty tanks and opened the fuel cross-feed. They had been over the end of the runway, but they just hadn't been able to see. They went around for the 5<sup>th</sup> time and they figured they only had enough gas for one, perhaps two more tries. The pilot tried to decide what to say in the voice recorder right before they would have to crash. As they asked for early turn-in vectors to the NDB, the crew chief asked "OK guys, what are we going to do now?" The pilot once again decided to couple up the NDB approach on the GPS computer with the autopilot – an unauthorized, untested technique that allows the computer to fly the aircraft without outside reference. He flew to 100 ft. below the approved minimums on autopilot altitude hold. This allowed him to look outside without concentrating on the instruments. They flew in and caught their first break, a gap in the waves of thunderstorm cells, rolling across the island. They finally saw the ground and, for the first time, saw the runway at  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles. The pilot immediately clicked off the auto pilot and dove to 100 ft. to avoid any possibility of going back into the clouds. They were still in moderate rain and picked up a 40 knot wind shear, 30 or 40 ft. from the end of the runway.

He continued to push the nose down, willing to have it hit, if it had to, but the Cdr managed to level out at 5 ft. and incredibly ended up with a smooth touchdown! The anti-skid released several times as they hydroplaned on the rain soaked runway. When it finally stopped, there was 3,000 ft. of runway left. They sat for a minute, the torrential rain closed back in and they couldn't see to taxi. The Cdr was asked if he would fly around the Far East with Navy again. "Absolutely" he replied. Would he ever fly to an island destination that had a tropical depression nearby? "Not on your life!" Three days later, they made their way back to Atsugi. As the Cdr shut down and walked away from the aircraft, he turned around to see a big old black raven, sitting all by himself, up on the tail. I could swear he winked at me and whispered "Nevermore."

 *"To be a champ, you have to believe in yourself, when nobody else will." (Sugar Ray Robinson)*



## **It Was The U.S. That Started The War With Japan and Not The Other Way Around!** Source – The Associated Press, Honolulu, circa 2000

**T**he discovery of a Japanese midget submarine, sunk before the assault on Pearl Harbour solves a 61-year-old puzzle while stirring debate over whether the encounter should have raised alarms before the attack. U.S. Navy historians opined that even if top commanders had received messages about the sub sooner, it would have been very difficult in peacetime weekend duty mode to mount a counter attack with

such short notice. Other historians have suggested the encounter with an armed Japanese submarine at the entrance to Pearl Harbour on the morning of 7 Dec, 1941, should have mobilized the base. For decades, historians have analyzed the report from the crew of the destroyer USS Ward that it sank an unmarked submarine believed to be Japanese. Discovery of the craft by University of Hawaii ocean researchers provided the first verification of their story. In fact, they had found the submarine in 365 metres of water, several kilometres off the harbour entrance, where it had apparently drifted. The sub was sitting on the ocean floor, intact and in good condition amid tonnes of war debris. The remains of the two man crew were still inside. The incident launched the two countries into a cataclysmic struggle in the Pacific. It was a Japanese government historian who stated the discovery showed that the U.S. started the war between the two countries. At that time, the finding provided evidence that it was the Americans who made the first shot, which means the war had already started even before Japan's air attack on Pearl Harbour. The sub was reportedly sunk by the USS Ward at 0645 on 7 Dec 1941 while the Japanese aerial attack began at 0755.

Just after the Ward fired on the mini-sub, the destroyer sent a radio message to the commandant of the 14<sup>th</sup> Naval District HQ advising of their action. The message wasn't relayed to the Commander of the U.S. and Pacific Fleets until 0730. The delay was a result of officers at the 14<sup>th</sup> Naval District and on the Commander's staff, seeking confirmation of the USS Ward's message, as to whether it was a Japanese vessel and that it had been sunk. An Undersea explorer, Robert Ballard, who led an unsuccessful National Geographic search for the Japanese sub in 2000, sees the sinking as a missed opportunity for the U.S. "Just imagine what a totally different outcome it would be if we'd gotten a 45 minute warning," he said in a Dec 2000 interview."



### **The Last of the "Dambusters"** Taken from the Toronto Star, 22 Aug, 2015

**O**n the night of May 16, 1943, a squadron of bombers set out from Britain to conduct a series of strikes against heavily fortified dams in the Ruhr Valley of Germany, using bombs that bounced on the water before exploding. Of the 133 who started the mission, only 77 returned. The last surviving pilot of those who came back was John Leslie Munro, who died at age 96. His death was met with tributes across the globe, including in Britain and his native New Zealand, for his role in the daring "Dambusters" mission that struck at the industrial heartland of the Nazi war effort and lifted Allied morale. Munro, who was known as Les, was part of the RAF's 617 Sqn that was tasked with destroying three dams with specially designed bombs shaped like cylinders that had to be dropped at a height of about 20 meters. The bombs were designed to bounce across the water, allowing them to avoid obstacles like anti-torpedo nets and then sink to the base of the dam walls before exploding, magnifying their effect. During the mission, the Munro's Lancaster Bomber was hit by flak. With his communications destroyed, he was unable to attack the dams. Despite a large hole in the aircraft's body, he managed to fly to safety.

According to accounts of those who survived the mission, the pilots and crew had only a

few weeks to prepare and they learned of their targets just hours before the raid. The dams in the Ruhr Valley supplied hydro-electric power and water for steel making and were important to Hitler's war machine. The bombs caused devastating flooding in the Ruhr Valley. Historians estimate that more than 1,300 people, including prisoners of war, were killed. The bombers were hailed as heroes and the mission was immortalized in 'The Dam Busters,' a 1955 film starring Michael Redgrave. In an interview with the BBC to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 'Dam Busters' mission, Munroe said he had not been afraid. "I approached most operations with a thought: if I'm going to cop it, so be it," he said!



## 6 Boys and 13 Hands – A Must Read

Each year I am hired to go to Washington, DC, with the eighth grade class from Clinton, WI where I grew up, to videotape their trip. I greatly enjoy visiting our nation's capital and I always take some special memories back with me. This fall's trip was especially memorable. On the last night of our trip, we stopped at the Iwo Jima memorial. This memorial is the largest bronze statue in the world and depicts one of the most famous photographs in history – that of the six brave soldiers raising the American Flag at the top of a rocky hill on the island of Iwo Jima, Japan, during WWII. Over 100 students and chaperones piled off the busses and headed towards the memorial. I noticed a solitary figure at the base of the statue and, as I got closer he asked, 'Where are you guys from?' I told him that we were from Wisconsin. 'Hey, I'm a cheese head, too! Come gather around, Cheese heads and I will tell you a story.' It was James Bradley, who just happened to be in Washington, DC to speak at the memorial the following day. He was there that evening to say good night to his dad, who had passed away. He was just about to leave when he saw the busses pull up. I videotaped him as he spoke to us and received his permission to share what he said from my videotape. It is one thing to tour the incredible monuments filled with history in Washington, D. C. but it is quite another to get the kind of insight we received that night. When all had grouped around, he humbly began to speak.

My name is James Bradley and I'm from Antigo, Wisconsin. My dad is on that statue and I wrote a book called 'Flags of Our Fathers.' It is the story of the six boys in bronze you see behind me, raising the flag. The first guy putting the pole in the ground is Harlon Block. Harlon was an all-state football player. He enlisted in the Marine Corps with all the senior members of his football team. They were off to play another type of game. A game called 'War.' Unfortunately, it didn't turn out to be a game. Harlon, at the age of 21, died with his intestines in his hands. I don't say that to gross you out, I say that because there are people who stand in front of this statue and talk about the glory of war. You guys need to know that most of the boys in Iwo Jima were 17, 18 and 19 years old – and it was so hard that the ones who did make it home never even would talk to their families about it. (He pointed to the statue) 'You see this next guy? That's Rene Gagnon from New Hampshire. If you took Rene's helmet off at the moment this photo was taken and looked in the webbing of that helmet, you would find a photograph ... a photograph of his girlfriend. Rene put that in there for protection because he was scared. He was 18 years old. It was just boys who won the battle of Iwo Jima. Boys – not old men.

The next guy here, the third guy in this tableau, was Sergeant Mike Strank. Mike is my hero. He was the hero of all these guys. They called him the 'old man' because he was so old. He was already 24! When Mike would motivate his boys in training camp, he didn't say, 'Let's go kill some Japanese' or 'Let's die for our country.' He knew he was talking to little boys. Instead he would say, 'You do what I say and I'll get you home to your mothers.' The last guy on this side of the statue is Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian from Arizona. Ira Hayes was one of them who lived to walk off Iwo Jima. He went into the White House with my dad. President Truman told him, 'You're a hero.' He told reporters, 'How can I feel like a hero when 250 of my buddies hit the island with me and only 27 of us walked off alive?' So, you take your class at school, 250 of you spending a year together having fun, doing everything together. Then all 250 of you hit the beach, but only 27 of your classmates walk off alive. That was Ira Hayes. He had images of horror in his mind. Ira Hayes carried the pain home with him and eventually died dead drunk, face down, drowned in a very shallow puddle, at the age of 32. 'The next guy, going around the statue, is Franklin Sousley from Hilltop, Kentucky. His best friend, who is now 70, told me, 'Yeah, you know, we took two cows up on the porch of the Hilltop General Store. Then we strung wire across the stairs so the cows couldn't get down. Then we fed them Epsom salts. Those cows crapped all night.' Yes, he was a fun-lovin' hillbilly boy. Franklin died on Iwo Jima at the age of 19. When the telegram came to tell his mother that he was dead, it went to the Hilltop General Store. A barefoot boy ran that telegram up to his mother's farm. The neighbors could hear her scream all night and into the morning. Those neighbors lived ¼ mile away.

'The next guy, as we continue to go around the statue, is my dad, John Bradley, from Antigo, Wisconsin, where I was raised. My dad lived until 1994, but he would never give interviews. When Walter Cronkite's producers or the New York Times would call, we were trained as little kids to say 'No, I'm sorry, sir, my dad's not here. He is in Canada fishing. No, there is no phone there, sir. No, we don't know when he is coming back.' My dad never fished or even went to Canada. Usually, he was sitting right there at the table, eating his Campbell's soup. But we had to tell the press that he was out fishing. He didn't want to talk to the press. You see, like Ira Hayes, my dad didn't see himself as a hero. Everyone thinks these guys are heroes because they are in a photo and on a monument. My dad knew better. He was a medic. John Bradley from Wisconsin was a combat caregiver. On Iwo Jima, he probably held over 200 boys as they died. And when boys died on Iwo Jima, they writhed and screamed, without any medication or help with the pain. When I was a little boy, my 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher told me that my dad was a hero. When I went home and told my dad that, he looked at me and said, 'I want you always to remember that the heroes of Iwo Jima are the guys who did NOT come back!'

'So that's the story about six nice young boys. Three died on Iwo Jima and three came back as national heroes. Overall, there were 7,000 boys that died on Iwo Jima in the worst battle in the history of the Marine Corps. My voice is giving out, so I will end here. Thank you for your time.' Suddenly, the monument wasn't just a big old piece of metal with a flag sticking out of the top. It came to life before our eyes with the heartfelt words of a son who did indeed have a father who was a hero. Maybe not a hero for the reasons most people would believe, but a hero nonetheless. One thing I learned while on tour with my 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in DC that is not mentioned here is... that if you look at the statue very closely and count the number of hands raising the flag, there are 13. When the man who made the

statue was asked why there were 13, he simply said the 13<sup>th</sup> hand was the hand of God.

 *"Ability is what you are capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it!" (Lou Holtz)*



## **Leave It to a Female Resistance Member to Trick the Gestapo**

**L**ucy Aubrec, 30 years old, had a 2 year old son and was pregnant again, mid '43. She and her husband, Raymond, had been active members of the French Underground Liberation Movement for three years. He travelled often in South-Eastern France as one of the leaders of the Resistance and his forte was explosives, blowing up railroad facilities which were aiding the German War effort. Lucy, on the other hand, was a history teacher and homemaker – a perfect foil for her activities with the Resistance, as she helped scores of Allies on the run and downed pilots escape France. Although the Gestapo never suspected Lucy, they had suspected Raymond and one night he was one of eight captured in a Gestapo raid at a meeting house. Although tortured for a week, he refused to disclose anything and was sentenced to be executed. Lucy learned of her husband's predicament. Although she was several months pregnant, she had concocted a unique scheme to gain his freedom. Armed with forged papers that established her as a staunch collaborator, she boldly marched into Gestapo Headquarters in Lyon. She put on a rousing performance – claiming to be an unwed mother-to-be, she demanded to see the German Captain in charge, then screamed at him that her honour was at stake and demanded he do something about it. She loudly declared that the lousy, no-good “terrorist” known as Raymond, who was being held in prison, had been her lover, but she had known nothing of his underground activities. Pointing to her pregnant condition, she vowed he was the father of her unborn child and, unless he married her, the offspring would go through life as a “bastard” and she a scarlet woman. The German pondered the story for a couple of minutes, decided that good propaganda could result in showing the Nazi police to be kind and humane, he agreed for them to be married in Raymond's cell. No, no cried Lucy hysterically – that would bring her shame – he must be brought to her at the HQ. (Secretly, the two had countless discussions concerning “what if” one had been captured, the other would give no indication they were husband and wife.) So, when the bearded, haggard prisoner entered the room, she embraced him and whispered “the truck carrying you back to jail will be attacked by friends.” The ceremony was carried out presumably making the unborn child legitimate and salvaging Lucy's honour. Raymond was hustled out immediately following the service, when darkness was descending. To make a long story short, the Germans failed to notice that four cars were following. Suddenly, one car whipped around the truck, putting a bullet through the driver's head. The truck careened wildly and crashed into a pole – the liberators freed the prisoners and they all fled into the night. Three weeks later, the Aubrec's were in England – just in time for Lucy to give birth to baby Catherine!



## The Great War and the First Christmas

**A**s you know, in needing to write about stories I have either been told or have read about, one should try to cover all the topics. We likely think very little about the Christmas period and our troops overseas, until the Festive Season is upon us. Back in 1914, when the war was young, one can only imagine what was going on in the minds of all the young men as they hovered in their trenches, chased the Huns and fired the big guns during that period leading up to the Blessed event. In reality, many insertions were written in personal diaries out on the plains and, in hindsight, many have speculated that the majority of those involved really didn't want to be where they were at all. Here then are some snippets written from soldier's diaries concerning, in particular, minor truces that had been struck that can be traced as far back as early November, 1914 and leading up to the era of Christmas, one month later. Of course, that's when opposing armies had begun static trench warfare. At that time, both sides brought their rations up to the front lines after dusk and both sides of the warring factions noted periods of peace and the food was distributed. Although relationships between the Français and the Deutsch were generally more tense, it was reported that a German Unit recorded a regular ½ hr truce each evening to recover dead soldiers for burial, during which, believe it or not, the Germans and French exchanged newspapers. Other truces could be enforced on both sides by weather conditions, especially when trench lines flooded in low-lying areas, although these often lasted well after the weather had cleared. One unusual phenomenon that grew in intensity was music. In the more peaceful locations, it was not uncommon for the various units to sing in the evenings, even if it was a deliberate attempt to 'entertain' or 'lull the enemy!' A Scot's Guard wrote he was "planning to organize a concert for Christmas Day which would 'give the enemy every conceivable form of song in harmony', in response to frequent choruses of Deutschland Über Alles."

There were various peace initiatives leading up to Christmas 1914 period. Many Open letters for PEACE were published; Even Pope Benedict XV begged for an official truce between warring factions. He asked "that the guns may fall silent, at least upon the night the Angels sang." What was recorded over and over, was the fact that with approx 100,000 German and British troops involved, there was indeed an unofficial cessation of hostilities along the Western Front. The 1<sup>st</sup> truce occurred Christmas Eve 1914 when the German troops decorated the area around their trenches in the Ypres Region located in Belgium. A British Officer reported the truce from his vantage position.

The Germans placed candles on their trenches and trees and continued the celebration by singing carols. The Brits responded with carols of their own. The two sides continued shouting Christmas greetings to each other. This was followed by excursions across No Man's Land, where items like food, tobacco and alcohol, souvenirs such as buttons and hats were exchanged. The guns fell silent. Recently killed and wounded soldiers were brought back to Unit lines by burial parties and medics. The unofficial truce lasted through Christmas night, some continuing until New Years, in other sectors.

A 19 year old Private in the London Rifles Brigade wrote his Mother on Boxing Day. "Dear Mother. I am writing from the trenches (among other things of disinterest he tells her he is smoking his pipe with German tobacco). Yes, from a live German soldier from across the

trenches. Yesterday the Brits and Germans met and shook hands in the ground between trenches. And really did shake hands! Yes, all day Christmas and as I write! Marvellous, isn't it?" The Daily Mail, Shrewsbury News and the Wellington Journal all published an edited letter from the King's Shropshire Light Infantry and it read as follows:

We are having the most extraordinary Christmas Day imaginable. A sort of unarranged truce exists between us and friends at the front. The funny thing is it only seems to exist in this part of the battle line – On our left and to our right, we can hear them firing away as loud as ever. The lull started last night – a bitter cold night, with white frost – soon after dusk when the Germans started shouting Merry Christmas Englishmen, to us. Of course, our fellows shouted back and presently large numbers of both sides have left their trenches, unarmed and met in debatable, shot riddled No Man's Land between the lines. Here the agreement – all on their own – came to be made that we should not fire at each other until after midnight tonight. The men were all fraternizing in the middle (naturally we did not allow them too close to our line) and swapped cigarettes, stories and lies in the utmost good fellowship. Not a shot was fired all night. "Of the German's" he wrote, "they are distinctly bored of the war." In fact one of them wanted to know what on earth we, the Englishmen, were doing here fighting them? They were supposed to be fighting the Frenchmen? The truce in that Sector continued until Boxing Day. The writer further commented "The beggars simply disregard all of our warnings to get down from off their parapet, so things are at a deadlock. We can't shoot them in cold blood. I cannot see how we can get them to return to business."

There's even recorded accounts from the Germans themselves "when the Xmas bells sounded in the villages of the Vosges behind the lines, something fantastically unmilitary occurred. German and French troops suddenly made peace and ceased hostilities; they visited each other through disused trench tunnels and exchanged wine, cognac and cigarettes for Westphalia black bread, biscuits and ham. This suited them so well, that they remained good friends even after Christmas was over." The writer was separated from the French troops by a narrow No Man's Land – Military discipline was soon restored. There were football matches; 29 were identified, though substantive details could not be located. If there was a Legacy or Historical Significance from all of this, it might be that the truces arranged in December 1914 can be seen as the most dramatic example of non-cooperation with the war spirit that, even for a minute, hour or ½ the day, included refusal to fight, unofficial truces, mutinies, strikes and peace protests.

In 2008, a Playhouse Theatre performed the musical drama "All is Calm." The authors explained their purpose was both to help kids learn about the remarkable events of Dec 1914 and to use the Christmas theme to provide a counterpoint to the Government's glorification of the WWI as heroic. What we heard was that the spontaneous acts of festive goodwill directly contradicted orders from High Command and offered an evocative and hopeful, albeit brief, recognition of shared humanity. What we have left then, would give a new meaning to the traditional message of 'Peace on Earth, Good Will toward Men!'



# Stories of Interest

## John Goheen Honoured By Dominion Command

In 2012, John was nominated and presented with the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal by Gord Moore, President, Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command in a surprise ceremony later in July 2012 while visiting his wife’s family in Brantford, ON. The award was a surprise to Goheen, who had just returned from France the day prior after doing some research for his 2013 tour.



Did you know that our very own Pilgrimage guide, John Goheen, an associate member of Coquitlam BC, was honoured several years ago by the Dominion Command Poppy and Remembrance Committee for his work as tour guide on these Pilgrimages? The 1<sup>st</sup> VP – Pat Varga, gave John his Meritorious Service Medal at the Legion House in Kanata. John was a Pilgrim in 1995, later to become the official Legion tour guide for all the pilgrimages ever since.

For more than a decade, Goheen has been running tours of European war sites for the RCL. It wasn’t the first medal for the Principal’s work to keep alive the memory of the many men and women who gave their lives in the wars and the military missions around the world. Just recently, the Minister of Veteran’s Affairs presented John with a Veteran’s Affairs Commendation, stating the innovations he has introduced have resulted in tours that offer both historical depth and substance while ensuring personal and emotional connections for participants. John always researches specific cemeteries on the tour that have a direct link to some aspect of the historical itinerary. You certainly do us all proud, John. We appreciate what you have achieved and look forward to your updated innovations for future Pilgrimages. BRAVO ZULU! I leave it to a professional freelance writer, Ms. Amanda Sage, to tell the full story of John using superlatives which he richly deserves.



## John Goheen, Principal-Pilgrimage of Remembrance Guide

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“It wasn’t about the ‘wow factor’ of war, thinking it was somehow exciting or thrilling; it was always born out of remembrance.” Many mornings in Port Coquitlam, BC, before the workday begins, John Goheen gets up. While his wife and daughters sleep, he brews a pot of coffee and quietly slips into his home office. There, he joins his 1,500+ history books, all on WWI and WWII and sets about his passion – deepening his knowledge of Canadian military history and preparing to make that knowledge as personal as possible for the people he guides for the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command Pilgrimage of Remembrance.

John's interest in remembrance reaches back to the early 1970s, when he was only a boy growing up in Vancouver, BC.

"Lots of people in our family were in WWI and WWII," says John. "My grandfather on my mother's side fought in WWI; dad's father, my grandfather, fought in WWII, lots of great uncles and other relations were involved in both wars. But very little was ever said about it when I was a kid, which was not unusual back then. What changed things for me was when I was about seven years old, my dad took me down to the cenotaph for Remembrance Day. I remember being quite moved, especially looking at what I thought were very old men from the WWI; they would have been in their late 70s, but to a little kid, they seemed so much larger than life. I was really struck by them." John calls that a defining moment in his life. It ignited his thirst for learning about military history, within the context of remembrance," he says. "Lots of people are interested in the wars these days and always have been. But for me, as a kid, it wasn't about the 'wow factor' of war, thinking it was somehow exciting or thrilling; it was always born out of remembrance."

That November 11<sup>th</sup> had an immediate impact on John's life. In his youth, he struggled with reading. His parents and two elder brothers were all avid readers, but John says he had what would today be diagnosed as a learning disability. Still, his desire to learn about the war was unquenchable. So he became a fixture at the local library. "I would take books off the shelf that I could barely carry, let alone read," he says. "I would sit there and pour over pages, pick out pictures and images." His love of books went so deep that he started saving his allowance to buy them – the inaugural entries to his now-mighty collection. "The first one I bought was a biography of Billy Bishop, a WWI fighter pilot," he says. By his early teens, John was as avid a reader as anyone in his family, if not more so. He immersed himself in history books, boning up on "specific accounts of key battles in both wars, primarily Canadian, just trying to get a knowledge base," he says. "It was for no purpose at that time; I was just keen to keep reading and learning."

## **History Lessons**

When John graduated from Centennial Secondary School in 1984, he enrolled at Simon Fraser University, completing a Bachelor of Education, with a history major, in 1990. He says he flirted with the idea of joining the military, something he looks back on as a bit of a "coulda, woulda, shoulda thing." He knew it wasn't his calling. "At the end of the day, I don't take orders very well." He also knew there was something else that needed his attention.

"Teaching came quite naturally to me," says John. "I got into teaching because I knew there had to be a way of reaching kids differently than how I was taught... Whatever approaches I took to engage my students had a lot to do with the lack of engagement I felt at school. I was a kid with learning disabilities; I struggled. I felt like no one really knew me. I think teachers thought: 'There's John, nice kid, not very great at academic side of things.' I remember in high school history class, sitting there bored out of my mind. I was a very quiet kid, but the teacher asked a question and I got kind of fed up because no one knew the answer, so I just told him the answer. And he looked at me incredulously and said, 'How do you know that?' He'd never asked me before.

“Going into teaching, I just thought: ‘If you’re going to spend all that time at school, you want to walk out of there feeling like you’re worth something, that you’re learning something, that you have some control or choice over how you’re learning.’” John isn’t talking about some “free-for-all.” He was, though, and is determined to learn from his own history so he can help youth benefit from a more balanced educational experience – an environment where teachers engineer learning opportunities for different students based on their specific needs. “My experiences as a student really motivated me when I was a young teacher to try to engage kids differently,” says John. “To find out where those sparks are, what they know, what they want to learn and how can you help them. My dad told me once, and it’s very true, that there are some teachers who are very interested in having you know how much *they* know and other teachers who are more interested in finding out what *you* know. There’s a bit of humility that comes with that.”

Humility – and not just a bit of it – carries through all that John does. At work, when he shares his devotion to remembrance and his great knowledge of Canadian military history, he’s careful not to impose his interests. Instead, he organically works them into the schools’ existing Remembrance Day programs, letting students come to him to ask questions when they’re ready. At all the schools John has worked at, he’s left a legacy of remembrance, of honouring our veterans who risked everything to preserve and improve our way of life. He did so as a teacher at Harbour View Elementary School and Kwayhquitlum Middle School, then as vice-principal at Pitt River Community Middle School and, finally, as principal, first at Alderson Elementary School and now at Rochester Elementary School. John also earned a Masters of Education degree from Simon Fraser University, which he completed in 2003. Beyond instilling an appreciation for remembrance, John has done a lot to foster school cultures that provide “a happy, productive place for kids and adults to work.” He deliberately didn’t become a history teacher (“I loved the topic too much to turn it into a job,”) but he always brought an equal passion to every subject he taught – writing, art, electronics, cooking, math – and looked for creative ways to pique students’ interest. For instance, he never used a textbook to teach math. “I found it limiting to use only one thing,” he says. “I tried to bring in all kinds of approaches to help kids with math, to contextualize it and really try to get kids engaged and understanding.”

## **A Context of Remembrance**

John’s involved and experiential approach to formal education spills over to his volunteer work guiding the Royal Canadian Legion’s Pilgrimage of Remembrance. “To me, the most important thing is something I call informed memory,” he says. “It’s the idea that, by experiencing places firsthand and learning about them when you’re there, you can develop a bit of a connection. Anything that I put on the tour, any site we see, I look at as gateways to the past. You never know which gateway is going to connect for which person, so you try to provide a real variety of gateways and opportunities for people. It’s different for everyone, but a place or something that’s said within the place, all of a sudden something will hit them and the comment I always get is, ‘I thought I knew a lot about this stuff but it’s never hit home like it did when I was there at that moment.’ “That’s why context is so important. I don’t try to fill heads with facts; people can do that themselves. I try to provide memories and context. It’s really about making that personal connection to the historical

events. So I look for personal openings and try to tell specific stories. There's an old house in Normandy that most tours would pass by, but it's an old house with marks on the side of the wall. Well, those marks were made by a tank that went rearing around the corner, went up on one side and clipped the corner. Why was the tank there? That provides an opening to a whole story of the engagement the Canadians were involved in during the early days of Normandy. When you can touch that track, you're never going to forget that story and you don't forget the context of that battle."

### **Giving Voice to those Scarce Heard**

John's outstanding efforts have made a mark as lasting as the ones etched into that old house in Normandy. When I asked John to help me gather a few testimonials from people who had taken his tours, there was an outpouring of lengthy messages, detailing many wonderful experiences with John as a guide. Here are a few snippets:

"It was an honour and a privilege to be part of the 2013 Royal Canadian Legion Pilgrimage of Remembrance and the experience would not have had the same impact on me if it were not for John Goheen. To put it simply, what is often a two-dimensional experience becomes 3-D in technicolour with John. His love of history, his fervent research and his diligence in locating obscure locations where our Canadians had a story to be told, brought events of WWI and WWII to life. Imagine standing in the middle of a cornfield, where a couple of dozen Canadian soldiers were cut down by the Nazis in the days following D-Day, as only two men managed to escape the slaughter and make it to a copse of maples some hundreds of yards away – trees still visible to this day. Imagine weeping as you realize you are standing where Canadian blood was shed in service to King and country. This is one example of many; John took us on a 15-day journey through two wars and countless stories of heroism, tragedy and national pride." – Belinda Wilson, Zone Commander, Zone F-4, ON Command; Lindsay, ON.

"Under the tutelage of John Goheen, Tour Guide Extraordinaire, I not only saw the horrors of war during the ensuing and exhausting two-week period, but learned also of the valours of war and saw firsthand where the dark consequences of hatred and strife took place... The other participants and I all headed home with a deeper appreciation of the sacrifices that others made for our freedom and for the unquestionably precious nature of life, which millions of people currently enjoy." – Sam Newman, 145 Vimy Branch, RCL; London, ON.

"John doesn't only have the knowledge, he has the heart that brings stories of the wars to life, that wraps the participants in the stories and the terrible human cost of the tragedy of war. Statistics are cold and impersonal things, but every 'one' in a statistic is a person and John tells the stories in terms of the individuals who fought." – Brenda Fredrickson, Board Member, Wounded Warriors Weekend Foundation; Regina, SK.

While John was busy launching his career in the education system, it's clear he pursued his interest in remembrance with equal commitment. He became an associate member of the Royal Canadian Legion in 1991 and participated in his first Pilgrimage tour in 1995 as the BC Command Representative.

John calls his first tour “a whirlwind – twelve straight days of touring, seeing hundreds of different things; it was all just a jumble. I had a good sense of the history, but I imagine someone who was new to this would be completely overwhelmed. Even I found it overwhelming.” That first tour covered a lot of ground. Starting in France, they took a ferry into Dieppe and toured through Normandy. Then they made their way into Somme and around Arras and Vimy, before heading north to Ypres, Belgium and into the Netherlands.

Astounded and whirl-winded though John may have been, his expansive knowledge still impressed the Legion president, who came along for the 1995 tour. By the end of 1996, John moved past the ranks of BC representative and was invited to become the official tour guide for the next Pilgrimage in 1997. Since then, he has had an unforgettable impact on hundreds of Pilgrimage participants. In the months leading up to every tour he leads, John spends countless hours, even days and weeks, reviewing his history books and compiling notes and documents, all to make each participant’s experience as informed and personalized as possible. He reads up on their deceased relatives and locates where their headstones lie; learns which battles they fought and in which fields they took place.

The Pilgrims aren’t the only ones taking note of John’s efforts. In 2008, he was awarded the Legion’s highest honour, the Meritorious Service Medal. In 2012, he received a commendation from the Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada, an honour generally reserved for veterans, and also the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for his “significant contributions to Canada.” “That was rather nice,” says John, ever humble. “You don’t do these things for awards, but it was very nice that somebody thought to put my name in.”

Recognition truly isn’t a factor. Just as he did since before receiving the medals, John continues his early morning routine of reading up on history before preparing for his present day activities. Those include running Rochester Elementary, spending time with Leslie, his wife of 12 years and their daughters Megan (10) and Ava (6,) as well as his daughters from a previous marriage Jennifer (20) and Leanne (16.) John likes to play a little hockey and tennis and never forgets to honour those who made it possible for him to enjoy the life he has. Keeping that in the top-of-his-mind, John is working with the Port Moody Station Museum to develop their upcoming McKnight Centennial Trench, a three-year exhibit scheduled to open July 1, 2015. He has now been commissioned to design and write all historical features for this year’s edition of the Royal Canadian Legion/BC-YT Command’s annual *Military Service Recognition Book*.

In July 2015, John will lead another Pilgrimage, taking people from across Canada to tour Europe: France, Belgium and Holland. He’s determined that the sacrifice our veterans made will not be lost on future generations. “I think Canadians of today have a hard time appreciating what the generations before them did in WW’s I and II,” says John. “There’s a huge debt. It’s a debt I don’t think we can ever repay, but I think by remembering, we’re at least showing that what they did mattered. To me, it’s really a way of giving back. Living a good life and being mindful of what’s been done for you is a way of saying thank you.” “Every day we get up and enjoy peace and freedom. I think you have to stop and say: ‘What did I do to deserve this?’ Maybe nothing; but other people did for you.” Lest we forget

To connect with John, email [jgoheen@telus.net](mailto:jgoheen@telus.net). For more about his work with

remembrance, read the articles he wrote for *The Tri-Cities Now*. You can visit [legion.ca](http://legion.ca) for information on how to join the Pilgrimage or become a member of the Royal Canadian Legion. Thank you to Port Coquitlam's Dan Gibson for recommending John as a Kickass Canadian.



## **My Grandfather's Watch**, Written by Alec Dreichel

**O**n this Pilgrimage (2013,) I brought with me my great-grandfather's pocket watch. He served during WWI and I thought it would be a neat memento to bring with me. Before I tell you my tale, I need to tell you his. My great-grandfather was Alex Wilson and was a part of the 49<sup>th</sup> Loyal Edmonton Regiment serving as a stretcher bearer. During the Battle of Passchendaele he emerged from the trench to rescue one of his fellow comrades. Upon doing this, he was struck in his neck and the bullet exited through his shoulder missing all of his vital organs. As this happened, located in his tunic pocket was the pocket watch he brought overseas with him. Alex made it back to the hospital and while there he fell in love with one of the nurses. Her name was Leah Jones and they were in love instantly. Alex returned home with his watch and Leah as his bride. He lived his life as a simple farmer and a carpenter. Through his life his pocket watch was never too far away from him. After he passed away, my grandfather Dave Wilson received the watch. He displayed the watch for everyone to see but he could never get it to work. He tried multiple times but it wouldn't tick a second and the arms wouldn't move. As a child I remember playing with the watch trying to get it to work but no matter what I did it wouldn't budge. It seemed it was forever frozen between 1104 and 1105. When I brought this watch with me overseas, I never let it too far from my side. I constantly was checking it making sure it survived the flight and nothing was wrong with it. Every time I did, it remained frozen in its original position. Our tour group was at the Passchendaele Cemetery and I was looking upon all the graves of members of the 49<sup>th</sup> Loyal Eddies. When I looked upon their graves I wondered how many of them my great grandfather would have carried away on a stretcher. I had a feeling then to check the watch. I looked upon it and noticed the minute hand had moved. I figured it was broken and disappointedly put it back in my pocket. I couldn't believe I brought the watch all this way just to have it break. I continued to walk around the cemetery reading the names of all the brave men who fell fighting for their country. I decided to take another gander at the watch before I left the cemetery. As I looked at it again, the minute hand was in another position. It didn't seem right as I believed the watch to be busted. I then heard a weird sound coming from it. It was a steady ticking sound. I knew it couldn't be the watch making that sound as it hadn't ticked for over 50 years. I then looked upon the second hand and with each tick it moved right along. I knew then that the watch had come back to life and was working again. I pulled the pin to see if the arms would move and to my surprise they did. The watch was working like it did when it was brand new. I couldn't believe it. I threw my other watch in my bag and kept my great-grandpa's watch with me for the remainder of the trip and it never missed a minute. To be there when my great-grandfather's watch starting working again was an unbelievable experience. Logic and reason can't explain it working but my heart knows why it did. It meant even more to me as I am named after my great-grandfather and I work

on an ambulance where stretcher handling is an everyday task. I felt that my connection with my great grandfather grew even more that day standing in the Passchendaele Cemetery with his pocket watch working again. I knew then and there that I was exactly where needed to be. On this trip, I wondered if my great grandfather was somewhere looking down on me during my journey. After hearing that watch start and see it working, I knew he was right there beside me every step of the way.



## **The Blue Max and the Little Boy**

Since the early years of the last century, when the bewildering sight of flying machines began to fill the sky, the dreams of young boys and girls were lit by a new fire, one painted in lofty colours of blue and warmed by the unearthly possibility of dancing among the clouds, with hearts pounding as the sun sent shadows spinning through their imaginations. The boys grew into the men and the girls into the women that became the pilots who filled the years of aviation history; the brave ones, the enduring ones, the wild ones, the famous ones and the nameless ones. Universally, they walked with swagger and spoke with bravado but, underneath that outer coating of dauntless weathered braggadocio, beat the staccato hearts of wing-struck young boys and girls whose precious dreams were unfolding around them. As it was then, it remains now. Children still wonder what it is to look down upon the patchwork of the land and rush headlong through canyons of brilliant white. For so many, flight is the stuff of their dreams and those that embrace it will someday take to the sky.

On the first day of October 1992, as autumn flared around him like a fanned ember, Adam Kirkpatrick, age 13, sat at the desk in his room and wrote a simple story. Every night that school year, he attempted to pen a simple and short story – an exercise to gain a hard-earned skill in writing. Writing did not come easy for Adam but he worked diligently and when he wrote from his young heart, his words broke from his hand onto the page and, what at first was difficult work became a gentle and clear minded statement. That cool October evening so long ago, he wrote, “When we are on the ground staring into the sky, we wish that we could fly without a plane. Thinking, wishing, dreaming of flying in the sky, flying so high about the clouds that when I look down at the world it looks like toy cars, like little dolls, like Lego buildings. But you need a plane, a glider or a hand glider. When you have a hand glider you are as close as you can be to not having a plane so I want to try it someday. I really want to fly a hand glider.” The end! He dated the sheet of three-ring-binder paper 01, 10, 92 and placed it aside. He planned to show it to his mom the next day.

The next day was Friday and the end of the school week brought out the exuberance of life fuelled by the crispness of the autumn air, fragrant with wood smoke, turned earth and sun-dried leaves. As twilight fell, a boisterous game of Hide and Seek set Adam’s neighbourhood in a happy din of shouts. Breathless children laughed and shrieked, calling to one another in the low light of a dying sun. Adam, with his heart lit with joy, laughter and friendship, made a dash for the safety of “Home Free,” cutting across the busy street just below a rise in the road. He was struck down by a car. He took into his coma the glee

and perfection of that last moment. His story sat unnoticed at home on his desk.

For many days, Adam lay in a coma, his brave fight for life hidden deep inside, beneath gentle lashes. His mother, Anne, found his last story and shared it with me while they held a vigil in the hospital. From a cabinet at home, I took a replica WWI German medal which my brother had given me. It was the famous "Blue Max" – the medal bestowed upon German pilots in the "Great War," usually the result of continuous bravery and accomplishment in combat. Many of Germany's highest performing aces were awarded the medal and all wore it with tremendous pride. The inscription it bore said simply "Pour le Mérite" – For Merit. It felt right as I handed it to his aunt (my wife) who in turn gave it to Adam's mother. The medal stayed with him for the next two weeks as he lay slender and motionless in his intensive care hospital bed. For all at the hospital, it stood for the silent fight that Adam was caught in. It stood for the bravery of a little boy's soul, the courage of his mother and her sister. It gave us focus. It wasn't everything. It wasn't even much – but it was something.



### **After Flight 77 Hit the Pentagon on 9/11, the Following Happened**

**A** Chaplain, who happened to be assigned to the Pentagon, told of an incident that happened right after Flight 77 hit the Pentagon on 9/11. A daycare facility inside the Pentagon had many children, including infants who were in heavy cribs. The daycare supervisor, looking at all the children they needed to evacuate, was in a panic over what they could do. There were mostly toddlers, along with the infants in the cribs. There was no time to try to bundle them into carriers and strollers. Just then, a young Marine came running into the center and asked what they needed. After hearing what the center director was trying to do, he ran back out into the hallway and disappeared. The director thought, "Well, here we are, on our own." About two minutes later, that Marine returned with 40 other Marines in tow. Each of them grabbed a crib with a child and the rest started gathering up toddlers. The director and her staff then helped them take all the children out of the center and down toward the park nears the Potomac River. Once they got about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile outside the building, the Marines stopped in the park and then did a fabulous thing – they formed a circle with the cribs, which were quite sturdy and heavy, like the covered wagons in the Old West. Inside this circle of cribs, they put the toddlers, to keep them from wandering off. Outside this circle were the 40 Marines, forming a perimeter around the children and waiting for instructions. There they remained until the parents could be notified and come get their children.

The chaplain then said, "I don't think any of us saw nor heard of this on any of the news stories of the day. It was an incredible story of our men there." There wasn't a dry eye in the room. The thought of those Marines and what they did and how fast they reacted; could we expect any less from them? It was one of the most touching stories from the Pentagon. It's the Military not the politicians that ensure our right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It's the Military who salutes the flag, who serves beneath the flag and whose coffin is draped by the flag. If you care to offer the smallest token of recognition and

appreciation for the military, please pray for our men and women who have served and are still serving our country, including those who have given the ultimate sacrifice for freedom.



## The Sandpiper

She was six years old when I first met her on the beach near where I live. I drive to this beach, a distance of three or four miles, whenever the world begins to close in on me. She was building a sand castle or something and looked up, her eyes as blue as the sea.

'Hello,' she said. I answered with a nod, not really in the mood to bother with a small child. 'I'm building,' she said. 'I see that. What is it?' I asked, not really caring. 'Oh, I don't know, I just like the feel of sand.' That sounds good, I thought, and slipped off my shoes. A sandpiper glided by. 'That's a joy,' the child said. 'It's a what?' 'It's a joy. My mama says Sandpipers come to bring us joy.' The bird went gliding down the beach. Good-bye joy, I muttered to myself, hello pain and turned to walk on. I was depressed; my life seemed completely out of balance. 'What's your name?' She wouldn't give up. 'Robert,' I answered. 'I'm Robert Peterson.' 'Mine's Wendy... I'm six.' 'Hi, Wendy.' She giggled. 'You're funny,' she said. In spite of my gloom, I laughed too and walked on. Her musical giggle followed me. 'Come again, Mr. P,' she called. 'We'll have another happy day.'

The next few days consisted of a group of unruly Boy Scouts, PTA meetings and an ailing mother. The sun was shining one morning as I took my hands out of the dishwasher. I need a sandpiper, I said to myself, gathering up my coat. The ever-changing balm of the seashore awaited me. The breeze was chilly but I strode along, trying to recapture the serenity I needed.

'Hello, Mr. P,' she said. 'Do you want to play?' 'What did you have in mind?' I asked, with a twinge of annoyance. 'I don't know. You say.' 'How about playing charades?' I asked sarcastically. The tinkling laughter burst forth again. 'I don't know what that is.' 'Then let's just walk.'

Looking at her, I noticed the delicate fairness of her face. 'Where do you live?' I asked.

'Over there.' She pointed toward a row of summer cottages. Strange, I thought, in winter.

'Where do you go to school?' 'I don't go to school. Mommy says we're on vacation.' She chattered little girl talk as we strolled up the beach, but my mind was on other things. When I left for home, Wendy said it had been a happy day. Feeling surprisingly better, I smiled at her and agreed. Three weeks later, I rushed to my beach in a state of near panic. I was in no mood to even greet Wendy. I thought I saw her mother on the porch and felt like demanding she keep her child at home. 'Look, if you don't mind,' I said crossly when Wendy caught up with me, 'I'd rather be alone today.' She seemed unusually pale and out of breath. 'Why?' she asked. I turned to her and shouted, 'Because my mother died!' and thought, My God, why was I saying this to a little child?

'Oh,' she said quietly, 'then this is a bad day.' 'Yes,' I said, 'and yesterday and the day before

and – oh, go away!' 'Did it hurt?' she inquired. 'Did what hurt?' I was exasperated with her, with myself. 'When she died?' 'Of course it hurt!' I snapped, misunderstanding, wrapped up in myself. I strode off. A month or so after that, when I next went to the beach, she wasn't there. Feeling guilty, ashamed and admitting to myself I missed her, I went up to the cottage after my walk and knocked at the door. A drawn looking young woman with honey-coloured hair opened the door.

'Hello,' I said, 'I'm Robert Peterson. I missed your little girl today and wondered where she was.' 'Oh yes, Mr. Peterson, please come in. Wendy spoke of you so much. I'm afraid I allowed her to bother you. If she was a nuisance, please, accept my apologies.' 'Not at all - she's a delightful child.' I said, suddenly realizing that I meant what I had just said. 'Wendy died last week, Mr. Peterson. She had leukemia. Maybe she didn't tell you.' Struck dumb, I groped for a chair. I had to catch my breath. 'She loved this beach, so when she asked to come, we couldn't say no. She seemed so much better here and had a lot of what she called happy days. But the last few weeks, she declined rapidly...' Her voice faltered, 'She left something for you, if only I can find it. Could you wait a moment while I look?' I nodded stupidly, my mind racing for something to say to this lovely young woman. She handed me a smeared envelope with 'MR. P' printed in bold childish letters. Inside was a drawing in bright crayon hues -- a yellow beach, a blue sea and a brown bird. Underneath was carefully printed: A SANDPIPER TO BRING YOU JOY.

Tears welled up in my eyes and a heart that had almost forgotten to love opened wide. I took Wendy's mother in my arms. 'I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry,' I uttered over and over and we wept together. The precious little picture is framed now and hangs in my study. Six words – one for each year of her life – that speak to me of harmony, courage and undemanding love. It was a gift from a child with sea blue eyes and hair the colour of sand who taught me the meaning of love. The story is a legend, which serves as a reminder to all of us that we need to take time to enjoy living and life and each other. The price of hating other human beings is loving oneself less. Life is so complicated; the hustle and bustle of everyday traumas can make us lose focus about what is truly important or what is only a momentary setback or crisis... I wish for you, a Sandpiper.

🌹 *"I think of a hero as someone who understands the degree of responsibility that comes with his freedom." (Bob Dylan)*



## Bayeux Tapestry

**T**he medieval town of Bayeux is just 27 kms west-northwest of Caen, France. It is home to the world's famous Bayeux Tapestry, which is actually embroidered in wool on a background of linen 230' long and 20" high (70m x 50cm.) It is a 900-year-old masterpiece depicting the events leading up to the Norman Military Invasion of England. It is totally awesome. It breaks off with a striking evocation of the Battle of Hastings which eventually led to the crowning of the victorious William as King of England in 1066. This remarkable piece of work was said to have been commissioned by the Bishop of Bayeux,

William's half- brother Odo, from an Anglo-Saxon Workshop, for display in his Cathedral. The tapestry bears a unique witness to life in the world of the XI<sup>th</sup> Century.

Creating a historic tapestry of a size and scope similar to that of the Bayeux Tapestry did not seem like such an audacious idea to a Newfie by the name of Joan Simmonds – until she saw the original in France. Simmonds' visit here to France, around 2004, came after she and a few other women from Conche, a tiny community near the tip of Newfoundland's Northern Peninsula, hatched a plan to create a tapestry depicting the history of the Province's French Shore. Interestingly enough, the French Shore refers to areas where French fishermen were allowed to catch and dry fish – but not to settle – after the British took control of Newfoundland in 1713. And, wouldn't you know, the French presence in Conche is now long gone - most people in that isolated community are of Irish descent.

French born artist, Jean Claude Roy and wife Christina spent an artist's retreat in Conche in 2004. While he was here painting, his wife was working on an embroidery kit of the Bayeux Tapestry. They got to chatting with each other and one thing lead to another and before you knew it, one of the ladies said "Wouldn't it be great to do something like that for Newfoundland?" It was a collaboration of J.C. Roy and the ladies from Conche. He provided the drawings of historical events, which are photographed and then projected onto stretched linen and traced in pencil. As of 2008, they are half way done. The work will be about 61m long and the same 50cm high. The first panels show animal life and early aboriginal culture – later events such as the arrival of the Vikings and then the coming of the Basque fishermen in the early 1500s. It's made on linen from Scotland and they found a sturdy woolen yarn from England, which doesn't break when pulled through the linen. When completed, probably by 2010, the tapestry will be put on display at the French Shore Interpretation Centre in Conche. The women also hope to send it on tour across Canada and hopefully even to Europe.



## **The French Shore Tapestry Update (2013)**

**I**nspired by the 11<sup>th</sup> Century Bayeux Tapestry in France, the Newfoundland memorable linen and wool mural tells the history of the region's French Shore, from the pre-historic animals that roamed the forests and shoreline to the moment in 2006 when a few talented women in the tiny out port of Conche began their embroidering odyssey. As you would walk past this 66 meter (216 ft.) tapestry, you can view a parable of historic and colourful characters that bring alive the events and legends that make the French Shore history unique. As was the Bayeux Tapestry when I first viewed it in 2005, the picture one views cannot do justice to such a monumental work of art and viewers are encouraged to see it in person, of course, at the French Shore Centre in Conche where the tapestry is on display a good part of the year.

I could go on with the description of the tapestry which would pull together the historical research and local stories, the coloured drawings and the written instructions to those who ultimately oversee the recruitment of the embroiderers. That would also include

transferring the design to the linen, because describing this all sounds simple and straight-forward. However, in reality, it was a far more complex process, taking up over two years of work and 20,000 hours of the artists and the artisans' time. It is truly a fascinating story about a unique place known as Newfoundland's French Shore. You just have to see it, to appreciate what went into its creation. The Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism Board are on the web as well as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.com.

 *"It's not enough we do our best; sometimes we have to do what's required."  
(Sir Winston Churchill)*



## **Over 100 Years of Flight in Canada**

*85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Air Force*

*60<sup>th</sup> year of the Air Force Association of Canada*

**D**id you know that Aviation in Canada, as we know it, began from the moment that J.A.D. McCurdy made that first power flight, flying the Silver Dart at Baddeck, NS on 23 February, 1909? In 1914, when WWI began, Canada had neither pilots nor aircraft in its military, but surprisingly almost 23,000 Canadians bravely flew with British Squadrons to fight for freedom. Four years later, when the war was over, 1,500 had lost their lives in that fight. The RCAF became a permanent component of Canada's Military in 1924. In the next years, it recruited and trained aviators and even developed a range of its own aircraft equipment. When WWII broke out, the RCAF was small with 4,060 personnel and 270 aircraft. The big challenge came when Britain was confronted with the German invasion in the summer of 1940, but Canada was among the allies that came to its rescue, defeating scores of enemy aircraft and helping to achieve victory. Undoubtedly, the ability to protect and defend from above was a pivotal part of the Allied victory. By the end of WWII, the RCAF had become the third largest Air Force in the world, with 249,662 air and ground crew. Approximately 18,000 made the ultimate sacrifice.

During the Cold War years, the RCAF which was aiding in the defence against the Soviet Union, developed a strong and reliable relationship with U.S. air defences. We joined NORAD in 1958 and ten years later we amalgamated our three single elements to form the Canadian Forces. But, just as we thought the Cold War was ending in 1990, the Gulf War started and for the first time since WWII, bombing offensive action was taken and the Canadian Air Force flew nearly 2,700 missions with CF18 in the name of Kuwaiti freedom. Nine years later they were at it again in Kosovo!

Since 11 September, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attack, more of our fighter forces have been deployed across Canada. When we are affected by military conflicts abroad, we are part of multi-lateral operations with UN and NATO. Most recently we have served in trouble spots such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Haiti. Canada's Air Force today has a crucial role to play in protecting Canada, Canadians and Canadian interests abroad. From being eyes in the skies and providing homeland security, to flying into foreign lands and helping to promote peace and stability, Canada's Air Force is always on the job. It can be called at any time to fly

people or cargo in support of military operations, humanitarian aid or diplomatic missions. As you can imagine, air power is the fastest way to get people and equipment to where they need to go – planet wide. Canada's Air Force embraces that responsibility.



## **Told to an Army Aviator Who Takes a Trip Down Memory Lane**

**I**t was just before Thanksgiving 1967 and we were ferrying the dead and wounded west of Pleiku, Vietnam. We had run out of body bags by noon, so the CH47 Chinook helicopter was pretty rough in the back. All of a sudden we heard a "take charge" woman's voice in the rear. There was the singer and actress Martha Raye wearing a Special Forces beret and in jungle fatigues helping the wounded in the Chinook and carrying the dead aboard. "Maggie" had been visiting her service heroes out west. We took off, short of fuel, and headed to the nearest Military Hospital pad at Pleiku. As we all started unloading our sad passengers, a smart ass USAF Capt. said to Martha - "Mrs. Raye, with all these dead and wounded to process, there would not be time for your show!" To all of our surprise, she pulled on her right collar and said "Capt. see this eagle? I am a full BIRD in the US Army Reserve and on this is a 'Caduceus' which signifies I am a nurse with a surgical specialty – now take me to your wounded." He said "Yes, Ma'am – Follow me." Several times at the Army Field Hospital in Pleiku, she would 'cover' a surgical shift, giving a nurse a well-deserved break. Martha Raye is the only woman buried in the Special Forces Cemetery at Fort Bragg. The most unforgiveable oversight of TV is that her shows were not taped.

 *"Accept the challenges so that you can feel the exhilaration of Victory. " (George S. Patton)*



## **The Double Sunrise: Qantas's Secret Perth–Ceylon Wartime Service**

**W**hen Singapore fell to Japan in February 1942, Australia lost its air connection to Britain. A new route was urgently needed. Hudson Fysh, co-founder of Qantas, wanted to establish a civilian service between Australia and Sri Lanka. The only problem was that, at this time, Japan had complete domination of the Indian Ocean, and civil aviation authorities ruled that this route was too dangerous to attempt. In 1943, at the urging of the British Government, the Royal Air Force in Britain supplied Qantas with five Catalina aircraft, if Qantas agreed to open a flying route from Perth to Ceylon (Sri Lanka.) It was to be the world's longest regular non-stop service – a total distance of 5,632km (3,520 miles.) The weight of fuel limited the Catalina's load to only three passengers and 69kg of diplomatic and armed forces mail. These flying boats travelled at 160 miles an hour.

Qantas Empire Airways began to operate the Catalina flying boats between Perth and

Koggala Lake in Ceylon (Sri Lanka.) This extraordinary, top secret, civilian service made 271 crossings of the Indian Ocean with no loss of life, continuing right through to the end of the war. In the process they delivered 860 high priority government and military passengers, large quantities of microfilmed mail and urgent war-related freight – a major contribution to the war effort.

These Catalina's were completely defenseless, carrying no weaponry and with all armor plating removed so that the planes were sufficiently light to make the long crossing of more than 6480 km. In order to remain undetected by the Japanese, they flew by night using celestial navigation and without radio, except for a very brief midnight weather bulletin in Morse code. The average length of the flights was 28 hours. Because the journey was made by night, the crew and passengers saw the sunrise twice, hence the name 'Double Sunrise' service. The Double Sunrise service still holds the record for the longest non-stop commercial air route and the record for the longest ever non-stop commercial flight – 32 hours and 9 minutes. The last Double Sunrise flight departed from Sri Lanka for Perth on 17 July 1945.



## WW II B17 Survival Story

*Navigator – Harry C. Nuessle; Bombadier – Ralph Burbridge; Engineer – Joe C. James; Radio Operator – Paul A. Galloway; Ball Turret Gunner – Elton Conda; Waist Gunner – Michael Zuk; Tail Gunner – Sam T. Sarpolus; Ground Crew Chief – Hank Hyland*

**A** mid-air collision on February 1, 1943, between a B-17 and a German fighter over the Tunis dock area, became the subject of one of the most famous photographs of WW II. An enemy fighter attacking a 97<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group formation went out of control, probably with a wounded pilot and then continued its crashing descent into the rear of the fuselage of a Fortress named "All American," piloted by Lt. Kendrick R. Bragg, of the 414th Bomb Squadron. When it struck, the fighter broke apart, but left some pieces in the B-17. The left horizontal stabilizer of the Fortress and left elevator were completely torn away. The two right engines were out and one on the left had a serious oil pump leak. The vertical fin and the rudder had been damaged, the fuselage had been cut almost completely through connected only at two small parts of the frame and the radios, electrical and oxygen systems were damaged. There was also a hole in the top that was over 16 feet long and 4 feet wide at its widest and the split in the fuselage went all the way to the top gunner's turret.

Although the tail actually bounced and swayed in the wind and twisted when the plane turned and all the control cables were severed, except one single elevator cable still worked, the aircraft still flew – miraculously! The tail gunner was trapped because there was no floor connecting the tail to the rest of the plane.



The waist and tail gunners used parts of the German fighter and their own parachute harnesses in an attempt to keep the tail from ripping off and the two sides of the fuselage from splitting apart. While the crew was trying to keep the bomber from coming apart, the pilot continued on his bomb run and released his bombs over the target. When the bomb bay doors were opened, the wind turbulence was so great that it blew one of the waist gunners into the broken tail section. It took several minutes and four crew members to pass him ropes from parachutes and haul him back into the forward part of the plane. When they tried to do the same for the tail gunner, the tail began flapping so hard that it began to break off. The weight of the gunner was adding some stability to the tail section, so he went back to his position.

The turn back toward England had to be very slow to keep the tail from twisting off. They actually covered almost 70 miles to make the turn home. The bomber was so badly damaged that it was losing altitude and speed and was soon alone in the sky. For a brief time, two more Me-109 German fighters attacked the All American. Despite the extensive damage, all of the machine gunners were able to respond to these attacks and soon drove off the fighters. The two waist gunners stood up with their heads sticking out through the hole in the top of the fuselage to aim and fire their machine guns. The tail gunner had to shoot in short bursts because the recoil was actually causing the plane to turn.

Allied P-51 fighters intercepted the All American as it crossed over the Channel and took pictures. They also radioed to the base describing that the empennage was waving like a fish tail and that the plane would not make it and to send out boats to rescue the crew when they bailed out. The fighters stayed with the Fortress taking hand signals from Lt. Bragg and relaying them to the base. Lt. Bragg signalled that 5 parachutes and the spare had been "used" so five of the crew could not bail out. He made the decision that if they could not bail out safely, then he would stay with the plane and land it. 2 ½ hours after being hit, the aircraft made its final turn to line up with the runway while it was still over 40 miles away. It descended into an emergency landing and a normal roll-out on its landing gear. When the ambulance pulled alongside, it was waved off because not a single member of the crew had been injured. No one could believe that the aircraft could still fly in such a condition. The Fortress sat placidly until the crew all exited through the door in the fuselage and the tail gunner had climbed down a ladder, at which time the entire rear section of the aircraft collapsed onto the ground. The rugged old bird had done its job.

• *"I can accept failure, but I can't accept not trying." (Michael Jordan)*



## Canadians Help Make World A Safer Place

**N**ot many people realize that a contingent of our service personnel have quietly finished serving their country at the very bottom of the South Pacific. In true Canadian fashion, they went about their business with a minimum of fuss but maximum professionalism. Ten explosives experts of the Canadian Military joined Operation Render Safe 2013 in the distant Solomon Islands alongside more than 200 combined service personnel from Australia, New Zealand, the U.S. and the Solomon Island Constabulary. We sent four clearance divers from the Royal Canadian Navy, two combat engineers from the Canadian Army, two specialists from the Royal Canadian Air Force along with a Liaison Officer and a staff officer who served as the Task Force Commander. Their job was to dispose of deadly WWII munitions that remained across the scattered archipelago and continued to impact the lives of the local people, often with deadly consequences. Did we have to be there? That's arguable. Canadians did serve in Asia between 1941 and 1945. They were mostly in Hong Kong but hardly near the major South-West Pacific area of operations. Our forces just never made it as far as the Solomons, a theatre of the war that saw bloody jungle fighting and sea battles between the Japanese and (mostly) U.S. and Australian forces. Still, it says something about Canada's commitment to making the world a better place that our servicemen and women could be found diving for live WWII weaponry in coral-fringed lagoons.

In 1993 Canadians were doing much the same thing in Cambodia after the fall of the Khmer Rouge. During seven years of military technical support to mine removal in Cambodia, more than 60 Canadian Forces field engineers and logisticians served 12 month tours leading local mine-removal teams. It was tough, dirty, lonely and incredibly dangerous work. I met the Canadian sailor mentioned in the opening sentence when I was a correspondent in Phnom Penh in 1993. He had strolled into the downstairs bar of the Hotel Le Royal, a favourite of the foreign press stationed in the capital and used as the backdrop for much of the Hollywood film THE KILLING FIELDS. The Canadian had spent the day on the Mekong River clearing mines and took his seat. He ordered a drink and reached for his wallet in his jungle greens. As he did, a small, round plastic object fell to the floor. "it's an anti-personnel mine," someone yelled before 50 - 60 people dived under their tables upending drinks, snacks, other people, a small pet monkey and dozens of wicker chairs to ready for the blast.

Five seconds passed - ten seconds - nothing happened. The only upright person was the Canadian Matelot still calmly sipping his beer. "Yes, it's an anti-personnel mine," he drawled between sips. "A training anti-personnel mine." Talk about laugh. We didn't. The Canadian eventually made it back out to the street but not before he was stripped, marched to the rear of the hotel and made to dive for his clothes and effects after they were tossed into the green, fetid water of the abandoned hotel swimming pool. The small Czech-made anti-personnel mine went on the shelf behind the bartender. For all I know, it is still there to this day.



## Bring Down United Airlines Flight 93

Pilots often claim that the two worst things that can happen to a pilot are: Walking out to the aircraft knowing this will be your last flight or walking out to the aircraft NOT knowing this will be your last flight. This pilot's story adds another possibility....The events of September 11, 2001, put two F-16 pilots into the sky with orders to bring down United Flight 93. Late on that Tuesday morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>, Lt. Heather "Lucky" Penney was on a runway at Andrews Air Force Base and ready to fly. She had her hand on the throttle of an F-16 and she had her orders, "Bring down United Airlines Flight 93." The day's fourth hijacked airliner seemed to be hurtling toward Washington. Penney, one of the first two combat pilots in the air that morning, was told to stop it.

"I genuinely believed that was going to be the last time I took off," says Maj. Heather "Lucky" Penney, remembering the earlier September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and the initial U.S. reaction. The one thing she didn't have as she roared into the crystalline sky was live ammunition, missiles or anything at all to throw at a hostile aircraft except her own plane. So that was the plan. Since the surprise attacks were unfolding, in that innocent age, faster than they could arm war planes, Penney and her commanding officer planned to fly their jets straight into a Boeing 757. "We wouldn't be shooting it down. We'd be ramming the aircraft," Penney recalls of her charge that day. "I would essentially be a kamikaze pilot." For years, Penney, one of the first generation of female combat pilots in the country, gave no interviews about her experiences on September 11<sup>th</sup> (which included, eventually, escorting Air Force One back into Washington's suddenly highly restricted airspace.)

Ten years later, though, she is reflecting on one of the lesser-told tales of that endlessly examined morning: How the first counterpunch the U.S. Military prepared to throw at the attackers was effectively a suicide mission. "We had to protect the airspace any way we could," she said in her office at Lockheed Martin, where she is a director in the F-35 program. Penney, now a major but still a petite blonde with a Colgate grin, is no longer a combat flier. She flew two tours in Iraq and she serves as a part-time National Guard pilot, mostly hauling VIPs around in a military Gulfstream. She takes the stick of her own vintage 1941 Taylor craft tail-dragger whenever she can. But none of her thousands of hours in the air quite compare with the urgent rush of launching on what was supposed to be a one-way flight to a midair collision. First of her kind!

She was a rookie in the autumn of 2001, the first female F-16 pilot they'd ever had at the 121st Fighter Squadron of the D.C. Air National Guard. She had grown up smelling jet fuel. Her father flew jets in Vietnam and still races them. Penney got her pilot's license when she was a literature major at Purdue. She planned to be a teacher. But during a graduate program in American studies, Congress opened up combat aviation to women and Penney was nearly first in line. "I signed up immediately," she says. "I wanted to be a fighter pilot like my dad." On that Tuesday, they had just finished two weeks of air combat training in Nevada. They were sitting around a briefing table when someone looked in to say a plane had hit the World Trade Center in New York. When it happened once, they

assumed it was some yahoo in a Cessna. When it happened again, they knew it was war. But the surprise was complete. In the monumental confusion of those first hours, it was impossible to get clear orders. Nothing was ready. The jets were still equipped with dummy bullets from the training mission. As remarkable as it seems now, there were no armed aircraft standing by and no system in place to scramble them over Washington. Before that morning, all eyes were looking outward, still scanning the old Cold War threat paths for planes and missiles coming over the polar ice cap.

"There was no perceived threat at the time, especially one coming from the homeland like that," says Col. George Degnon, Vice Commander of the 113<sup>th</sup> Wing at Andrews. "It was a little bit of a helpless feeling, but we did everything humanly possible to get the aircraft armed and in the air. It was amazing to see people react." Things are different today, Degnon says. At least two "hot-cocked" planes are ready at all times, their pilots never more than yards from the cockpit. A third plane hit the Pentagon and, almost at once, came word that a fourth plane could be on the way, maybe more. The jets would be armed within an hour, but somebody had to fly now, weapons or no weapons. "Lucky, you're coming with me," barked Col. Marc Sasseville. They were gearing up in the pre-flight life-support area when Sasseville, struggling into his flight suit, met her eye. "I'm going to go for the cockpit," Sasseville said. She replied without hesitating, "I'll take the tail." It was a plan and a pact. 'Let's go!' Penney had never scrambled a jet before. Normally the pre-flight is a half-hour or so of methodical checks. She automatically started going down the list. "Lucky, what are you doing? Get your butt up there and let's go!" Sasseville shouted.

She climbed in, rushed to power up the engine, screamed for her ground crew to pull the chocks. The crew chief still had his headphones plugged into the fuselage as she nudged the throttle forward. He ran along pulling safety pins from the jet as it moved forward. She muttered a fighter pilot's prayer – "God, don't let me foul up" – and followed Sasseville into the sky. They screamed over the smoldering Pentagon, heading northwest at more than 400 mph, flying low and scanning the clear horizon. Her commander had time to think about the best place to hit the enemy. "We don't train to bring down airliners," said Sasseville, now stationed at the Pentagon. "If you just hit the engine, it could still glide and you could guide it to a target. My thought was the cockpit or the wing." He also thought about his ejection seat. Would there be time just before impact? "I was hoping to do both at the same time," he says. "It probably wasn't going to work, but that's what I was hoping."

Penney worried about missing the target if she tried to bail out. "If I eject and my jet soars through without impact... the thought of failing more dreadful than the thought of dying." But she didn't die. She didn't have to knock down an airliner full of kids and salesmen and girlfriends. They did that all by themselves. It would be hours before Penney and Sasseville learned that United 93 had already gone down in Pennsylvania, an insurrection by hostages willing to do just what the two Guard pilots had been willing to do – anything and everything. "The real heroes are the passengers on Flight 93 who were willing to sacrifice themselves," Penney says. "I was just an accidental witness to history." She and Sasseville flew the rest of the day, clearing the airspace, escorting the president, looking down onto a city that would soon be sending them to war. Now a mom of two girls, she still loves to fly. And she still thinks often of that extraordinary ride down the runway a decade ago. "I genuinely believed that was going to be the last time I took off," she says.



## Existing Tunnel at Casa Loma

A drafty, 240 metre tunnel connects the castle to its hunting lodge and stables, including the garage, potting shed, stalls and carriage and tack rooms. But during WWII, it was the gateway to a Top-Secret intelligence operation. The Allies Anti-Submarine Detection Investigation Committee (AS-DIC) used sonar equipment to detect the location of German U-Boats. After its production site in London, England was bombed, the decision was made to set up shop in Canada. William Corman, a Canadian Engineer, was tasked with finding a suitable Headquarters. He chose Casa Loma. He famously said "Who would suspect a freakin' castle?" AS-DIC worked in the stables, using the tunnel as a thoroughfare. At the time, Casa Loma served as an event venue, hosting weekly dance parties every Friday. Only a handful of people knew about AS-DIC, in those days. The people working on it came in at scattered hours to avoid raising suspicion. Maintenance signs were posted at the tunnel entrance to keep the public out. The signs worked like they were supposed to. The tunnel is now open to visitors. How times have changed!



## All There Is To Know About Monopoly

Starting in 1941, an increasing number of British Airmen found themselves as the involuntary guests of the Third Reich and the Crown was looking for ways and means to facilitate their escape. The POWs required maps, not only showing where stuff was but showing locations of "Safe Houses" where a POW on the lam could go for food and shelter. Paper maps (as you know) had some real drawbacks – they make lots of noise when you open and fold them; they wear out rapidly; and when they get wet they turn into mush. So – someone in MI-5, got the idea of printing escape maps on silk. Durable, can be scrunched up into tiny wads, unfolded as many times as required and make no noise at all! The John Wadding Manufacturer in Great Britain had perfected the technology and when approached by the Government, the firm was only too happy to contribute to the war effort. By pure coincidence, this firm also had the UK licence for the popular American board game, Monopoly and, as it happened, 'games and pastimes' was a category of items qualified for insertion into CARE packages despatched by the International Red Cross to POWs.

Under the strictest of secrecy, in a securely guarded and inaccessible old workshop on the grounds of Waddington's, a group of sworn-to-secrecy employees began mass producing escape maps, keyed to each region of Germany or Italy where Allied POW camps were located. When processed, these maps could be folded into such tiny dots that they actually fit inside a Monopoly playing piece. As long as they were at it, they'd add: (1) a playing token containing a small magnetic compass; (2) a two part metal file that could be neatly screwed together; and (3) useful amounts of genuine high-denomination German, Italian and French currency, all hidden within the piles of Monopoly money. Troops were advised, before taking off on their first mission, how to identify a 'rigged' Monopoly set - by means of a tiny RED dot,

cleverly rigged to look like an ordinary printing glitch, located in the corner of the 'Free Parking' square. Of the estimated 35,000 Allied POWs who successfully escaped, an about  $\frac{1}{3}$  were aided in their flight by the rigged Monopoly sets. Everyone who did so was sworn to secrecy indefinitely, since the British Government might want to use this highly successful ruse in still another future war. This story wasn't declassified until 2007 when the surviving craftsmen from Waddington's, as well as the firm itself, were finally honoured in a public ceremony. Anyway – it's always nice when you can play that 'GET OUT OF JAIL FREE' card!



## The Wooden Bowl

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law and four-year-old grandson. The old man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred and his step faltered. The family ate together at the table. But the elderly grandfather's shaky hands and failing sight made eating difficult. Peas rolled off his spoon onto the floor. When he grasped the glass, milk spilled on the tablecloth. The son and daughter-in-law became irritated with the mess. 'We must do something about father,' said the son 'I've had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating and food on the floor.' So the husband and wife set a small table in the corner. There, Grandfather ate alone while the rest of the family enjoyed dinner. Since Grandfather had broken a dish or two, his food was served in a wooden bowl. When the family glanced in Grandfather's direction, sometimes he had a tear in his eye as he sat alone. Still, the only words the couple had for him were sharp admonitions when he dropped a fork or spilled food.

The four-year-old watched it all in silence. One evening before supper, the father noticed his son playing with wood scraps on the floor. He asked the child sweetly, 'What are you making?' Just as sweetly, the boy responded, 'Oh, I am making a little bowl for you and Mama to eat your food in when I grow up.' The four-year-old smiled and went back to work. The words so struck the parents that they were speechless. Then tears started to stream down their cheeks. Though no word was spoken, both knew what must be done. That evening, the husband took Grandfather's hand and gently led him back to the family table. For the remainder of his days he ate every meal with the family and, for some reason, neither husband nor wife seemed to care any longer when a fork was dropped, milk spilled or the tablecloth soiled.

On a positive note, I've learned that, no matter what happens, how bad it seems today, life does go on and it will be better tomorrow. I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way s/he handles four things: a rainy day, the elderly, lost luggage and tangled Christmas tree lights. I've learned that making a 'living' is not the same thing as making a 'life.' I've learned that life sometimes gives you a second chance. I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back sometimes. I've learned that if you pursue happiness, it will elude you but, if you focus on God, your family, your friends, the needs of others, your work and

doing the very best you can, happiness will find you.



## Three Trees

Once there were three trees on a hill in the woods. They were discussing their hopes and dreams when the first tree said, 'Someday I hope to be a treasure chest. I could be filled with gold, silver and precious gems. I could be decorated with intricate carving and everyone would see the beauty.' Then, the second tree said, 'Someday I will be a mighty ship. I will take Kings and Queens across the waters and sail to the corners of the world. Everyone will feel safe in me because of the strength of my hull.' Finally, the third tree said, 'I want to grow to be the tallest and straightest tree in the forest. People will see me on top of the hill and look up to my branches and think of the heavens and God and how close to them I am reaching. I will be the greatest tree of all time and people will always remember me.'

After a few years of praying that their dreams would come true, a group of woodsmen came upon the trees. When one came to the first tree he said, 'This looks like a strong tree, I think I should be able to sell the wood to a carpenter,' and he began cutting it down. The tree was happy, because he knew that the carpenter would make him into a treasure chest. At the second tree the woodsman said, 'This looks like a strong tree. I should be able to sell it to the shipyard.' The second tree was happy because he knew he was on his way to becoming a mighty ship. When the woodsmen came upon the third tree, the tree was frightened because he knew that if they cut him down his dreams would not come true. One of the woodsmen said, 'I don't need anything special from my tree, I'll take this one,' and he cut it down.

When the first tree arrived at the carpenters, he was made into a feed box for animals. He was then placed in a barn and filled with hay. This was not at all what he had prayed for. The second tree was cut and made into a small fishing boat. His dreams of being a mighty ship and carrying Kings and Queens had come to an end. The third tree was cut into large pieces and left alone in the dark. The years went by and the trees forgot about their dreams. Then, one day, a man and woman came to the barn. She gave birth and they placed the baby in the hay in the feed box that was made from the first tree. The man wished that he could have made a crib for the baby, but this manger would have to do. The tree could feel the importance of this event and knew that it had held the greatest treasure of all time.

Years later, a group of men got in the fishing boat made from the second tree. One of them was tired and went to sleep. While they were out on the water, a great storm arose and the tree didn't think it was strong enough to keep the men safe. The men woke the sleeping man and He stood and said 'Peace' and the storm stopped. At this time, the tree knew that it had carried the King of Kings in its boat. Finally, someone came and got the third tree. It was carried through the streets as the people mocked the man who was carrying it. When

they came to a stop, the man was nailed to the tree and raised in the air to die at the top of a hill. When Sunday came, the tree came to realize that it was strong enough to stand at the top of the hill and be as close to God as was possible, because Jesus had been crucified on it.

The moral of this story is that when things don't seem to be going your way, always know that God has a plan for you. If you place your trust in Him, God will give you great gifts. Each of the trees got what they wanted, just not in the way they had imagined. We don't always know what God's plans are for us. We just know that His ways are not our ways, but His ways are always best.



## Dad and Cheyenne

"Watch out! You nearly broadsided that car!" My father yelled at me. "Can't you do anything right?" Those words hurt worse than blows. I turned my head toward the elderly man in the seat beside me, daring me to challenge him. A lump rose in my throat as I averted my eyes. I wasn't prepared for another battle.

"I saw the car, Dad. Please don't yell at me when I'm driving." My voice was measured and steady, sounding far calmer than I really felt. Dad glared at me, then turned away and settled back. At home, I left Dad in front of the television and went outside to collect my thoughts. Dark, heavy clouds hung in the air with a promise of rain. The rumble of distant thunder seemed to echo my inner turmoil. What could I do about him?

Dad had been a lumberjack in Washington and Oregon. He had enjoyed being outdoors and had reveled in pitting his strength against the forces of nature. He had entered grueling lumberjack competitions and had placed often. The shelves in his house were filled with trophies that attested to his prowess. The years marched on relentlessly. The first time he couldn't lift a heavy log, he joked about it, but later that same day I saw him outside alone, straining to lift it. He became irritable whenever anyone teased him about his advancing age or when he couldn't do something he had done as a younger man.

Four days after his 67<sup>th</sup> birthday, he had a heart attack. An ambulance sped him to the hospital while a paramedic administered CPR to keep blood and oxygen flowing. At the hospital, Dad was rushed into an operating room. He was lucky; he survived. But something inside Dad died. His zest for life was gone. He obstinately refused to follow doctor's orders. Suggestions and offers of help were turned aside with sarcasm and insults. The number of visitors thinned and then finally stopped altogether. Dad was left alone. My husband, Dick, and I asked Dad to come live with us on our small farm. We hoped the fresh air and rustic atmosphere would help him adjust.

Within a week after he moved in, I regretted the invitation. It seemed nothing was satisfactory. He criticized everything I did. I became frustrated and moody. Soon I was taking my pent-up anger out on Dick. We began to bicker and argue. Alarmed, Dick sought out our pastor and explained the situation. The clergyman set up weekly counseling

appointments for us. At the close of each session he prayed, asking God to soothe Dad's troubled mind. But the months wore on and God was silent. Something had to be done and it was up to me to do it. The next day, I sat down with the phone book and methodically called each of the mental health clinics listed in the Yellow Pages. I explained my problem to each of the sympathetic voices that answered in vain.

Just when I was giving up hope, one of the voices suddenly exclaimed, "I just read something that might help you! Let me go get the article." I listened as she read. The article described a remarkable study done at a nursing home. All of the patients were under treatment for chronic depression. Yet their attitudes had proved dramatically when they were given responsibility for a dog. I drove to the animal shelter that afternoon. After I filled out a questionnaire, a uniformed officer led me to the kennels. The odor of disinfectant stung my nostrils as I moved down the row of pens; each contained five to seven dogs. Long-haired dogs, curly-haired dogs, black dogs, spotted dogs all jumped up, trying to reach me. I studied each one but rejected one after the other for various reasons – too big, too small, too much hair. As I neared the last pen a dog in the shadows of the far corner struggled to his feet, walked to the front of the run and sat down. It was a pointer, one of the dog world's aristocrats. But this was a caricature of the breed.

Years had etched his face and muzzle with shades of gray. His hip bones jutted out in lopsided triangles. But it was his eyes that caught and held my attention. Calm and clear, they beheld me unwaveringly. I pointed to the dog. "Can you tell me about him?" The officer looked and then shook his head in puzzlement. "He's a funny one. Appeared out of nowhere and sat in front of the gate. We brought him in, figuring someone would be right down to claim him. That was two weeks ago and we've heard nothing. His time is up tomorrow." He gestured helplessly. As the words sank in I turned to the man in horror. "You mean you're going to kill him?" "Ma'am," he said gently, "that's our policy. We don't have room for every unclaimed dog."

I looked at the pointer again. The calm brown eyes awaited my decision. "I'll take him," I said. I drove home with the dog on the front seat beside me. When I reached the house, I honked the horn twice. I was helping my prize out of the car when Dad shuffled onto the front porch. "Ta da! Look what I got for you, Dad!" I said excitedly. Dad looked and then wrinkled his face in disgust. "If I had wanted a dog, I would have gotten one. And I would have picked out a better specimen than that bag of bones. Keep it! I don't want it." Dad waved his arm scornfully and turned back toward the house. Anger rose inside me. It squeezed together my throat muscles and pounded into my temples. "You'd better get used to him, Dad. He's staying!" Dad ignored me. "Did you hear me, Dad?" I screamed. At those words, Dad whirled angrily, his hands clenched at his sides, his eyes narrowed and blazing with hate. We stood glaring at each other like duelists, when suddenly the pointer pulled free from my grasp. He wobbled toward my dad and sat down in front of him. Then slowly, carefully, he raised his paw.

Dad's lower jaw trembled as he stared at the uplifted paw. Confusion replaced the anger in his eyes. The pointer waited patiently. Then Dad was on his knees hugging the animal. It was the beginning of a warm and intimate friendship. Dad named the pointer Cheyenne. Together he and Cheyenne explored the community. They spent long hours walking down

dusty lanes. They spent reflective moments on the banks of streams, angling for tasty trout. They even started to attend Sunday services together, Dad sitting in a pew and Cheyenne lying quietly at his feet. Dad and Cheyenne were inseparable throughout the next three years. Dad's bitterness faded and he and Cheyenne made many friends. Then, late one night, I was startled to feel Cheyenne's cold nose burrowing through our bed covers. He had never before come into our bedroom at night. I woke Dick, put on my robe and ran into my father's room. Dad lay in his bed, his face serene. But his spirit had left quietly sometime during the night. Two days later, my shock and grief deepened when I discovered Cheyenne lying dead beside Dad's bed. I wrapped his still form in the rag rug he had slept on. As Dick and I buried him near a favourite fishing hole, I silently thanked the dog for the help he had given me in restoring Dad's peace of mind.

The morning of Dad's funeral dawned overcast and dreary. This day looks like the way I feel, I thought, as I walked down the aisle to the pews reserved for family. I was surprised to see the many friends Dad and Cheyenne had made filling the church. The pastor began his eulogy. It was a tribute to both Dad and the dog that had changed his life. And then the pastor turned to Hebrews 13:2. "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." "I've often thanked God for sending that angel," he said. For me, the past dropped into place, completing a puzzle that I had not seen before: the sympathetic voice that had just read the right article; Cheyenne's unexpected appearance at the animal shelter; his calm acceptance and complete devotion to my father; and the proximity of their deaths. And suddenly I understood. I knew that God had answered my prayers after all. Life is too short for drama or petty things, so laugh hard, love truly and forgive quickly. Live while you are alive. Forgive now those who made you cry. You might not get a second time.



## Did You Know

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### An Unusual Award (the Queen's Crocheted Scarf)



**A**n unusual award, in the form of a long scarf crocheted by Queen Victoria, was made to selected servicemen during the South African War. It was apparently worn over

the shoulder, passing under the shoulder strap, across the chest and buckled on the right hip. The description of the scarf is given as *“crocheted in Khaki-coloured Berlin wool, approximately nine inches wide and five foot long, including a four inch fringe at each end and bears the Royal Cipher V.R.I. (Victoria Regina Et Imperatrix.)”* At one time, even the number of scarves was in doubt, but it has been confirmed that a total of eight were awarded, four to British servicemen. The recipients were required to be chosen by a vote of the NCOs and men of each unit and approved by the Commanding Officer. The four scarves awarded to the British Army went to men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Division, under the command of Sir Henry Hildyard. These were:

- Quartermaster Sergeant Henry George Clay, DCM, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn The East Surrey Regiment.
- Colour Sergeant William Colclough, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, The Devonshire Regiment.
- Colour Sergeant Thomas Ferrett, DCM, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn The Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regiment.
- Colour Sergeant Frank Kingsley, DCM, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn The West Yorkshire Regiment.

Questions have been raised as to whether Queen Victoria had crocheted the scarves herself, but it was reported that during the presentation of the scarf to Dufrayer in Australia by HRH The Duke of York (later King George V.) the Duchess of York (later Queen Mary) had informed one recipient that she had helped the eighty-two year old Queen when she had dropped stitches whilst making the scarves. There has been much speculation as to the exact degree of honour that the award of the scarf carried. It was at one time believed to be equivalent to the Victoria Cross but this is not the case. In 1902, New Zealand Government requested that the title 'Queen's Scarf' be used in the Army List and other official documents but, in a reply dated 4 June 1902, the Secretary of State refused to grant permission. The question of precedence has continued over the years and, as late as 1956, it was raised again, when a descendent of one of the holders requested permission to attend the VC Centenary Celebrations. The official reply stated *'...while the Queen's Scarf is regarded as a unique and distinguished award, relatives of those who received it are not being included in the present ceremony as it does not carry equal status with the Victoria Cross.'*

 *“I’ve reached the age where I’m seriously thinking about what I’ll be, when I come back.”*  
(Lynn Ruth Miller, 80 year old Comedian)



## **A Little Known Town in Ontario**

**O**wen Sound, a little known town in Ontario, up close to the Bruce Trail, south of Manitoulin Island and close to Georgian Bay, is proud that their cemetery contains three VC recipients: Maj. David V. Currie (later LCol and Sgt-at-Arms, House of Commons,) Col W. A. (Billy) Bishop and Tommy Holmes, VC (*Passchendaele*.) They are all buried in the Greenwood Cemetery in Owen Sound.



## **An Old Pub in the Marble Arch in London, England**

**T**here is an old pub in the Marble Arch in London, England which used to have gallows adjacent to it. Prisoners were taken to the gallows (after a fair trial of course) to be hung. The horse drawn dray (which is a brewer's cart without sides for heavy loads) carrying the prisoner was accompanied by an armed guard. The dray would be stopped outside of the pub and the prisoner was asked if he would like "one last drink." If he said "yes," it was referred to as "one for the road"! If he declined, that prisoner was known to be "on the wagon!" So, there you go!



## **Urine to Tan Animal Skins**

**D**id you know they used to use urine to tan animal skins? Years ago, families all used to pee in a pot and once a day it was taken and sold to a tannery? If you had to do this to survive, you were considered to be "Piss Poor." BUT – worse than that were the really poor folk who couldn't even afford to buy a pot and they were considered the lowest of the low – because they "Didn't have a pot to piss in!"

 *"As I hurtled through space, one thought kept crossing my mind – every part of this rocket was supplied by the lowest bidder." (John Glenn)*



## **Ken Plourde from Athabaska, Alberta**

**O**ur very own Ken Plourde from Athabaska, Alberta sent me a clip on Bush Flying history in Canada entitled "100 years of Flight" which was, of course, important for Canadian Aviation's Evolution. He personally has worked 50 years in the forestry business from Labrador to Northern BC and he has flown in everything from small Cessnas to Beech 18's. He flew with ex Viet Nam jockeys in many types of choppers, mostly Huey 500s. They were a short winged, hot, little machine which would put people down in the smallest opening in the bush. The most reliable aircraft were the Beavers and the Otters (the workhorses) and he tells me that the scariest flight occurred in a Twin Beechcraft landing in the trees! Like a WWII Vintage Beech 18.



## **My Pilot's Log Book**, by Sam Newman

**D**id you know I can provide you with an interesting assortment of planes that I have flown in, listed from my Pilot's Log book when working with the Cadet Power Scholarship at both the Guelph Airpark and Breslau (Waterloo) with Aviation

International and The National Flyers Academy? The list (which would have impressed Richard Bach,) includes a Tiger Moth, Citabria, Cessna Skylane 182-P, Piper Cherokee, Cessna 172, Thruxton Jackaroo (a 4-seater Tiger Moth,) Katana DA20, Van RV6, Cessna 150, P19 (Open cockpit,) Mini Skybolt, a Pitts Special, Baby Ace, Gypsy Moth, Taylorcraft, Cub 4, a Bucker Jungmeister and, in 2014, a Harvard out of the Canadian Warplane Museum in Hamilton. Oh yes, and I was lucky enough to spring a flight in the Budweiser Balloon in Lakeland, Florida. I'm very proud of that list. Most recently, I have been flying in a PA28-151 Piper Warrior!



**Enduring the Blitz**, Source: Toronto Star edition 7 Nov 2014,  
Enduring the Blitz – London England honours Engineer who saved the City.

Every day, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, boats full of tourists and commuters float by a pale patch on the wall that lines the River Thames near Britain's Houses of Parliament. Few notice the concrete mark or recognize it as evidence of how close London came to drowning during WWII. It is a piece of history that has been rediscovered by a team of professional and amateur archaeologists. The patch was left by a secret squad of engineers and labourers who worked night after night during WWII to repair flood defences hit in German air raids. As bombs fell and fires raged, the teams organized by engineer Thomas Person Frank used rubble, sandbags and, finally, concrete to mend breaches in the Thames wall that threatened the inundation of thousands of businesses and homes. The current Director of the Thames Discovery Program (a project that brings together experts and volunteers to explore the archaeology of London's river) has stated that "It could have brought London to its knees very easily. Not just people drowning – we would have lost buildings; it would have flooded the sewers and brought up all the sewage; it would have contaminated the water supplies; cut off gas and electricity and there would have been widespread devastation and huge loss of life." You see, London burned during the war, but it never flooded, due in large measure to Frank, chief engineer for London County Council and his crews.

But their story is little known – obscured first by wartime secrecy, then by gradual forgetting. That began to change when that Director of the Thames Discovery Program and his team noticed the large concrete patch, 30 feet across at its widest, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century river wall. Chunks of the wall's granite parapet lie scattered along the muddy river foreshore nearby. The researchers suspected the damage had been done by a Luftwaffe bomb, but the agency in charge of the river did not have any record of it. Deep in the London Metropolitan Archives, the researchers found files revealing the truth that had been hidden from Londoners during the war and later forgotten – the river wall was hit 121 times between 1940 and 1945, 84 of them during the Blitz of September 1940 to May 1941. The number of bomb strikes on the river was suppressed at the time so as not to alarm Londoners or alert Nazi Germany to the city's vulnerability.

London was fortunate to have Frank, a ferociously well-organized and industrious civil servant who had served in WWI and, by the 1930s, was warning of the city's vulnerability to floods. When war broke out, Frank was put in charge of maintaining London's roads and

utilities. He set up four depots along the river, staffed by engineers and road-repair crews, augmented by troops from the Royal Engineers. Each time river defences were hit, Frank's teams were sent in, often while bombs were still falling and with little protective equipment. The workers were part of a civilian army – along with nurses, air raid wardens, volunteer firefighters, police and more – that kept the city running during the onslaught. Frank was knighted in 1942 for his work, though details of his job were kept under wraps. He was later made president of the Institution of Civil Engineers. Frank died in 1951, very much an unsung hero. He was recognized, but within a very small circle because it was secret. During Remembrance Week 2014, a group of engineers and civic dignitaries unveiled a plaque commemorating Frank's work near the patch on the wall. Londoners who come across it may pause and reflect on how narrowly the city avoided disaster. It has been stated that German pilots who dropped bombs were likely aiming for Parliament and likely didn't realize that a hole in the river wall could have inflicted far worse damage. The Germans seem not to have realized their opportunity to knock out the parapet and they could have flooded all of London.

• *"After the battle, the King and the Pawn go into the same box." (Old Italian proverb)*



**Message from Zimbabwe** – It sometimes takes an outside perspective to help see ourselves anew!

Source: "More of Our Canada," March 2011 edition; written by Wendy MacDougal of Hamilton, ON.

Some years ago, I was studying for my M.Ed at Brock University in St. Catharines, ON. It was a small class – seven women and an instructor. One of the women was a visiting student from Zimbabwe, Africa. Her name was Otillia. She was quiet, but when she did speak it was clear she reflected deeply on our studies. It was difficult, however, to know what she thought, since she never volunteered an opinion. During one particular lecture, our prof posed a question to the group. She made it clear that there was no right or wrong answer, but our opinions should be backed up by solid logic. With vigour, each woman gave her answer and reasoning behind it. One of the students commented wryly, "We must be Canadian – seven people, seven opinions and it isn't even an important issue!" The other six Canadians in the room laughed. Otillia cleared her throat and spoke spontaneously for the first time that semester.

"You laugh at yourselves, but I think this exercise shows what Canadians are. You listen to and respect the opinions of others. You encourage everyone to think for themselves. You have never lived in a country where the only opinion is the one held by the soldier pointing a gun at you." We were startled into silence. Otillia continued: "When my Government told me I was to come to Canada to study, I was given no choice. I was afraid. What kind of people are these Canadians? What will they be like? I thought about what I knew of you. In times of war, Canadians are called. They are called, not to aid in that war, but to bring peace. That is the kind of people the world knows you to be." No one spoke – spell bound by Otillia's words. "I wondered how the individuals of such a nation would behave. Now I know. You're people of peace because of your respect for others. This is no laughing matter. You should be very proud of the work you have done here tonight."

Never before had I been faced so clearly with what it meant to be Canadian. The impact of that speech has made me listen even more respectfully to the opinion of others. As for the class, I don't even recall what it was about – the real curriculum was delivered by a guest to Canada, whose insight into our National psyche was so profound!



## War Heroes – A Dog, Pigeons and a Goat!

*Sources: Toronto Star Archives and the Fort Garry Horse Museum and Archives.*

A medal awarded to a dog that sniffed out survivors amid the rubble of the London, England Blitz has been sold at an auction in London for 24,250 pounds, from a buyer at Spink's Auctioneers, who chose to remain anonymous. The sale price, equivalent to \$43,300 Canadian was 10,000 pounds higher than the estimate. It also beat the previous record of 23,000 pounds for the Dickin Medal, awarded the HMS Amethyst ship's cat, Simon. The Dickin Medal is Britain's highest honour for animals and it was awarded to a dog named Rip who was credited with finding more than 100 people trapped by German bomb damage during WWII. Maria Dickin, who established the medal program, decorated Rip in 1945. Rip had been found abandoned in an air raid shelter and was adopted by an air raid warden. He died in 1948 and is buried in a pet charity cemetery in East London. Besides Rip and Simon, the 62 animals awarded the Dickin Medal included other dogs, pigeons and horses.

Pigeons – Communication was a constant challenge during the war. Radio technology was still developing and the wireless sets available to the army were bulky and fragile and had fairly short ranges. Telephones were more reliable, but their wires could be cut or damaged by shell fire. So when urgent messages needed to be sent from the front lines, the best technology was sometimes an old-fashioned one: Carrier Pigeons! Pigeons had a reputation for getting confused in heavy shelling, but a June 1916 report from the Canadian Corps Signal Company said that wasn't much of a problem. As an example, in June 1916, 638 pigeons were sent from the lofts to deliver messages, the report said. Out of those, 446 successfully delivered messages from trenches, 180 arrived without messages or carried them back to the trenches and only 12 were lost.

It was a pigeon that saved the lives of a Toronto pilot and two other airmen who went down in the North Sea in the spring of 1918. Flight Commander Robert Leckie was trying to rescue the men from a plane that was brought down about 80 kms offshore. Stranded with no food or water, their only hope for rescue was that one of the 4 pigeons carried with him would be able to send a message to their base in England. I landed Wednesday and released a pigeon at once, carrying our position and cause of trouble. On Thursday he released a similar message. And again on Friday morning, the third bird was sent. Knowing that we could not last much longer, our remaining fourth pigeon was released on Friday afternoon, carrying an SOS signal. The first three pigeons failed to reach England, but the fourth was a winner. In spite of adverse conditions and in spite of the fact that the pigeon must have been suffering from hunger and thirst, he struggled bravely over the fifty-odd miles of sea without a landmark, without rest and reaching the English Coast about 20 miles north of our base, almost instinctively it would seem, picked out a coast guard station and fluttering into the

courtyard, fell dead from exhaustion. “At the cost of his own life, he delivered his message and thus saved ours – we were picked up by a British ship the very next day!

And finally, a GOAT! The third Battalion, also known as the Toronto Regiment, had a goat for a mascot, outfitted in the regimental colours. Its provenance and name are unknown. Most animals performed essential wartime services, although some others may not have worked as hard, but raised morale for their battalions.

The most famous WWI mascot was the Cdn Army Veterinary Corp’s black bear cub, Winnie. Winnie’s owner was Harry Colebourn, who emigrated from Birmingham to Toronto in 1905. Colebourn wound up in Winnipeg working as a Veterinarian for the Department of Agriculture and it was that city that lent Winnie her name. He made it to the Salisbury Plain and was not allowed on the Battle Fields of France. Eventually Colebourn brought her to the London Zoo, where she became a beloved attraction. One of her biggest fans was a little boy named Christopher Robin Milne, whose father, author A.A. Milne, wrote a storybook with Winnie in the leading role.



## Taps

**Y**ou all have likely heard a bugler playing “Taps” at one time or another. It's a somewhat haunting song; it inevitably leaves a lump in our throats and often tears in our eyes. I'd like to recount for you its humble beginnings!

Reportedly, it began in 1862 during the Civil War when the Union Army was battling it out against the Confederate Army near Harrison's Landing in Virginia. One night, a Capt. Robert Ellicombe heard the moans of a soldier who lay severely wounded in the field. Not knowing which side the soldier belonged to, the good Captain decided to risk his life and bring the stricken man back to his lines for medical attention. Crawling on his stomach through gunfire, he reached the stricken soldier and began pulling him back toward his encampment. When he reached his own lines, the Union Officer discovered it was a Confederate soldier and he had died throughout the ordeal. The Captain lit a lantern and suddenly caught his breath and went numb with shock. In the dim of the light, he saw the face of the soldier – it was his own son! The boy had been studying music in the South when war broke out. Without telling his father, the son had enlisted in the Confederate Army. The following morning, the heartbroken father requested permission of his superiors to give his son a full military burial, despite his enemy status. He received only partial permission. He had asked for a group of Army Band members to play a dirge for his son. That request was turned down since the soldier was a Confederate. But, out of respect, they could provide one musician. The Captain chose a bugler to play a series of notes he had found on a piece of paper in the pocket of his son's uniform. He played Taps, with the following words put to music:

Day is done; gone the sun; from the lakes, from the hills, from the sky  
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh  
Fading light, dims the site; and a star, gems the sky, gleaming bright  
From afar, drawing nigh. Falls the night!

Thanks and praise; for our days; neath the sun, neath the stars; neath the sky  
As we go, this we know – God is nigh!

I never knew the story behind this piece of music and don't know if any of you had either, so I thought I'd pass it along. I now have an even deeper respect for that lyric than I ever did before. Makes you want to remember those lost and harmed while serving their Country!



## The Wedding Gown That Made History

Lilly Friedman doesn't remember the last name of the woman who designed and sewed the wedding gown she wore when she walked down the aisle well over 60 years ago. What the grandmother of seven does recall is that when she first told her fiancé Ludwig that she had always dreamed of being married in a white gown, he realized he had his work cut out for him. The tall, lanky 21 year old had survived hunger, disease and torture, buy this was a different kind of challenge? How was he ever going to find such a dress in the Bergen Belsen Displaced Persons' (DP's) Camp where they felt grateful for just having any clothes on their backs? Fate would intervene in the guise of a former German pilot who walked into the food distribution centre where Ludwig worked, eager to make a trade for his worthless parachute. In exchange for two lbs of coffee and a couple packs of cigarettes, Lilly would have her gown. For two weeks, the seamstress worked under the curious eyes of her fellow DP's, carefully fashioning the six parachute panels into a simple, long sleeved gown with a rolled collar and fitted waist that tied in the back with a bow. The left over material made a matching shirt for the groom.

A white wedding gown may have seemed like a frivolous request in the surreal environment of the camps, but for Lilly, it symbolized the innocent, normal life that she and her family once led before the war hit them. Her father, a well-respected teacher and two sons were marked for extermination immediately upon arriving at Auschwitz. For Lilly and her sisters, it was only the first stop on their long journey of persecution, which included Plashof, Neustadt, Gross-Rosen and finally Bergen Belsen. 400 people marched 15 miles in snow to the town of Celle, 27 Jan, 1946, to attend Lilly and Ludwig's wedding. The town synagogue, damaged and desecrated, had been lovingly renovated by the DP's with the meagre materials available. With all the camps experiencing the highest marriage rate in the world, Lilly's gown was in great demand.

In 1948, when President Truman finally permitted the 100,000 Jews who had been languishing in DP camps since the end of the war to emigrate, the gown accompanied Lilly across the ocean to America. The eventual home for her wedding dress became the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington in a specially designed show case, guaranteed to preserve it for 500 years.



## Bless the Lady Plumber

*Irena Sendler died: May 12, 2008 (aged 98) Warsaw, Poland*

**D**uring WWII, Irena, got permission to work in the Warsaw ghetto, as a Plumbing/Sewer specialist. She had an ulterior motive. Irena smuggled Jewish infants out in the bottom of the tool box she carried. She also carried a burlap sack in the back of her truck, for larger kids. Irena kept a dog in the back that she trained to bark when the Nazi soldiers let her in and out of the ghetto. The soldiers, of course, wanted nothing to do with the dog and the barking which covered the kids/infants noises. During her time of doing this, she managed to smuggle out and save 2500 kids/infants. Ultimately, she was caught, and the Nazi's broke both of her legs and arms and beat her severely. Irena kept a record of the names of all the kids she had smuggled out, in a glass jar that she buried under a tree in her back yard. After the war, she tried to locate any parents that may have survived and tried to reunite the family. Most had been gassed. Those kids she helped get placed into foster family homes or adopted. In 2007, Irena was up for the Nobel Peace Prize. She was not selected. It is now more than 69 years since the WWII in Europe ended. Six million Jews, 20 million Russians, 10 million Christians and 1,900 Catholic priests were murdered, massacred, raped, burned, starved or humiliated! Now, more than ever, with Iran and others, claiming the HOLOCAUST to be 'a myth,' it's imperative to make sure the world never forgets, because there are others who would like to do it again.



### **Sometimes, It's Not Really Just Luck**

or "Using Jewish Slave Labour is Never a Good Idea."

*Courtesy of Elmer Bendiner's book, "The Fall of Fortresses"*

**E**lmer Bendiner was a navigator in a B-17 during WW II. He tells this story of a WWII bombing run over Kassel, Germany and the unexpected result of a direct hit on their gas tanks. Our B-17, the Tondelayo, was barraged by flak from Nazi anti-aircraft guns. That was typical, but on this particular occasion our gas tanks were hit. Later, as I reflected on the miracle of a 20 millimetre shell piercing the fuel tank without touching off an explosion, our pilot, Bohn Fawkes, told me it was much more complicated. On the morning following the raid, Bohn asked our crew chief for that shell as a souvenir of unbelievable luck. The crew chief told Bohn that, in addition to that shell, another eleven were found in the gas tanks. One shell was sufficient to blast us out of the sky. It was as if the sea had parted for us. A near-miracle, I thought. Even after 35 years, this awesome event leaves me shaken, especially after I heard the rest of the story from Bohn. He was told that the shells were sent to the armorers to be defused. The armorers told him that Intelligence had picked them up. They couldn't say why at the time, but Bohn eventually sought out the answer. Apparently, when the armourers opened each of those shells, they found no explosive charge. They were clean as a whistle and just as harmless. Empty? Not all of them! One contained a carefully rolled piece of paper with a scrawled message in Czech. The Intelligence people scoured our base for a man who could read Czech. Eventually they found one to decipher the note. It was amazing! Translated, the note read: "This is all we can do for you now."



## Extraordinary Coincidence

**A** German mother who photographed her infant son in 1914 left the film to be developed at a store in Strasbourg, but was unable to collect the film picture when WWI broke out. Two years later, she bought a film plate in Frankfurt, over 100 miles away and took a picture of her newborn daughter – only to find, when developed, the picture of her daughter super imposed on the earlier picture of her son; The original film, never developed, had been mistakenly labelled as 'unused' and resold! What are the odds?



## Cannon Balls

**I**t was necessary to keep a good supply of cannon balls near the cannon on old war ships. But how to prevent them from rolling about the deck was the problem. The storage method devised was to stack them as a square based pyramid, with one ball on top, resting on four, resting on nine, which rested on sixteen. Thus, a supply of 30 cannon balls could be stacked in a small area right next to the cannon. There was only one problem – how to prevent the bottom layer from sliding or rolling from under the others. The solution was a metal plate with sixteen round indentations, called (for reasons unknown) a MONKEY. But if this plate were made of iron, the iron balls would quickly rust to it. The solution to the resting problem was to make them of brass – hence Brass Monkeys! Few landlubbers realize that brass contracts much more and much faster than iron when chilled. Consequently, when the temperature dropped too far, the brass indentations would shrink so much that the iron cannon balls would come right off the monkey.

Thus, it was quite literally, “cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey.” And all this time folks thought that it was just a vulgar expression!



## Guts vs. Balls

**T**o those of you who are nitpickers about the meaning of words: there is a medical distinction between guts and balls. We've all heard about people having guts or balls, but do you really know the difference between them? In an effort to keep you informed, here are the definitions...

**GUTS** - is arriving home late, after a night out with the boys, being met by your wife with a broom and having the guts to ask “Are you still cleaning or are you flying somewhere?”

**BALLS** - is coming home late after a night out with the guys, smelling of perfume and beer with lipstick on your collar, slapping your wife on the butt and saying “You're next,

chubby!"

Hope this clears up any confusion on the definitions. Apparently and medically speaking, there is no difference in the outcome.



## **Landing at a Hidden Military Base**

**L**ikely you have all heard of the US Air Force's ultra-high security, super-secret base in Nevada, known simply as "Area 51." Well, late one afternoon, the Air Force folks out at Area 51 were very surprised to see a Cessna landing at their "secret" base. The officials immediately impounded the aircraft and hauled the pilot into an interrogation room. The pilot's story was that he took off from Vegas, got lost and spotted the Base just as he was about to run out of fuel. The Air Force started a full FBI background check on the pilot and held him overnight during the investigation. By the next day they were finally convinced that the pilot really was lost and wasn't a spy. They gassed up his airplane, gave him a terrifying "you did NOT see a base" briefing, complete with threats of spending the rest of his life in prison, told him Vegas was "that-a-way," on such and such a heading and sent him on his way. The day after that though, to the total disbelief of the Air Force, the same Cessna showed up once again. Once again, the MP's surrounded the plane - only this time there were two people in the plane. The same pilot jumped out of the aircraft and exclaimed "Do anything you want to me, but my wife is in the plane and YOU have to tell her where I was last night!"



## **Caterpillar Club (Cat Club)**

**I** have a buddy in London, Ontario by the name of Jim Garrity. He was wearing a most unusual tiny gold caterpillar pin and, when asked, he proceeded to tell me all about this prestigious award. Back when, between 20 Oct, 1922 and 11 Nov. in Dayton, Ohio, the Caterpillar Club was formed. This worldwide club is for aviators, both military and commercial, who have saved their lives with a parachute in emergency situations. Seems it all started with a young Army test pilot, by the name of Howard Harris. 20 October, 1922 he was flying a monoplane fighter in a mock dog fight with a friend. His aircraft had been equipped the day before with experimental aerodynamically balanced ailerons. After taking off from a test centre at McCook Field, Dayton, actually very near where the Wright Brothers tested their plane, his plane suddenly rocked violently and Harris found he could not control it. He had to bail out and he became the first American known to be saved by a manually operated parachute in an emergency jump from a disabled or flaming aircraft. A discussion followed and the suggestion was made that since there were likely to be more jumps with the chute, a club should be formed to embrace those intrepid airmen. They considered several names for the organization and eventually selected "The Caterpillar Club." The reasoning? The parachute main sail and shroud lines were woven from the finest silk. The lowly 'cat'

worm spins a cocoon and crawls out and flies away from certain death! A Canadian 'Cat Club' for WWII POW's was started and the practise of awarding a tiny gold 'CAT' pin to anyone who was a living testimony to saving his own life by using an Irving Type Air Chute began.

For your information, during the height of WWII, production of parachutes with the Irving Air Chute Co. factory in Letchworth, England, reached a peak of 1,500 parachutes per week. The first Canadian Parachute Battalion was formed in July 1942 and they completed their first jump 04 May, 1943! By late 1945, there were some 34,000 members of the 'Cat Club.' A poem was found in a Leland Potter's POW Journal:

Little silk worm – so very small  
You saved me from an awful fall;  
And tho you're such an ugly thing,  
I owe my life to your man-made wing!



## It's What You Scatter That Counts

I was at the corner grocery store buying some early potatoes – I noticed a small boy, delicate of bone and features, ragged but clean, hungrily appraising a basket of freshly picked green peas. I paid for my potatoes, but was also drawn to the display of fresh green peas. I am a pushover for creamed peas and new potatoes! Pondering the peas, I couldn't help overhearing the conversation between Mr. Miller (the store owner) and the ragged boy next to me.

“Hello Barry, how are you today?”

H'lo Mr. Miller. Fine, thank ya. Jus' admirin' them peas. They sure look good!”

“They are good, Barry. How's your ma?”

“Fine, gittin stronger alla' time.”

“Good. Anything I can help you with?”

“No Sir. Just admirin' them peas.”

“Would you like to take some home,” asked Mr. Miller?

“No sir. Got nuthin' to pay for 'em with.”

“Well, what have you to trade me for some of those peas?”

“All I got's my prize marble here.”

“Is that right? Let me see it,” said Mr. Miller.

“Here tis - she's a danda.”

“I can see that! Hmmm - only thing is this one is blue and I sort of go for red. Do you have a red one like this at home?” the store owner asked.

“Not zachley, but almos'!”

“Tell you what, take this sack of peas home with you and next trip this way, let me look at that red marble,” Mr. Miller told the boy.

“Sure will - Thanks, Mr. Miller.”

Mrs. Miller, who had been standing nearby, came over to help me. With a smile she said “There are two other boys like him in our community, all three are in very poor

circumstances. Jim just loves to bargain with them for peas, apples, tomatoes or whatever. When they come back with their red marbles and they always do, he decides he doesn't like red after all and he sends them home with a bag of produce for a green marble or an orange one, when they come on the next trip to the store.”

I left the store smiling to myself, impressed with this man. A short time later I moved out of town a long ways, but I never forgot the story of this man, the boys and their bartering for marbles. Several years went by, each more rapid than the previous one. Just recently I had occasion to visit some old friends in that previous community and while I was there I learned that Mr. Miller had died. They were having his visitation that evening and knowing my friends wanted to go, I agreed to accompany them. Upon arrival at the funeral home, we fell into line to meet the relatives of the deceased and to offer whatever words of comfort we could.

Ahead of us in line were three young men. One was in a military uniform, while the other two wore nice hair-cuts, dark suits and white shirts and all were very professional looking. They approached Mrs. Miller, standing composed and smiling by her husband's casket. Each of the young men hugged her, kissed her on the cheek, spoke briefly with her and moved on to the casket. Her misty blue eyes followed them as one by one each young man stopped briefly and placed his own warm hand over the cold pale hand in the casket. Each left the funeral home awkwardly, wiping his eyes with their handkerchief. Our turn came to meet Mrs. Miller. I told her who I was and reminded her of the story from those many years ago and what she had told me about her husband's bartering for marbles. With her eyes glistening, she took my hand and led me to the casket. “Those three young men who just left were the boys I told you about. They just told me how they appreciated the things Jim 'traded' them. Now, at last, when Jim could not change his mind about colour or size, they came to pay their debt. We've never had a great deal of the wealth of this world,” she confided “but right now, Jim would consider himself the richest man in the world.” With loving gentleness, she lifted the lifeless fingers of her deceased husband. Resting underneath were three exquisitely shined RED marbles.

You see, we'll not be remembered by our words, but by our kind deeds! Life is not measured by the breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away; and it's not what you gather, but what you scatter, that tells what kind of a life you have lived!



## The Doolittle Raiders

**I**n April of 2013, in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, the surviving Doolittle Raiders gathered publicly for the last time. They once were among the most universally admired and revered men in the United States. There were 80 of the Raiders in April 1942, when they carried out one of the most courageous and heart-stirring military operations in this nation's history. The mere mention of their unit's name, in those years, would bring tears to the eyes of grateful Americans. Now only four survive. After Japan's sneak attack on Pearl

Harbor, with the United States reeling and wounded, something dramatic was needed to turn the war effort around. Even though there were no friendly airfields close enough to Japan for the United States to launch a retaliation, a daring plan was devised. Sixteen B-25s were modified so that they could take off from the deck of an aircraft carrier. This had never before been tried – sending such big, heavy bombers from a carrier. The 16 five-man crews, under the command of Lt. Col. James Doolittle, who himself flew the lead plane off the USS Hornet, knew that they would not be able to return to the carrier. They would have to hit Japan and then hope to make it to China for a safe landing.

But on the day of the raid, the Japanese military caught wind of the plan. The Raiders were told that they would have to take off from much farther out in the Pacific Ocean than they had counted on. They were told that because of this they would not have enough fuel to make it to safety. Those men went anyway. They bombed Tokyo and then flew as far as they could. Four planes crash-landed; 11 more crews bailed out and three of the Raiders died. Eight more were captured; three were executed. Another died of starvation in a Japanese prison camp. One crew made it to Russia. The Doolittle Raid sent a message from the United States to its enemies, in those years, as well as to the rest of the world: America will fight. No matter what it takes, we will win.

Of the 80 Raiders, 62 survived the war. They were celebrated as national heroes, models of bravery. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer produced a motion picture based on the raid, “Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo,” starring Spencer Tracy and Van Johnson, was a patriotic and emotional box-office hit and the phrase became part of the national lexicon. In the movie-theater previews for the film, MGM proclaimed that it was presenting the story “with supreme pride.”

Beginning in 1946, the surviving Raiders have held a reunion each April, to commemorate the mission. The reunion is in a different city each year. In 1959, the city of Tucson, Arizona, as a gesture of respect and gratitude, presented the Doolittle Raiders with a set of 80 silver goblets. Each goblet was engraved with the name of a Raider. Every year, a wooden display case bearing all 80 goblets is transported to the reunion city. Each time a Raider passes on, his goblet is turned upside down in the case at the next reunion, as his old friends bear solemn witness. Also in the wooden case is a bottle of 1896 Hennessy Very Special cognac. The year is not happenstance, because it was 1896 when Jimmy Doolittle was born. There has always been a plan: When there are only two surviving Raiders, they would open the bottle, at last drink from it and toast their comrades who preceded them in death.

As 2013 began, there were five living Raiders; then, in February, Tom Griffin passed away at age 96. What a man he was. After bailing out of his plane over a mountainous Chinese forest after the Tokyo raid, he became ill with malaria and almost died. When he recovered, he was sent to Europe to fly more combat missions. He was shot down, captured and spent 22 months in a German prisoner of war camp.

Imagine the selflessness of these men, the sheer guts. There was a passage in the Cincinnati Enquirer obituary for Mr. Griffin that, on the surface, had nothing to do with the war, but that encapsulates the depth of his sense of duty and devotion; “When his wife became ill and needed to go into a nursing home, he visited her every day. He walked from his house to the

nursing home, fed his wife and at the end of the day brought home her clothes. At night, he washed and ironed her clothes. Then he walked them up to her room the next morning. He did that for three years until her death in 2005.”

So now, out of the original 80, only four Raiders remain: Dick Cole (Doolittle's co-pilot on the Tokyo raid,) Robert Hite, Edward Saylor and David Thatcher. All are in their 90s. They have decided that there are too few of them for the public reunions to continue. The events in Fort Walton Beach this past April have marked the end of this era. It has come full circle; Florida's nearby Eglin Field was where the Raiders trained in secrecy for the Tokyo mission. The town planned to do all it could to honour the men: a six-day celebration of their valour, including luncheons, a dinner and a parade. Do the men ever wonder if those of us for whom they helped save the country have tended to it in a way that is worthy of their sacrifice? They don't talk about that, at least not around other people. But if you had found yourself near Fort Walton Beach back in April of 2013 and if you could have encountered any of the Raiders, I bet you might have wanted to offer them a word of thanks. I have heard from various sources and from first hand observation that they appreciated hearing that they were so well remembered.

The men decided that following that final public reunion they will wait until a later date – sometime in the Autumn of 2013 – to get together once more, informally, and in absolute privacy. That is when they will open the bottle of brandy. The years are flowing by too swiftly now; they are not going to wait until there are only two of them. They will fill the four remaining upturned goblets and raise them in a toast to those who are gone. In November, 2013, the last four survivors shared a final toast of that special last bottle of 1896 Hennessy Very Special cognac at the National Museum of the USAF in Dayton, Ohio. On 29 January, 2015, Edward Saylor passed away at age 94. Two months later, 30 March, 2015, Robert Hite followed. At best as my research could bring forth, with these deaths, only two Doolittle Raiders now survive: Richard E. Cole and David Thatcher. Lest we forget!

 *“Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”*  
(Abraham Lincoln 1863)



## **Military Pay**

**C**indy Williams was appointed by President Obama as an Assistant Director for National Security in the Congressional Budget Office. This is an Airman's response to Cindy Williams' editorial piece in the Washington Times about Military Pay. It should be printed in all newspapers across America.

Ms. Williams wrote a piece for the Washington Times denouncing the pay raise(s) coming to service members this year, citing that the stated 13% wage increase was more than they deserve. A young airman from Hill AFB responds to her article below. He ought to get a bonus and a medal for this.

Ms. Williams: I just had the pleasure of reading your column, "Our GI's earn enough," and I am a bit confused. Frankly, I'm wondering where this vaunted overpayment is going, because as far as I can tell, it disappears every month between DFAS (The Defence Finance and Accounting Service) and my bank account. Checking my latest earnings statement I see that I make \$1,117.80 before taxes per month. After taxes, I take home \$874.20. When I run that through the calculator, I come up with an annual salary of \$13,413.60 before taxes and \$10,490.40 after. I work in the Air Force Network Control Center where I am part of the team responsible for a 5,000 host computer network. I am involved with infrastructure segments, specifically with Cisco Systems equipment. A quick check under jobs for "Network Technicians" in the Washington, D.C. area reveals a position in my career field, requiring three years of experience in my job. Amazingly, this job does NOT pay \$13,413.60 a year. No, this job is being offered at \$70,000 to \$80,000 per annum – I'm sure you can draw the obvious conclusions. Given the tenor of your column, I would assume that you NEVER had the pleasure of serving your country in her Armed Forces.

Before you take it upon yourself to once more castigate congressional and DOD leadership for attempting to get the families in the military's lowest pay brackets off of WIC and food stamps, I suggest that you join in a group of deploying soldiers headed for Afghanistan; I leave the choice of service branch up to you. Whatever choice you make though, opt for the six month rotation – it will guarantee you the longest possible time away from your family and friends, thus giving you full "deployment experience."

As your group prepares to board the plane, make sure to note the spouses and children who are saying good-bye to their loved ones. Also take care to note that several families are still unsure of how they will be able to make ends meet while the primary breadwinner is gone. Obviously, they've been squandering the "vast" piles of cash the government has been giving them. Try to deploy over a major holiday; Christmas and Thanksgiving are perennial favourites. And, when you're actually over there, sitting in a foxhole, shivering against the cold desert night and the flight sergeant tells you that there aren't enough people on shift to relieve you for chow, remember this: Trade whatever MRE's (meals, ready-to-eat) you manage to get for the tuna noodle casserole or cheese tortellini and add Tabasco to everything. This gives some flavour.

Talk to your loved ones as often as you are permitted; it won't be nearly long enough or often enough, but take what you can get and be thankful for it. You may have picked up on the fact that I disagree with most of the points you present in your open piece. But tomorrow, from Kabul, I will defend to the death your right to say it! You see, I am an American fighting man, a guarantor of your First Amendment right and every other right you cherish.... On a daily basis, my brother and sister soldiers worldwide ensure that you and people like you can thumb your collective noses at us, all on a salary that is nothing short of pitiful and under conditions that would make most people cringe. We haemorrhage our best and brightest into the private sector because we can't offer the stability and pay of civilian companies. And you, Ms. Williams, have the gall to say that we make more than we deserve? What do you think someone should be paid to defend your life and the life of your family?

 *"Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country? "*  
*(John F. Kennedy, 1961)*



## The Stories Behind the Phrases

### "Kilroy was here!"

**S**o who was Kilroy? He is engraved in stone in the National War Memorial in Washington, DC- back in a small alcove where very few people have seen it. For the WWII generation, this will bring back memories. For you younger folks, it's a bit of trivia that is a part of our North American history. Anyone born from 1913 to about 1950 is familiar with Kilroy. No one knew why he was so well known – but everybody seemed to get into it. So who was Kilroy? In 1946, the American Transit Association, through its radio program "Speak to America," sponsored a nationwide contest to find the real Kilroy, offering a prize of a real trolley car to the person who could prove he was the genuine article. Almost 40 men stepped forward to make that claim, but only James Kilroy from Halifax, Massachusetts, had evidence of his identity. 'Kilroy' was a 46-year old shipyard worker during the war who worked as a checker at the Fore River Shipyard in Quincy. His job was to go around and check on the number of rivets completed. Riveters were on piecework and got paid by the rivet. He would count a block of rivets and put a check mark in semi-waxed lumber chalk, so the rivets wouldn't be counted twice. When Kilroy went off duty, the riveters would erase the mark. Later on, an off-shift inspector would come through and count the rivets a second time, resulting in double pay for the riveters.

One day, Kilroy's boss called him into his office. The foreman was upset about all the wages being paid to riveters and asked him to investigate. It was then he realized what had been going on. The tight spaces he had to crawl in to check the rivets didn't lend themselves to lugging around a paint can and brush, so Kilroy decided to stick with the waxy chalk. He continued to put his check mark on each job he inspected, but added 'KILROY WAS HERE' in king-sized letters next to the check and eventually added the sketch of the chap with the long nose peering over the fence and that became part of the Kilroy message.



Once he did that, the riveters stopped trying to wipe away his marks. Ordinarily the rivets and chalk marks would have been covered up with paint. With the war on, however, ships were leaving the Quincy Yard so fast that there wasn't time to paint them. As a result, Kilroy's inspection "trademark" was seen by thousands of servicemen who boarded the troopships that the yard produced.

His message apparently rang a bell with the servicemen, because they picked it up and spread it all over Europe and the South Pacific. Before war's end, "Kilroy" had been here,

there and everywhere on the long hauls to Berlin and Tokyo. To the troops outbound in those ships, however, he was a complete mystery; all they knew for sure was that someone named Kilroy had "been there first." As a joke, U.S. servicemen began placing the graffiti wherever they landed, claiming it was already there when they arrived. Kilroy became the U.S. super-GI who had always "already been" wherever GIs went. It became a challenge to place the logo in the most unlikely places imaginable. It is said to be atop Mt. Everest, the Statue of Liberty, the underside of the Arc de Triomphe and even scrawled in the dust on the moon. As the war went on, the legend grew. Underwater demolition teams routinely sneaked ashore on Japanese-held islands in the Pacific to map the terrain for coming invasions by U.S. troops (and thus, presumably, were the first GI's there.) On one occasion, however, they reported seeing enemy troops painting over the Kilroy logo!

In 1945, an outhouse was built for the exclusive use of Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill at the Potsdam conference. Its' first occupant was Stalin, who emerged and asked his aide (in Russian,) "Who is Kilroy?" To help prove his authenticity, in 1946, James Kilroy brought along officials from the shipyard and some of the riveters. He won the trolley car, which he gave to his nine children as a Christmas gift and set it up as a playhouse in the Kilroy yard in Halifax, Massachusetts. The tradition continues – even outside Osama Bin Laden's house!

### **“Balls to the Wall”**

Early aircraft's throttles had a ball on the end of it, in order to go full throttle the pilot had to push the throttle all the way forward into the wall of the instrument panel, hence “balls to the wall” for going very fast.

### **“I Gave Them the Whole Nine Yards”**

During WWII, U.S. airplanes were armed with belts of bullets which they would shoot during dogfights and on strafing runs. These belts were folded into the wing compartments that fed their machine guns. These belts measured 27 feet and contained hundreds of rounds of bullets. Often times, the pilots would return from their missions having expended all of their bullets on various targets. They would say, “I gave them the whole nine yards,” meaning they used up all of their ammunition.

### **“God Willing and the Creek Don't Rise”**

Did you know the saying “God willing and the creek don't rise” was in reference to the Creek Indians and not a body of water? It was written by Benjamin Hawkins in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. He was a politician and Indian diplomat. While in the south, Hawkins was requested by the President of the U.S. to return to Washington. In his response, he was said to write, “God willing and the Creek don't rise.” Because he capitalized the word “Creek” it is deduced that he was referring to the Creek Indian tribe and not a body of water.

### **“Okay, But It'll Cost You an Arm and a Leg.”**

In George Washington's days, there were no cameras. One's image was either sculpted or

painted. Some paintings of George Washington showed him standing behind a desk with one arm behind his back while others showed both legs and both arms. Prices charged by painters were not based on how many people were to be painted, but by how many limbs were to be painted. Arms and legs are 'limbs,' therefore painting them would cost the buyer more. Hence the expression, "Okay, but it'll cost you an arm and a leg." (Artists know hands and arms are more difficult to paint.)

### **"Here Comes the Big Wig"**

As incredible as it sounds, there was a time when men and women took baths only twice a year (May and October.) Women kept their hair covered, while men shaved their heads (because of lice and bugs) and wore wigs. Wealthy men could afford good wigs made from wool. They couldn't wash the wigs, so to clean them they would carve out a loaf of bread, put the wig in the shell and bake it for 30 minutes. The heat would make the wig big and fluffy, hence the term "big wig." Today we often use the term "here comes the Big Wig" because someone appears to be or is powerful and wealthy.

### **"To Sit in the Chair "**

In the late 1700's, many houses consisted of a large room with only one chair. Commonly, a long wide board folded down from the wall and was used for dining. The 'head of the household' always sat in the chair while everyone else ate sitting on the floor. Occasionally a guest, who was usually a man, would be invited to sit in this chair during a meal. To sit in the chair meant you were important and in charge. They called the one sitting in the chair the "chairman." Today, in business, we use the expression or title "Chairman" or "Chairman of the Board."

### **"Mind Your Own Bee's Wax;" "To Crack a Smile;" and "Losing Face"**

Personal hygiene left much room for improvement. As a result, many women and men had developed acne scars by adulthood. The women would spread bee's wax over their facial skin to smooth out their complexions. When they were speaking to each other, if a woman began to stare at another woman's face she was told "mind your own bee's wax." Should the woman smile, the wax would crack, hence the term "crack a smile." In addition, when they sat too close to the fire, the wax would melt, therefore, the expression "losing face."

### **"Straight Laced"**

Ladies wore corsets, which would lace up in the front. A proper and dignified woman, as in "straight laced" wore a tightly tied lace.

### **"Not Playing With a Full Deck"**

Common entertainment included playing cards. However, there was a tax levied when purchasing playing cards but only applicable to the Ace of Spades. To avoid paying the tax, people would purchase 51 cards instead. Yet, since most games require 52 cards, these

people were thought to be stupid or dumb because they weren't "playing with a full deck."

## **"Gossip"**

Early politicians required feedback from the public to determine what the people considered important. Since there were no telephones, TV's or radios, the politicians sent their assistants to local taverns, pubs and bars. They were told to "go sip" some ale and listen to people's conversations and political concerns. Many assistants were dispatched at different times. "You go sip here" and "You go sip there." The two words "go sip" were eventually combined when referring to the local opinion and, thus we have the term "gossip."

## **"Minding your "P's and Q's"**

At local taverns, pubs and bars, people drank from pint and quart-sized containers. A bar maid's job was to keep an eye on the customers and keep the drinks coming. She had to pay close attention and remember who was drinking in 'pints' and who was drinking in 'quarts,' hence the phrase 'minding your 'P's and Q's'.



## **What Happened To The WWII Movie Stars?**

**S**ome of you probably have not even heard of these old movie stars. They gave up their wealth, position and fame to become service men and women. From this group of only 18 men came over 70 medals in Honour of their valor, spanning from Bronze Stars, Silver Stars, Distinguish Service Cross, Purple Hearts and one Congressional Medal of Honour.

**Alec Guinness** (Star Wars) operated a British Royal Navy landing craft on D-Day.

**James Doohan** ("Scotty" on Star Trek) landed in Normandy with the U.S. Army on D-Day

**Donald Pleasance** (The Great Escape) really was an R.A.F. pilot who was shot down, held prisoner and tortured by the Germans.

**David Niven** was a Sandhurst graduate and Lt. Colonel of the British Commandos in Normandy.

**James Stewart** entered the Army Air Force as a private and worked his way to the rank of Colonel. During WWII, Stewart served as a bomber pilot, his service record crediting him with leading more than 20 missions over Germany and taking part in hundreds of air strikes during his tour of duty. Stewart earned the Air Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, France's Croix de Guerre and 7 Battle Stars during WWII. In peace time, Stewart continued to

be an active member of the Air Force as a reservist, reaching the rank of Brigadier General before retiring in the late 1950s.

**Clark Gable** was beyond the draft age at the time the U.S. entered WWII. He enlisted as a private in the AAF on Aug. 12, 1942 at Los Angeles and attended the Officers' Candidate School at Miami Beach, Florida where he graduated as a Second Lieutenant on Oct. 28, 1942. He then attended aerial gunnery school and in Feb. 1943. He was assigned to the 351<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group at Polebrook where he flew operational missions over Europe in B-17s. Capt. Gable returned to the U.S. in Oct. 1943 and was relieved from active duty as a Major on June 12, 1944 at his own request, since he was over-age for combat.

**Charlton Heston** was an Army Air Corps Sergeant in Kodiak.

**Ernest Borgnine** was a U. S. Navy Gunners Mate 1935-1945. (Maybe that's why he starred in "McHale's Navy?")

**Charles Durning** was a U. S. Army Ranger at Normandy earning a Silver Star and awarded the Purple Heart.

**Charles Bronson** was a tail gunner in the Army Air Corps, more specifically on B-29's in the 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force out of Guam, Tinian and Saipan.

**George C. Scott** was a decorated U. S. Marine.

**Eddie Albert** from the Green Acres TV series was awarded a Bronze Star for his heroic action as a U.S. Naval Officer aiding Marines at the horrific battle on the island of Tarawain in the Pacific, November 1943.

**Brian Keith** served as a U.S. Marine rear gunner in several actions against the Japanese on Rabal in the Pacific.

**Lee Marvin** was a U.S. Marine on Saipan during the Marianas campaign when he was wounded, earning him the Purple Heart.

**John Russell** enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1942 where he received a Battlefield Commission and was wounded and highly decorated for valour at Guadalcanal.

**Robert Ryan** was a U.S. Marine who served with the O.S.S. in Yugoslavia.

**Tyrone Power** joined the U.S. Marines, was a pilot flying supplies into and wounded Marines out of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

**Audie Murphy**, little 5'5" tall, 110 pound guy from Texas who played cowboy parts: Most Decorated serviceman of WWII and earned: Medal of Honour, Distinguished Service Cross, 2 Silver Star Medals, Legion of Merit, 2 Bronze Star Medals with "V," 2 Purple Hearts ,

U.S. Army Outstanding Civilian Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, 2 Distinguished Unit Emblems, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with One Silver Star, Four Bronze Service Stars (representing nine campaigns) and one Bronze Arrowhead (representing assault landing at Sicily and Southern France) WWII Victory Medal Army of Occupation Medal with Germany Clasp, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Combat Infantry Badge, Marksman Badge with Rifle Bar, Expert Badge with Bayonet Bar, French Fourragère in Colours of the Croix de Guerre, French Legion of Honour, Grade of Chevalier, French Croix de Guerre With Silver Star, French Croix de Guerre with Palm, Medal of Liberated France and Belgian Croix de Guerre 1940 Palm.



## Poems, Songs and Humour

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### In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row.  
That mark our place and in the sky  
The Larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt Dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe.  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders field.

McCrae's "In Flanders Fields" remains to this day one of the most memorable war poems ever written. It is a lasting legacy of the terrible battle in the Ypres Salient in the spring of 1915. Here is the story of the making of that poem:

Although he had been a doctor for years and had served in the South African War, it was impossible to get used to the suffering, the screams and the blood here. Major John McCrae had seen and heard enough in his dressing station to last him a lifetime. As a surgeon attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Brigade, Maj. McCrae, who had joined the McGill faculty in 1900 after graduating from the University of Toronto, had spent seventeen days treating injured men – Canadians, British, Indians, French and Germans in the Ypres Salient. It had been an ordeal that he hardly thought possible. McCrae later wrote of it: "I wish I could embody on paper some of the varied sensations of those seventeen days....seventeen days

of Hades! At the end of the first day if anyone had told us we had to spend seventeen days there, we would have folded our hands and said it could not have been done."

One death particularly affected McCrae. A young friend and former student, Lt. Alexis Helmer of Ottawa, had been killed by a shell burst on May 2, 1915. Lt. Helmer was buried later that day in the little cemetery outside McCrae's dressing station and McCrae had performed the funeral in the absence of the chaplain. The next day, McCrae vented his anguish by composing a poem. The major was no stranger to writing, having authored several medical texts besides dabbling in poetry. In the nearby cemetery, McCrae would see the wild poppies that sprang up in the ditches in that part of Europe and he spent twenty minutes of precious rest time scribbling fifteen lines of verse in a notebook. A young soldier watched him write it. Cyril Allinson, a twenty-two year old sergeant-major, was delivering mail that day when he spotted McCrae. The major looked up as Allinson approached, then went on writing while the sergeant-major stood there quietly. "His face was very tired, but calm as he wrote, "Allison recalled." He looked around from time to time, his eyes straying to Helmer's grave." When McCrae finished five minutes later, he took his mail from Allinson and, without saying a word, handed his pad to the young NCO. Allinson was moved by what he read: "The poem was an exact description of the scene in front of both of us. He used the word blow in that line because the poppies actually were being blown that morning by a gently east wind. It never occurred to me at that time that it would ever be published. It seems to me just an exact description of the scene." In fact, it was very nearly not published. Dissatisfied with it, McCrae tossed the poem away, but a fellow officer retrieved it and sent it to newspapers in England. The Spectator, in London, rejected it, but Punch published it on December 8, 1915.



John McCrae Gravesite at the Wimereux Cemetery



Friends, Chuck and Sam amid the poppies



## A Poem Entitled 'Uncle John'

The Poem is a tribute to Mary Van Ruyveen, Ontario Command's representative at the 2009 Pilgrimage of Remembrance. Mary was of Dutch extraction and languished in what she

saw, heard and felt. The poem simply called "Uncle John" was written by Mary's cousin, Greg, five years older than her. It would appear that Greg had started this poem some years ago when Uncle John passed away. He was never able to complete it until he became inspired to finish it, having read about Mary's recent Pilgrimage back in 2009.

### **Uncle John**

So long ago, on grandpa's field, my friend and I, a kite in tow,  
Drank in the sun; our laughter pealed; we sang the songs that children know.  
And I remember Uncle John, beside the road, he walked along;  
He saw us running through the hay, Then came across the field to say;  
"Please let me try," and in his hands he took the string and held it tight  
While in the beaming sun I cried "Uncle John! Captain of the kite!"  
I know it did not strike me then; he'd never flown a kite before,  
Not much older than we were then, he'd lived a life defiled by war.  
Crossing fields in foreign lands, Fire scorched the sky and grass ahead;  
A rifle clutched in quaking hands, he'd run with fear, rushed past the dead.  
He saw his comrades crumple down beneath the hellish flames full lash;  
The wounded in their blood would drown while others vanished into ash---  
And I remember Uncle John. He left us to our childish games,  
Smiling in his modest way; yet this, to us, his life proclaims -  
No kite can fly without a string; a guiding touch must keep it true;  
Thus, our freedom is a tethered thing. And sacred hands its worth renew.  
I see him proudly move across a golden gleaming field  
Rejoined with all the ones he'd lost, all worries past, all sadness healed.  
And so I see him march within eternal daylight's dawn,  
And in this way I'll remember him, Remember Uncle John!



### **What Are You Guarding, Man-at-Arms?**

"Why do you watch and wait?"  
"I guard the graves," said the Man-at-Arms. "I guard the graves by Flanders Farms, where  
the dead will rise at my call to arms and march to the Menin Gate."

"When do they march then, Man-at-Arms? Cold is the hour and late."  
"They march tonight," said the Man-at-Arms, "with the moon on the Menin Gate. They  
march when the midnight bids them to, with their rifles slung and their pipes aglow, along  
the road – the roads they know, the roads to the Menin Gate."

"What are they singing, Man-at-Arms, as they march to the Menin Gate?"  
"The marching songs," said the Man-at-Arms, "that let them laugh at fate;  
No more will the night be cold for them; for the last tattoo has rolled for them;  
And their souls will sing as of old for them, as they march to the Menin Gate."

- Anonymous



## The Green Fields of France by Eric Vogle

Well how do you do, young Willie McBride,  
Do you mind if I sit here down by your graveside  
And rest for a while 'neath the warm summer sun  
I've been working all day and I'm nearly done.  
I see by your gravestone you were only nineteen  
When you joined the dead heroes of nineteen-sixteen.  
I hope you died well and I hope you died clean  
Or Willie McBride, was it slow and obscene.

Chorus:

Did they beat the drum slowly, did they play the fife lowly,  
Did they sound the dead-march as they lowered you down.  
Did the bugles play the Last Post and chorus,  
Did the pipes play the 'Floors o' the Forest'.

And did you leave a wife or a sweetheart behind  
In some faithful heart is your memory enshrined  
Although you died back there in nineteen-sixteen  
In that faithful heart are you ever nineteen  
Or are you a stranger without even a name  
Enclosed and forgotten behind the glass frame  
In an old photograph, torn and battered and stained  
And faded to yellow in a brown leather frame.

The sun now it shines on the green fields of France  
The warm summer breeze makes the red poppies dance  
And look how the sun shines from under the clouds  
There's no gas, no barbed wire, there's no guns firing now  
But here in this graveyard it's still no-man's-land  
The countless white crosses stand mute in the sand  
To man's blind indifference to his fellow man  
To a whole generation that were butchered and damned.



## "You Could Not Know" by Jean Stoner

You were so young and strong and came with eagerness and pride,  
And found quite soon a mangled earth where brave young soldiers died:  
You knew your friends and folks back home thought of you and would fear,  
The cold unfeeling note which said that you must stay out here.

You knew the grey, smoke-laden air and knew that pain and death  
Were waiting so impatiently in gunfire's noisy breath.  
You knew the weariness of days; the cheerless nights - how slow;  
And wondered if there would be fear when you were told to go.  
Brave man, perhaps you understood your individual share,  
But there is one thing that I know, you could not be aware---  
You could not know, long years ahead, someone you never knew,  
Would search and find your place and stand and shed a tear for you.



## Recruiting Sgt Song

Two recruiting Sgts came to the Club,  
For the sons of the merchants to join the Blue Puttees;  
So all hands enlisted, 500 young men,  
Enlist, you Newfoundlanders and come follow me!

They crossed the broad Atlantic in the brave FLORIZEL,  
On the sands of Suvla they entered into hell;  
And on those bloody beaches, the first of them fell,  
Enlist, you Newfoundlanders and come follow me!

And it's over the mountains and over the sea,  
Come, brave Newfoundlanders and join the blue puttees;  
You'll fight the Hun in Flanders and at Galipoli,  
Enlist, you Newfoundlanders and come follow me!

The call came from London for the last July drive,  
"To the trenches with the Regiment, prepare yourselves to die"  
The roll call next morning, just a handful survived,  
Enlist, you Newfoundlanders and come follow me!

The store men on Water Street still cry for the day,  
When the pride of their city, went marching away;  
A thousand men slaughtered, to hear the King say,  
Enlist, you Newfoundlanders and come follow me!



## "You Bought Me Time" by Arnie Hanenberg

You gave your lives in WWII,  
And even though I fought with you,  
I lived, was it my due?

You bought me time!

Time to see my family grow,  
See my Grandkids faces glow,  
Things that you will never know,  
You bought me time!

Time to work and time to play,  
Watch a sunset after day.  
Watch my garden grow in May,  
You bought me time!

Stanley Cups and Super Bowls,  
Worked at my job, achieved my goals,  
Wore many hats, played many roles,  
You bought me time!

Fifty years and even more,  
I've lived since that so costly war,  
No aircraft whine, no cannon roar,  
You bought me time.

And now I'm over seventy,  
I've had a life both full and free  
I thank you all eternally,  
You bought me time!



## **The Clock of Life**

*After Easy Eddy, Al Capone's lawyer died in a blaze of gunfire on a lonely Chicago Street, the police removed this poem amid a rosary, a crucifix and a religious medallion from his pocket..*

The clock of life is wound but once,  
And no man has the power  
To tell just when the hands will stop,  
At late or early hour.

Now is the only time you own.  
Live, love, toil with a will.  
Place no faith in time,  
For the clock may soon be still.



## Scottish Love Story

**A**n elderly man lay dying in his bed. While suffering the agonies of impending death, he suddenly smelled the aroma of his favourite scones wafting up the stairs. He gathered his remaining strength and lifted himself from the bed. Leaning on the wall, he slowly made his way out of the bedroom and with even greater effort, gripping the railing with both hands, he crawled downstairs. With laboured breath, he leaned against the door-frame, gazing into the kitchen. Were it not for death's agony, he would have thought himself already in heaven, for there, spread out upon the kitchen table were literally hundreds of his favourite scones. Was it heaven? Or was it one final act of love from his devoted Scottish wife of sixty years, seeing to it that he left this world a happy man? Mustering one great final effort, he threw himself towards the table, landing on his knees in rumped posture. His aged and withered hand trembled towards a scone at the edge of the table, when it was suddenly smacked by his wife with a wooden spoon. "P\*\*S off," she said. "They're for the funeral."



## Ship High In Transit (SHIT)

I think that it's important to learn the lesser known lessons of history and today's lesson concerns MANURE!

**I**n the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, everything had to be transported by ship and it was before commercial fertilizers were invented, so large shipments of manure were commonplace! It was shipped dry, because in dry form it weighed a lot less than when wet, but once any sea water hit it, it not only became heavier but the process of fermentation began again, of which a bi-product is methane gas. As the stuff was stored below decks in bundles, you can see what could (and did) happen. Methane began to build up below decks and the first time someone came below at night with a lantern – BOOM!

Several ships were destroyed in this manner before it was determined just what was happening. After that, the bundles of manure were always stamped with the term "ship high in transit" on them, which meant for the sailors to stow it high enough off the lower decks so that any water that came into the hold would not touch this volatile cargo and start the production of methane. Thus evolved the term "S.H.I.T." (Ship High in Transit,) which has come down through the centuries and is in use to this very day. I bet none of you knew the true history of this word. Neither did I – I always thought it was a golf term!



## Need a T-33 to De-Ice a Runway? No Problem

**M**y first crack at “piloting” a real jet didn’t turn out the way I’d hoped in February 1958, the T-33 training at RCAF Station Gimli, already far behind schedule, was thrown into chaos. Southern Manitoba, where Gimli was located, was hit by an extended shot of freezing rain followed by a flash freeze; as far as the weather forecasters could see, there was no relief. Like the rest of Course 5701, I’d just finished ground school and perfected my drills in the static trainer and this latest slap in the face from Mother Nature was keeping me from fulfilling my hopes and dreams of finally flying a jet. Clearing the ice from taxiways and runways weighed heavily on the minds of the few officers who had remained reasonably sober during the extended station stand-down.

One early afternoon when we were skulking around in the smoky Flight Cadets’ mess where, unlike the officers, we were denied alcohol until after supper, an officer bounded in and bellowed: “Right – I need three volunteers!” We three crowded onto the ladder of a T-33 while the instructor who plucked us from the Flight Cadet’s mess sat in the cockpit, describing and miming what we were going to do. I couldn’t believe it. Ahead of my classmates, I was actually going to start up and run the engine of a jet. The idea was to have a tractor tow a T-33 out onto the icy paved surfaces of the airport, followed by a bulldozer. Coordinating with only hand signals, I would hold the T-Bird’s brakes full on and the bulldozer would position itself strategically behind the jet’s tailpipe. At the arranged signal, I would advance power to 50% and the boiling-hot jet blast would deflect down off the bulldozer blade toward the pavement and voilà – melt the ice. If more heat was needed, the tractor driver would wave his hand over his head for either more or less power.

I was the guinea pig to test the procedure. If it worked, my two classmates would join me in an echelon left formation made up of three tractors towing three T-33s, trailed by three bulldozers, to creep slowly down one of the runways, clearing it of ice. It worked well for the first few tries. Coordinating all the hand signals was a bit confusing but they worked and we de-iced a taxiway without incident. Now for the main event: the runway. The tractor driver in front gave the signal that he’d set the tractor brake. I replied by giving the signal that the T-Bird’s brakes were set and since I couldn’t see behind, I guessed the bulldozer guy was doing what he was supposed to be doing. I advanced the power slowly and everything was going well.

But the laws of physics would not be denied: The roaring Rolls-Royce Nene engine was more than enough to overcome the locked brakes and the combined weight of the tractor, aircraft and tow bar and the ice, unsurprisingly, was slippery. There may have been a possible dithering of hand signals between the tug driver and me. Suddenly I could see the tractor sliding sideways from dead ahead to the left. What the heck was the driver doing? The tractor seemed to move faster and faster. Then the driver seemed to be violently trying to slash his own throat. Finally it dawned on me. Oh I see, I thought, he wants me to shut down. I sheepishly did. The only injuries were a slightly damaged nose gear, a bent tow bar and my badly bruised ego. It could have been worse. Both the tractor and the bulldozer driver were spared the haranguing I got from the station commanding officer, but even up to my last flight, when years later I parked a 747-400 at Gate 104 at Toronto’s Pearson

International Airport, I always had a twinge of anxiety at the start of every push-back.



## **Alerts to Threats in 2013 Europe and Australia**

Regards, John Cleese, British writer, actor and tall person

*In the world of sublime, this is written to promote some chuckles and truths! It seems to be so fitting, what with Home Land Security in the States and everywhere else in other corners of the world, especially in Europe and Australia this year.*

**T**he English are feeling the pinch in relation to recent events in Syria and have therefore raised their security level from “Miffed” to “Peeved.” Soon, though, security levels may be raised yet again to “Irritated” or even “A Bit Cross.” The English have not been “A Bit Cross” since the blitz in 1940 when tea supplies nearly ran out. Terrorists have been re-categorized from “Tiresome” to “A Bloody Nuisance.” The last time the British issued a “Bloody Nuisance” warning level was in 1588, when threatened by the Spanish Armada. The Scots have raised their threat level from “Pissed Off” to “Let's get the Bastards.” They don't have any other levels. This is the reason they have been used on the front line of the British army for the last 300 years.

The French government announced yesterday that it has raised its terror alert level from “Run” to “Hide.” The only two higher levels in France are “Collaborate” and “Surrender.” The rise was precipitated by a recent fire that destroyed France's white flag factory, effectively paralyzing the country's military capability. Italy has increased the alert level from “Shout Loudly and Excitedly” to “Elaborate Military Posturing.” Two more levels remain: “Ineffective Combat Operations” and “Change Sides.” The Germans have increased their alert state from “Disdainful Arrogance” to “Dress in Uniform and Sing Marching Songs.” They also have two higher levels: “Invade a Neighbour” and “Lose.”

Belgians, on the other hand, are all on holiday as usual; the only threat they are worried about is NATO pulling out of Brussels. The Spanish are all excited to see their new submarines ready to deploy. These beautifully designed subs have glass bottoms so the new Spanish navy can get a really good look at the old Spanish navy. Australia, meanwhile, has raised its security level from “No worries” to “She'll be right, mate.” Two more escalation levels remain: “Crikey! I think we'll need to cancel the barbie this weekend!” and “The barbie is cancelled.” So far no situation has ever warranted use of the last final escalation level.

## **The Real (???) Story Behind the Apollo 11 Moon Mission**

**O**n 20 July, 1969, as Commander of the Apollo 11 Lunar Module, Neil Armstrong was the first person to set foot on the moon. His first words after stepping on the moon “That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind” were televised to earth and heard by millions.

But just before he re-entered the Lander, Armstrong made the enigmatic remark 'Good luck, Mr. Gorsky.' Many people at NASA thought it was a casual remark concerning some rival Soviet cosmonaut. However, upon checking, there was no Gorsky in either the Russian or American Space Program. Over the years many people questioned Armstrong as to what the 'Good luck, Mr. Gorsky' statement meant, but Armstrong always just smiled. On the 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1995, in Tampa Bay, Fla., while answering questions following a speech, a reporter brought up the 26 year old question to Armstrong. This time he finally responded. Mr. Gorsky died, so Neil Armstrong felt comfortable answering the question. In 1938, when he was a kid in a small mid-west town, he was playing baseball with a friend in the back yard. His friend hit the ball, which landed in his neighbour's yard by the bedroom windows. Well, as luck would have it, Mr. and Mrs. Gorsky were his neighbours. As he leaned down to pick up the ball, young Armstrong heard Mrs. Gorsky shouting at Mr. Gorsky – “SEX, you want SEX? You'll get sex when the kid next door walks on the moon!

Taken from Snopes: let me state that Neil never said “Good luck, Mr. Gorsky” at any time during the mission.



## The Final Inspection

The soldier stood and faced God,  
Which must always come to pass  
He hoped his shoes were shining,  
Just as brightly as his brass.

'Step forward now, you soldier,  
How shall I deal with you?  
Have you always turned the other cheek?  
To My Church have you been true?'

The soldier squared his shoulders and said,  
'No, Lord, I guess I ain't.  
Because those of us who carry guns,  
Can't always be a saint.

I've had to work most Sundays,  
And at times my talk was tough.  
And sometimes I've been violent,  
Because the world is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny,  
That wasn't mine to keep...  
Though I worked a lot of overtime,  
When the bills got just too steep.

And I never passed a cry for help,  
Though at times I shook with fear.  
And sometimes, God, forgive me,  
I've wept unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place,  
Among the people here.  
They never wanted me around,  
Except to calm their fears.

If you've a place for me here, Lord,  
It needn't be so grand.  
I never expected or had too much,  
But if you don't, I'll understand.

There was a silence all around the throne,  
Where the saints had often trod.  
As the soldier waited quietly,  
For the judgment of his God.

'Step forward now, you soldier,  
You've borne your burdens well.  
Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets,  
You've done your time in Hell.'



## **Freedom of the Press**

It's the Military, not the reporter who has given us the freedom of the press.  
It's the Military, not the poet, who has given us the freedom of speech.  
It's the Military, not the politicians that ensures our right to life, liberty and the pursuit of  
happiness.  
It's the Military who salutes the flag, who serves beneath the flag and whose coffin  
is draped by the flag.  
If you care to offer the smallest token of recognition and appreciation for the military,  
please pray for our men and women who have served and are currently serving our  
country and pray for those who have given the ultimate sacrifice for freedom.



**Lest We Forget**  
*Your cordial scribe: Sam*