

Honouring Our Local Veterans

2003

A.J. Bauer

Birthdate: December 13, 1924

Rank / Branch: Group Captain, Royal Canadian Air Force

Unit: 1 Canadian Air Group, United Nations Emergency Force (Egypt)

Region: Canada (various locations for training and service), Germany, Egypt, and Great Britain

Served: 1943-1946; 1948-1979

Community: Desboro, Owen Sound, Hamilton, and Sauble Beach

Medals / Decorations:

- 1939-1945 Star
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal
- Canadian Forces Decoration
- United Nations Emergency Force (Middle East)



Military Service

It seems that the notion of joining the Air Force was very firmly set in his mind by the time he moved to Hamilton. A.J. was seventeen and a half at the time; during the war that age made one eligible for service if their parents would consent. He dutifully complied with his mother's wishes and waited until his eighteenth birthday. As a testament to what an important event this was in his life he can still recall that his birthday fell on a Sunday that year, forcing him to wait an extra day before enlisting.

He enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in Hamilton on December 14, 1943, in Hamilton. Upon being accepted for air crew training he began flying in Regina, and later in Brandon, Manitoba. He was awarded his wings in April, 1944, after completing flight instructor training. As a flying instructor he was stationed at Yorkton (Sask.), Souris (Man.), Centralia (Ont.), and Summerside (P.E.I.). He was released from duty in January 1946.

On returning in 1948, he again performed instructional duties. He spent 1953 through 1957 flying the F-86 Sabre at Baden-Soellingen, Germany. He flew the F-86 Sabre, alternating assignments between Canada and Europe until 1964 when he was assigned to a CF-104 Starfighter.

In 1967 he became the commanding officer at Canadian Forces Base Chatham, New Brunswick. He remained at this post for four years before returning to Germany as Deputy

Commander of 1 Canadian Air Group. In 1974 he was a Deputy Commander of the United Nations Emergency Force in Egypt. From Egypt he returned to Canada, this time as Director of Air Operations and Training. In 1977 A.J. became Air Force Adviser to the Canadian Defence Liaison Staff, a position that sent him to London, England. In 1979 he returned to Canada and was discharged in December, 1979 marking his official retirement.

Elizabeth (Bette) Bauer (nee Harris)

Birthdate: July 5, 19__

Rank / Branch: Leading Air Woman, Women's Division of the Royal Canadian Air Force

Unit: RCAF Women's Division - Specializing in Photography

Region: Canada (various locations for training): served primarily in Ottawa and Prince Edward Island

Served: 1943- 1946

Community: Quarter, Scotland; Hamilton, Scotland; Hamilton, Ontario; Sauble Beach, Ontario

Medals / Decorations:

- 1939-1945 Star
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal

Military Service



On the July 2, 1941 the Government of Canada granted the RCAF permission to enlist women into the Canadian Women's Auxiliary Air Force. It was several more weeks before women were able to enlist in the army and a year before they could enlist in the navy. By February of 1942, the Women's Division of the RCAF was created to better integrate the airwomen. Harris enlisted in September 1943.

Initially there were only eleven trades available to women so Harris opted to undergo training in photography. Photographic intelligence was one of the primary functions of the Air Force. After receiving her initial training at Rockliffe and Dauphin, Manitoba, she then studied at the photography school at Rockliffe, Ontario.

Following her posting at the Rockliffe Base in Ottawa, Harris was sent to Prince Edward Island in 1944. She would be stationed there for the remainder of the war. During this time, Harris was promoted from Air Woman (1st Class) to Leading Air Woman (LAW). This was the highest rank attainable in the Women's Division of the Air Force. By the end of the war there were 17,038 women in the RCAF Women's Division alone. Because of the valiant contributions of women like Bette Bauer, the Royal Canadian Air Force chose to integrate women into the regular corps in 1951.

William Courtney

Birthdate: January 28, 1920

Rank / Branch: Private, Class 'B' Cook, Canadian Army

Unit: Argyll Highlanders

Region: Canada (various locations for training), Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany

Served: 1943-1945

Community: Sunnidale Township, Collingwood, and Owen Sound

Medals / Decorations:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France Germany Star
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal
- Victory Medal

Military Service

In 1943 Courtney enlisted in the army. With a frame of mind common to so many Canadians, he recalls, "It was the thing to do." Upon enlisting he went to Centre #20 in Brampton, Ontario. After spending a month in Brampton he was transferred to Camp Borden where he completed his basic infantry training.

Following this training, Bill spent three months at Hamilton and three months at Farmborough, England training towards a cook's degree. He became a Class 'B' Cook, a position that garnered trades pay. He then went to work at Northern Yorkshire (near York) at an Air Force training centre.

He then left the service corps, enlisting with the Argylls who came from Hamilton, via Jamaica. The Argylls had come to Europe in the summer of 1944. Courtney recalls arriving in France and then riding a train to Belgium. After being stationed briefly in Belgium the Argylls advanced into Germany. While moving along the west bank of the Rhine River they came under siege. Courtney was taken prisoner in March, 1945.

"(We were treated the) same as the rest of them. Not much food. Mostly boiled turnips. Once in a while we'd get a Red Cross package... British, sometimes American... I'd seen those guys from Dieppe. They were in bad shape...I felt sorry for them."

After approximately six weeks as a P.O.W. help came from the British. General Montgomery and his troops freed the camp. Courtney remembers Montgomery as "a mighty man." From Brussels he was flown to London by the R.A.F. in a Lancaster bomber. He survived the war, as did his brothers, Don and Lewis.



William Mercer

Birthdate: February 16, 1924

Rank / Branch: Private, Canadian Army

Unit: Essex Scottish Infantrymen

Region: Canada (various locations for training), Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Poland

Served: 1943 - 1946

Community: Hepworth, Owen Sound

Medals / Decorations:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France Germany Star
- Defence of England Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal
- Victory Medal
- Canada 125th Anniversary Medal (Red Cross service)



Military Service

While recovering from a broken wrist on his nineteenth birthday, Bill recognized the need for volunteers and enlisted in the army on March 11, 1943 in Owen Sound. As with so many brave Canadians of his era he says of his choice - "It was the thing to do!"

After enlisting, Mercer was sent to Toronto for two weeks. There he began basic training which consisted of four weeks in Brampton and six weeks at Camp Borden. He was sent to Halifax to board the Queen Mary to set sail for England. Mercer remembers being on the ship: "It had been a luxury liner, but there wasn't any luxury on it. Every little cabinet and every wall was filled with hammocks, probably three or four deep. You were crammed in there like sardines."

After staying for a few weeks in England, he was part of a wave of reinforcements being sent to France in August, 1944 to provide support for the men who had landed in June. Fighting was sporadic and heavy through the summer of 1944. Mercer joined the Essex Scottish Infantrymen as they made their way through northwest France into Belgium.

On September 28th near the recently liberated city of Antwerp, Mercer was taken prisoner. The prisoners were marched east on a relentless trek that took them to a P.O.W. camp at Stardgaard (present day Poland). Reaching camp on November 7th, Mercer estimates that they marched about 500 miles. The camp held Canadians (many of whom were at Dieppe in 1942) and Americans.

During his time as a prisoner of war, one phenomenon had a profound impact on Private Mercer. The Germans had conceded that Red Cross deliveries could be sent to P.O.W. camps. The deliveries consisted of an array of medical supplies and food. The courage of the

Red Cross volunteers who sought to ease the suffering of their compatriots inspired Mercer to join them himself. For ten years after the war he selflessly gave his time as an integral part of the Red Cross. He remained in the POW camp until February 26th, 1945. As the liberated men were marching back to Belgium, the collapse of Hitler's 3rd Reich was underway.

Donald Reidy

Birthdate: August 17, 1921

Rank / Branch: Corporal, Canadian Army

Unit: Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps, 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade, and 2nd Canadian Armoured Division

Region: Canada (various locations for training and service), Great Britain, France, and Germany

Served: 1940-1946

Community: London, Brantford, Wiarton, and Owen Sound

Medals / Decorations:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France Germany Star
- Defence of England Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp
- Victory Medal
- Overload Efficiency Medal (12 years of service)



Military Service

Donald enlisted in the army very early on in the war. He signed up on December 12th, 1940. His initial basic training was in London, but he was soon sent to Camp Borden. At Camp Borden he took a job as a clerk and store man as much of the Canadian contribution of armaments, vehicles and supplies were being prepared for shipment to Europe at that time.

The onset of Reidy's military career consisted of far more than basic training. As a clerk he and his counterparts had an extraordinary responsibility - the task of preparing supplies for use in battle and outfitting vehicles for a diverse number of tasks. Much has been written about the difficulties the Allies faced in traversing the torn and muddy terrain of France and Belgium: their well-trained Corps of engineers made mobility possible.

Reidy went overseas in 1943, making a brief stop in Scotland for additional training before arriving in England. He was stationed at several bases as part of the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps: Aldershot, Midhurst, Brighton, and Folkestone.

After months of working on several thousand pieces of equipment, Reidy was promoted to Corporal and sent to France. In France he joined the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade. For the

remainder of the war he moved with the 5th Infantry Brigade and the 2nd Canadian Armoured Division. As they moved through France and into Germany, he and his workshop crew kept the equipment working and the troops mobile. Their roles included recovering disabled vehicles and salvaging functioning machinery.

John Warrilow

Birthdate: February 19, 1923

Rank / Branch: Private, Driver/Mechanic, Canadian Army

Unit: Argyll Highlanders

Region: Canada (various locations for training), Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Holland

Served: 1942-1946

Community: Owen Sound, Derby Township, and Britt

Medals / Decorations:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France Germany Star
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal
- Victory Medal
- 2001 Special Anniversary Medal (Holland)



Military Service

John enlisted in Owen Sound on November 26, 1942. He was sent to St. Jerome, Quebec for basic training. After that it was on to Camp Borden for advanced training for armoured service. He became a driver/mechanic, capable of operating trucks, tanks and other track vehicles. Once this training was completed John took brief leave in March 1944. He quickly returned to service and was sent by train to Windsor, Nova Scotia for final preparations before going overseas.

Having completed his training John was sent over on the Isle of France to serve in an armoured division. He was prepared, but did not go into combat right away. During this time word came that there was a desperate need for infantrymen. Many men were taken from armoured and artillery divisions in England and sent to join the infantry in combat. John was among them.

He served in France and then in Holland, where he joined the Argylls. When he joined his regiment they were already in combat on the border of Holland and Belgium, near a town called Waterfleet. Combat was ferocious as bullets snapped in the air as they whizzed by. John was at Veen when a number of Canadians were captured (including Private Bill Courtney). He sadly recalls the desperate need for reinforcements that never seemed to arrive: "(The armoured) didn't lose that many men at a time. (The infantry) were losing companies at a time. They were running out of troops, that's why they couldn't get reinforcements...Infantry lost a lot of men,

there was a time when they had to send bandaged men back to the frontline. We didn't have enough troops."

The area around Veen, on the Rhine river, was subsequently levelled by allied bombing runs. John was with the Argylls when they freed areas around Brussels, Ghent, and Antwerp. The Argylls were the first allied regiments to move into Holland, the Dutch people have graciously recognized the Canadian contribution to their liberation. However he came home with more than medals to commemorate his service. As a driver he was an obvious target for the enemy. He recalls one occasion wherein he came under fire while driving his jeep, realizing the disparity of his situation he jumped out moments before the jeep was destroyed by heavy fire from a German machine gun. To this day he cannot wear a seatbelt.