

In memoria...they sacrificed for us



Remembering them...



No words can convey the pain felt with the loss of a loved one, as painful even if lost in battle. The pain never stops completely, it only diminishes with time, fading ever so slowly but nevertheless, remaining.

Many served, some returned, others did not. We remember them.

Lt. Col. *Sam Sharpe*, one of our earliest victims of *PTSD*

[The material about Lt. Col. Sam Sharpe is based on a visit to the Town of Uxbridge and seeing the commemorative material and war memorials the town has on its streets and sidewalks.]



Sam Sharpe, an average young man, was born and raised in the Uxbridge area, just north of Toronto, the population of which was barely more than 2000 residents at beginning of the 1900s. When Sam was 16, impassioned by his patriotism and loyalty to Canada, he joined the 34th Ontario Regiment, a local militia infantry unit.

Sam did well academically. A university attendee and a graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School, he was a barrister and solicitor in Uxbridge, a rising star among the professionals of the community. He was an elder in the Methodist Church, a Master in the Masonic Lodge. He was elected to the House of Commons as a Conservative Party member in 1908. He was re-elected in 1911 and was a rising member, one point considered for the cabinet ministry of Minister of Militia and Defense. In short, he was a well-respected and well-known professional in the Uxbridge community.

When WWI broke out, Sam had already served in the local militia for

many years. It was inevitable that he would enlist. He was commissioned decades before the war started and rose to rank of major and second-in-command in the 34th regiment by the time the war started.

The news of the war's outbreak moved Sam to more than just serve. He was determined to recruit as many young men from the region as possible to serve in the Canadian military. He recruited relatives, friends, every able-bodied person he could find. He was very successful in the endeavour enlisting over 1000 young recruits from a population of just 2000 residents.

In 1916, his battalion sailed from Halifax on the RMS *Olympic* (sister ship of the ill-fated *Titanic*) a rather ominous omen. The battalion was deployed to France in early 1917.

The first engagement for the battalion came in April when they manned the front-line trenches at Vimy Ridge. Casualty numbers were low but fatal for Sam. He lost his closest friend, Lieutenant Tom Hutchinson, a loss which affected him very badly and began the erosion of his mental well-being.

In the summer of 1917, the battalion was redeployed to the Western Front. Sam lost his best friend at Vimy Ridge but in 1917, the incredible losses suffered by his battalion would destroy him emotionally. Passchendaele was the last straw. Hundreds of his young recruits were killed. As ranking officer, his duty was to write letters home to inform the soldiers' families of their loss. Each letter tore another layer from Sam's psyche.



The warfare impacted every soldier to various degrees. Many suffered shell shock from the constant barrage of the artillery. Sam suffered much more than his fellow soldiers, probably because of his letter writing duties. Eventually, he wrote more than a 1000 letters. Dear Mary,..., Dear Helen,...Dear Joan,...Dear Zoe,...it was a treadmill of agony and sorrow that devastated him emotionally.

His first breakdown came in early 1918. As his military career rose, he received the Distinguished Service Order in January 1918, but his

emotional well-being disintegrated. 'Shell shock,' the name given to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at the time, was not viewed as an illness then. Rather, soldiers suffering the illness at the time were labeled as cowards. Being labeled a coward was too much for Sam's psyche to bear and it marked the beginning of the end for him. He had devoted half of his life to Canadian military service. He fought at Vimy. He fought at Passchendaele. He had recruited more than 1000 young people, all killed. He lost his best friend. He lost almost all the young men he had recruited. Each letter he wrote ripped away another layer from his unstable emotions.

First, he was admitted to the Canadian Convalescence Hospital in Buxton, but his condition declined. He was invalided to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal. The damage of his front-line service, the loss of his best friend, Tom, the impact of the loss of over 1000 recruits was too much to bear. The toll was too much. On May 25, 1918, he jumped to his death through a fourth-floor hospital window to the pavement below. He was 41 years old.

The *AZIZ* family



Remembering my Parents

When you ask a veteran about their war experience, they are only too happy to tell you the adventures they had or the funny things that happened. Digging into the real story can often bring tears and shaking heads. Both my parents, Arthur and Winifred, were Second World War Vets, and yet their stories, experiences, and involvement in the war were completely different.

My father, Arthur, grew up in Toronto, Ontario, and had a job as an instrument designer and maker (This was usually mechanical gauges used to measure pressure.) at the beginning of the war. Art and his buddies followed the news of the war and decided together to enlist in the Canadian Army on October 16, 1941. My father completed his basic training at the Canadian Forces Base Borden, Ontario. This is also where my Father received his training on military tanks at the Canadian Tank School (Base Borden).

In late 1942, my father received orders he was being shipped to England. As a young child, I remember my father entertaining us at mealtimes with stories about his adventures crossing the Atlantic in January 1943. His ship sailed from New York on a very cold day. Soldiers were told to stay below decks. Amid rough seas, seasickness, cramped quarters, and card games, the soldiers rejoiced after three days when they spotted the lights of land, only to be told it

was Halifax. This is where their ships joined the Royal Canadian Navy convoy to make the Atlantic crossing. My father described in detail, the role of each ship in the convoy- troop ships, merchant ships, destroyers, and corvettes. While crossing in the convoy, one merchant ship was hit by German U-boats. My father described watching it sink as they sailed by. No ships in the convoy were allowed to stop to give assistance due to the danger of more ships being hit by U- U-boats.

Upon arriving in London, my father was quickly shipped to Aldershot, England where he spent the rest of his time in England repairing the instruments of military tanks. Although he didn't see military action, I can't help but reflect on the commitment of my father and many young men to support the war effort. Sacrifices and lives were "put on hold" in order to defend our democracy.

My mother 's stories were completely different. She seldom volunteered information or stories about the war. It was only as an adult, when I took my mother (Win) back to her birthplace - London, England, that I got a good glimpse into the life of a young woman in London during the war. My mother was born in London and received an excellent education. She received many scholarships and in 1937 passed the examinations needed to work for the London County Council. Here, she worked in the Public Health Department in Central London Office adjacent to Big Ben. Women like my mother, were trained to fill the void left by men who were now in the armed forces. She was transferred to Highgate Hospital to process air raid victims. Since the war had a slow beginning, She was transferred once again to Whitehall at Westminster to work with patients suffering from Tuberculosis.

As the war progressed, London became a dangerous place due to the heavy bombing. Nightly the city was attacked by buzz bombs, rockets fired from Holland, incendiary bombs, and bombers. During air raids, many Londoners would seek shelter, as Win 's family did, in shelters built in their backyards. These shelters had concrete floors, cement block walls, and a tin roof covered with sandbags. All houses had blackout curtains on their windows. Cars' headlights were also covered except for a thin cross for the light to shine through. It was during one of these air raids that Win 's family house was hit by a bomb. Her family had to move to a flat and during air raids were now required to descend deep into the subway system for the remainder of the night. During the raids, the bombers often followed the Thames River into the heart of London. Therefore, often government buildings were easy targets for bombs. All government employees were trained in firefighting in case an incendiary bomb hit their building. My mother received this training in order to protect Whitehall. She was equipped with a water pump, a scoop, and a bucket of sand. She explained that workers were on teams of 2 or 3 and when their turn arrived they stayed all night in order to protect their building. If a bomb hits its mark on the roof, your team scurried out onto the roof and with a water pumper and sand, to put out the fire. This happened to her a few times. After her death, while I was going through her army papers I found a letter from the Home Guard of London commending her for her service on the night of August 16th/17th, 1941 for protecting Whitehall.

In 1941 Win enlisted in the army and joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service (which was a division of the army). She was sent to Trowbridge in Southern England to receive six months of

training as a special wireless operator. Upon completion, she was stationed in the Village of Loughborough in the County of Leicester. The women were housed in Neissan huts. Each operator worked a radio unit listening to a specific frequency (This was usually an ultra-high frequency). They were listening for signals and/or messages that came through rapidly in Morse code. Messages came in blocks of five and often an operator recognized the sender by the touch sound of the Morse code. All the messages were from the military. Similar to the decoding done at Bletchley Park, this decoding was top secret and all operators were required to take the Official Secrets Act. My mother took this oath and well into her late eighties refused to disclose the information they gathered.

My mother later married a Canadian soldier, my father. Her life continued to feel the effects of war life as she became a War Bride and immigrated to Canada to start a new life. This became another difficult period in her life.

Both my parents taught me to have great respect for our soldiers. From listening to and understanding the events that shaped their early adult years, I wonder if I would have had the grit and determination they did. I know every Remembrance Day when I hear the last post played and I see soldiers salute the flag, I always try to swallow the huge lump in my throat and fight tears for the contribution my parents and many other soldiers made to protect our democracy. I wear my Poppy faithfully and respectfully for our country 's war heroes.

by **Gail Aziz**

The **BERGERSON** family



Edgar M. Jackson

My father was born in June 1911, and was raised on a farm in West Gwillimbury in an area called '*the Hollows.*' He enlisted in 1942. He was 31 years old and felt he needed to defend our freedom.

Dad's basic training was at Canadian Forces Base Borden. He served for just over three years (from December 7, 1942 to February 13, 1946). When he was finally sent to the war front, he



was stationed in France, Holland, Belgium and Britain. Ranked as a corporal, dad's main role was to drive ammunition vehicles to supply the front lines. To minimize the danger in driving these trucks, the transportation was done mostly at night, under camouflage with the truck's lights masked as slotted black-out headlights. The work was no easy task. Often, he drove with the night sky above lit up by bomb explosions and artillery fire. The fear that his vehicle would be hit was his constant passenger.

My dad survived the war, but his return trip home was another matter. The troop carrying ship, the Queen Mary, was hit by a horrendous Atlantic storm. At times the ship was atop of 40 foot waves, the next moment in the trough below the the same gigantic waves. The shipped bobbed on the stormy waves like a helpless cork. Many of the soldiers aboard were terribly seasick. None expected to survive this crossing and return home. They did, eventually arriving safely to New York. The troops cheered with joy and celebration when the ship finally docked.

From New York, the veterans were then transported to Toronto, to the CNE Colosseum, where they were reunited with family and loved ones.

My dad will always be remembered.

by *Evelyn Jackson Bergerson*

The *BRENNER* family



Maurice, Harold and Sydney Brenner



Maurice Brenner



Harold Brenner



Sydney Brenner

Finding information about my family members who served in the armed forces was more than I expected. Many of my family members have passed on. Those who remain, had little more than memories and anecdotes passed down at family gatherings over the years, each recollection a little less as memories faded. With perseverance and determination I have managed to find some information.

Maurice Brenner

Maurice Brenner, my grandfather, served during WWI. Find his information was a real challenge as his service was more than 100 years old. Grandfather Brenner served in the British Armed Forces during the Great War. He served again in WWII but because of his age, he was allowed to serve in the the Home Guard rather than seeing actual field combat. Nevertheless, the Home Guard had proper military duties serving as coastal defense along the coast of the English Channel. There was a real fear throughout the combat years that England might be attacked and so the Home Guard had serious military responsibilities along the entire southern coast.

Harold Brenner

There was little information about Harold Brenner's service. Harold was my father and served in the British Armed Forces in WWII. He saw actual combat during his time of service, fighting in France and southern Belgium. He must have experienced terrible battle engagements for he never talked about his war years, likely lasting legacies of PTSD, the mental health condition many service men suffered when they returned home.

Sydney Brenner

My uncle, Sydney Brenner, served in the Royal Airforce Bomber Command. His role in bomber flights over Germany was navigation and target determination. He flew many missions but was lost in 1944 when his squad was lost in its mission over the North Sea.

by *Maurice Brenner*

“They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old; Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. We will remember them.”

The **BREWSTER** family



Jim and Joseph Ryan

My three uncles, Jim and Joe, maternal-side, twins, served in the Canadian armed forces. Uncle Joe served in the RCAF and trained Canadian pilots in Harvards.



Jim was in the Military Police and was fortunate to survive the war. He continued service after the war as a Military Police officer stationed in Germany for many years. He retired in Canada

from his job in security for Simpson Sears.

My uncle Joe (1921-144) was unfortunate. Sergeant Joe Ran served in the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. He was killed in action in France when munitions landed in their foxhole. He had intended to become an Anglican minister after the war.

Bruce Singleton (nephew)

The **COOK** family



**Private Garner Cook, Canadian Expeditionary Force,
Nova Scotia Highlanders, 85th Battalion, WWI and Home Guard, WWII
1894 - 1967**

My grandfather, Garner Cook, joined the movement of East Coast farmers who volunteered to defend Canada, inexperienced for battle, with no formal training, all who signed on in Halifax, boarded a steamer for Europe with a uniform and a prayer.

*"The story of the role played by the 85th Battalion in the battle of Vimy Ridge has become almost mythical. Raised as part of what became a great province-wide undertaking over a few weeks in the fall of 1915, it had only just arrived at the front in February 1917 and was still waiting to take its place in the line of battle. On the morning of 9 April, when all four divisions of the Canadian Corps attacked together for the first time in the First World War, the 85th was relegated to acting as a work battalion, to help repair trenches and carry out other tasks behind the initial advance. Within a few hours, Canadians had captured almost the entire ridge, and only the two highest points held out: the **"Pimple"** and **Hill 145** (the summit where Canada's Vimy Memorial now stands). Having seen all of his existing battalions broken up attempting to capture Hill 145, the 11th Brigade's commanding officer, Brigadier-General Victor Odlum, turned to the 85th to attempt one more advance before the end of the day. "C" and "D" companies under Captains Harvey Crowell and Percival Anderson were charged with the task."*

[From the Canadian Military Journal <https://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/Vol17/no2/page34-eng.asp>]

The rest is legendary. The Hill was captured, and Vimy secured.

My grandfather contracted pneumonia, which most assuredly saved his life. He was spared from the Somme and lived to raise 8 children.

He continued his military service as Home Guard during WWII, protecting the mouth of the Fundy Tidal Bore on the Atlantic Ocean between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, scanning the open waterway for German U-Boats. Thanks, Grampie. Love you.



Frederick Isaac Cook, CD
Chief Warrant Officer
1936 - 2017

My uncle Fred joined the Canadian Army in 1958 with the Royal Canadian Engineers. After completing his basic Field Engineer training at the Royal Canadian School of Military Engineering (RCSME) at Camp Chilliwack BC he remained in Vedder Crossing with the RCSME Demonstration Troop. From there Fred was posted to 4 Field Squadron in Germany. When he

returned to Canada he started on an Airborne career path – first with 1 Field Squadron, Petawawa, ON and then with 1 Airborne Field Squadron in Edmonton, AB starting in 1968. After Edmonton he was stationed in Camp Gagetown, NB – first with 2 Field Squadron and then with the Base Construction Engineering Section. In 1982 Fred was appointed Regimental Sergeant Major of 2 Combat Engineer Regiment in Petawawa where he served until his retirement in 1985.

Uncle Fred was a former president of the **Lions Club Foundation of Canada** in Sackville, NB. After he retired, was a leading advocate of the **Lions Club Foundation Dog Guides of Canada program**. **Ink** is a member of the Autism Assistance Service Dogs of Canada doing his service for the Cook family in Canada. **Fred Cook** has done his duty and now rests in peace.



Ink is an Autism Assistance Service Dog trained graduate of the Lions Foundation Dog Guides of Canada program. Thanks Uncle Fred. Love you.

Lest We Forget

On behalf of the Cook family, to all retired and serving military and those we lost through combat and friendly fire, lest we forget, thank you. The freedoms won by these brave men, women and the animals who assisted should not be lost through time. We also honour the families of all military personnel who supported and loved those who sacrificed so we can walk free. For those who have returned and face trauma and live with the difficulty of choices made, you are not alone. Assistance is available through the [Royal Canadian Legion Provincial Command](#).

Linda Cook (granddaughter and niece)

Deputy Mayor & Regional Councillor

The **GIRARDI** family



My father served in the Italian army for 10 years. It was WWII. It was conscription for all able-bodied young men. He served throughout Europe: France, Albania, Montenegro, Greece, and Yugoslavia.

He was a member of the Alpini Regiment, the Mountain troops. These soldiers trained and served in mountainous regions where temperatures always ranged from cold to extreme winter cold. Unfortunately, the soldiers' uniforms were not made for this climate.

My father never wanted to talk about his army service, but I remember snippets.

One winter after a twelve-hour march through mountainous terrain, he and his squad found what they thought was a safe place to camp for the night. Extremely tired, they tried to cook up a meal. The only food they had was some rice which they began to cook in buckets of melted snow. Suddenly, they received a warning the enemy was nearby. Tired and hungry, they gobbled down the partially cooked rice. He was very sick that night.

While stationed in France, he learned to speak French to his great satisfaction. While in Yugoslavia he met a young woman and fell in love with her name, the name I got, Nadia.

Many of the young soldiers had left girlfriends behind with whom they wished to communicate but it was always difficult to compose original and meaningful letters. My father always loved writing and composing. He was recruited to write letters for the young soldiers to mail back home.

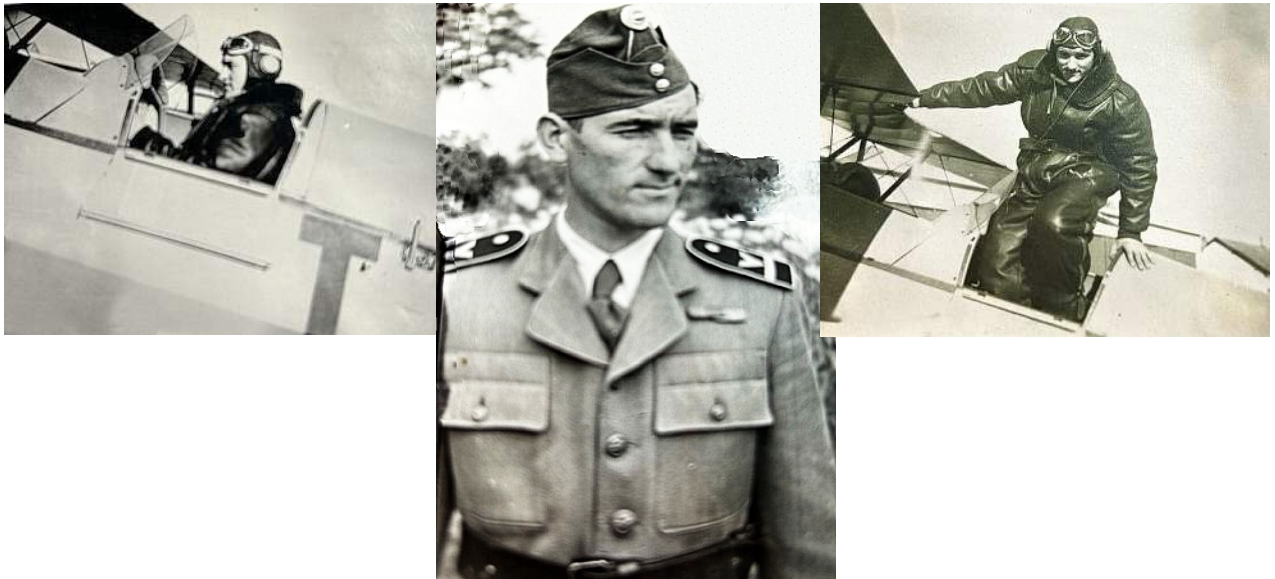
My father had a tattoo of an eagle on his left forearm, the symbol of the Alpini. My father always lamented getting tattooed because the process made him extremely ill at the time. My young friends were always awed by my father's tattoo. As tattoos became fashionable, his teenage granddaughter thought her granddad was

'very cool' with his tattoo.

My father attained the rank of Sergeant Major, received the Medal of Valour, but most importantly, he returned home.

by *Nadia Girardi*

The **LEDENYI** family



REMEMBERING MY DAD

I wonder "Why did he fight in WWII? In the Hungarian Revolution of 1956?" "For Freedom! For Mankind! For Everyman kind!," would have been my father's response.

It breaks my heart to see images of suffering war victims that could easily be imposed over past pictures of war. And it still goes on and on and on.

My dad, *Joseph Ledényi*, was a very proud and accomplished Air Force pilot but he was not proud of the destruction his bombs caused. He was following orders.

My dad seldom talked about the war, but when he did, he spoke in somber tones in a reflective way. His eyes would cloud over, the pain of remembering very evident.

The Hungarian Air force was a very small one during that time and it was swallowed up by the German Air force. The Hungarian pilots had no other choice but to be a part of the bigger German command.

My dad recalled these military experiences in a bland manner, devoid of emotion. He did what he had to do because he was a pilot and it was his job. He followed orders but within he planned to bomb open fields, with little success. He was part of a bombing squad following orders automatically, with no regard to the destruction caused. His training wouldn't allow it. He loved and lived for flying but viewed the war as evil, as dirty politics, as destructive!

He explained that he endured these grueling bombing runs because of the friendships and camaraderie of his fellow Hungarian pilots. My dad was an even-tempered man who made friends easily, so his small salvation was his Air Force colleagues. They were a very tight group of like-minded men, who loved to fly and wanted to serve their country. They supported each other; they leaned on each other; they mourned their fallen comrades but they never discussed any mission after its conclusion, its success or its failure. He remembered the sadness and weariness of war etched on the tired faces of his fellow pilots, none wanting to fly these missions but each forced to do so as they had to follow given orders.

My dad was never shot down, never wounded, never court-martialed as an enemy pilot. In my eyes, he was my hero; a gentleman, an air force pilot, whose words still ring true today, "War is evil; war is dirty politics; war destroys! But despite that, countless soldiers, men and women, fought for and defended freedom to the free world.

We thank you for your service.

by *Eva*

Henn

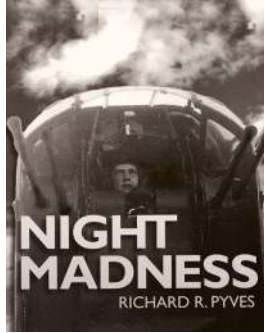
The PYVES family



“Kathleen” for luck



Kay Eason



Mission briefing



Ron Leslie Pyves

Canadian author, Rick Pyves’ memories of his father...

Rick Pyves is a Canadian author with three well-read works, two of which are military in scope.

- Night Madness - A Rear Gunner’s Story of Love, Courage and Hope in WWII
- Courage, Sacrifice, Betrayal: The Story of the Victoria Rifles of Canada, 60th Battalion, in the First World War.

[This is not intended as a book promotion. However, Pyves writes military history and these books are very informative in regard to Canadian and British military services.]

Night Madness, which I highly recommend, is Pyves’ tribute to his father, pilot officer Ronald Leslie Pyves, RCAF 434 Bluenose Squadron who flew on 35 combat ops over France, Germany, and Norway.

When Rick’s mother passed in 2007, it led to the discovery of over 220 letters of correspondence between his mom and dad during WWII – a teenager’s eye witness account to WWII – both overseas on the home front. This was the genesis for Rick’s book *Night Madness* and a reconnection with his dad’s military service which had so dramatically affected his dad’s mental health.

Night Madness is an emotional and sensitive war story about Ronald Pyves, the author's father. It is far more than a recounting of a man's military service. Rather it is a touching tribute to a vet who returned home, shaken and traumatized by his military experience. Another real case of PTSD, something the Canadian military never acknowledged at that time.

Ronald Pyves was a tail gunner in a Canadian Royal Air Force bomber flying bombing missions over Germany. His most devastating mission was the bombing of the city of Dresden on Valentine's Day in 1945. The German city was targeted as it was a key transportation hub for the movement of German troops on the Western Front in reaction to the Russian army's penetration into Germany in early 1945. Although a necessary mission, with over 25,000 military and civilian casualties, Ron would later in life feel guilty about this particular mission although this was not the case for many aircrew who participated.

Pyves, the younger, dedicates his book to the memory of his father and his service but the dedication goes further. All veterans are traumatized by their combat engagement to some degree with some so severely that the repercussions affect them long after their service days end. This awful mental illness is an agonizing mental personal battle known as PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder). The Pyves children saw the seriousness and extent of this emotional and mental suffering experienced by their father for many years after the war.

Another important goal of *Night Madness* is to prod the Canadian government into developing more and better psychological and medical assistance for all first responders including the armed forces veterans who have suffered debilitating mental trauma because of their military service.

Consider giving your support to the cause by reading Rick Pyves' ***Night Madness***.

View Rick Pyves' summary of his book at [NIGHT MADNESS](#).

by **Rick Pyves**

The **ROBINSON** family



Andrew Irwin was Councillor Lisa Robinson's uncle. He served in the Royal Canadian Navy.

Mississauga Citizen of the Year **Andrew Irwin** has died at 92.

The Port Credit man is remembered as a proud Navy veteran.

Andrew Irwin, Mississauga's Citizen of the Year for 2017, has died at the age of 92. He is survived by three children, six grandchildren, and a great-grandchild.

On May 25, his wife Elaine accepted the Cordon S. Shipp Memorial Award on Irwin's behalf at during the Mississauga Civic Awards



reception.

"With all of the recognition he's had, it's wonderful." Elaine said. "I know he went as far as he could go. The doctors kept hoping we would be able to get him in a wheelchair and get him (to the awards ceremony), but that just didn't work.

Irwin's 92nd birthday was on May 28 and Ward 1 councillor Jim Tovey visited him in hospital to present him with his medal and plaque for earning the title of Citizen of the Year.

Irwin earned many medals of honour -including the Russian Medal of Ushakov and the French Legion of Honour - from his time serving with the Navy during the Second World War.

He was recognized as Citizen of the Year for his efforts in sharing his stories with schools and other community groups across Mississauga.

Tovey admired Irwin's desire to share his stories of the war when many others who fought along with him would have been shell-shocked.

"They went through some incredibly horrendous experiences," Tovey said. 'But here's Andy, who takes it on as his obligation and duty to let everybody know why they fought, what they fought for. And what that freedom means.

During the Second World War, he guided convoys on the Murmansk Run as they shipped vital supplies to the Russians in their fight against the Germans.

He was also on the gun crew of the HMCS Algonquin during the Invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944.

To help teachers develop teaching aids for Canada's role in the Second World War, he helped create An ABC of the Battle of the Atlantic. an online teaching resource.

An avid sailor and respected member of the Port Credit Yacht, Irwin spent 25 years as the 'foreman of the boat launch and haul.

As part of the Easter Seals Family Fun Day during the Port Credit Regatta, he took disabled children and their families out for an afternoon on the water.

He was a longtime participant in Port Credit's Canada Day parade and the Port Credit Legion's Remembrance Day parade.

Lisa Robinson

(niece)

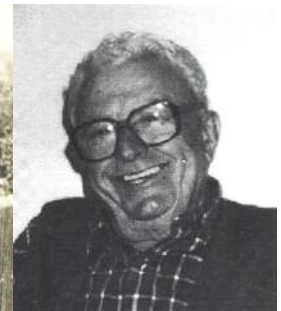
The **SZPIN** family



Polish officers' mess



Olga & John Szpin



my dad, 1996

Reluctant recollections of the war...

My father, *John Szpin*, a Polish cavalry soldier, was captured and imprisoned very soon after WWII started. Poland fought WWII as if it were WWI. Horses and infantry were no match for tanks and artillery. Poland was defeated in 6 short weeks.

As prisoner of war, his first imprisonment was relatively good as he was forced to work on a farm. He had access to food, clandestinely but as Germany began to lose the war, prisoner life changed. My father was put into a concentration camp for three years.

Life in the concentration camps was as brutal as movies portray. Likely worse as my father avoided talking about this period of his life. Over time, I learned bits and pieces about his prisoner days: cold, death a board cot away every night, days of bitter cold working outside in the winter, and worst of all, constant hunger, being starved to death.

I did learn things like...food was so scarce they made a soup from sawdust and potato peels. The winters were indescribably cold. Wood shavings were inserted into 'rag' shoes to insulate the feet.

When the British army liberated the camp, freeing the prisoners, my dad walked out a living skeleton. He guessed his weight at about 75 lbs. He was 5 ft, 8 in.

The British assigned work duties to the prisoners relative to what they did before the war. My dad astutely claimed to have been a cook and so was assigned to work in the British army's kitchens. Food, finally.

He worked as a cook for the British for next three years. When the British camps closed, my dad's destination of relocation was Canada as Britain's immigration quotas had been reached.

My father was very fortunate as a British officer, Canadian Forces, a wealthy civilian remembered him and had him assigned to travel to Canada to be employed at a hotel he owned. My father became a cook at the Windsor Hotel in Sault Ste. Marie in 1948, never to be hungry again but never forgetting his near starvation during WWII.

by *Richard Szpin*

The **WHITE** family





As the decades flash by there are probably not many people that can state that their father served in the WWI. Mine did. I didn't come along till he was 49 in 1945. His name was Harold William White.(upper right-hand corner). Also my grandfather, his brother(great Uncle), and his two sons(Dad's cousins) all went overseas with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) was neither diagnosed or recognized for returning soldiers. My father suffered his entire life from that condition but never received any pension for it, nor recognition from the government. He died at the age of 69 in 1965. I enlisted with the Royal

Canadian Engineers in 1964 and trained in B.C. and N.B. as a combat Engineer. Our biggest training exercise was for NATO service, when I served with the 2nd. Field Squadron in Gagetown attached to the Black Watch infantry regiment in Newfoundland. We flew into the US SAC airbase in Stephenville in Hercules planes, NFLD. The USA was at war in Vietnam and the base was under wartime readiness. US army ,USAF, British, Irish, Canadian army and RCAF troops carried out field exercises all around the countryside of Stephenville, Port aux Basque, and Cornerbrook. Some of the poor locals living in the remoter areas thought the WW III had started. There was still snow on the eastern hilltops in June. We spent the first night on the base and visited with troops shipping out to fight overseas. I thought to myself that these guys looked awfully young. We were the same age; 18-20. Some were from farming communities. Not street wise as we were from the major cities. I don't think they knew what they were in for. During the month-long training exercise, we built non-construction bridges across rivers out of logs, cut down upstream, floated down to the construction site, captured, trimmed and fitted. Just like the British engineers did in the movie, "The Bridge on the River Kwai", screened in 1964. When training in Vedder Crossing, B.C., just outside Chilliwack, the base Commandant had bus loads of recruits driven into Vancouver for the grand premier showing of the movie. We had our summer dress uniforms on, and were marched down the main street to the theatre to the beat of a military band. It was a great spectacle that had the locals wondering what occasion was taking place.(on left side with Felix Katz). We also built an airfield out of the woods so small aircraft could land, and carried out field maneuvers. It was then that it struck me how well Canadian soldiers were trained throughout the ranks. We captured American positions with relative ease. I don't condone or glorify war. What we see on TV today from Ukraine and Gaza and Lebanon is beyond tragic. Innocent lives lost . Insanity. There would be no wars if only we could send the politicians who start them.

I am among the fortunate ones, those who served and returned home, safe. However, I know my family was very committed to Canada's military service as many of my family members served and one never returned.

Harold White, my father, served in the Royal Canadian Regiment, RCR, of New Brunswick, ultimately serving in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force. After 4 years of service, he returned home to Canada. His compensation for his service, medals. He never received any veteran's pension.

George White, my father's cousin, enlisted as a teen and fought in WWI with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He fought in what is known as the battles of the trenches. Sadly, he was a casualty of war.

John White, Jim's brother, my great, was another young Canadian who fought in WWI. He fought for the four years of the war. He survived but came back home a casualty from the experiences suffered in the war.

Jim White, my grandfather, enlisted soon after the outbreak of the war. He served with the Canadians who fought in the four years of the war and fortunately, he also returned home after the war.

Paul White

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Create your own DIGITAL POPPY.

[to be used anywhere you do digital work, emails, websites, digital newsletters]

How to create and use your DIGITAL POPPY

1. Go to link -> [DIGITALPOPPY](#)

[You will be asked your ***name***,
to whom you want to ***dedicate the poppy***,
for a ***donation***
(by credit card...it's safe. The Canadian Legion site.)]

2. Download the digital poppy and save it to your computer

- Once you have created the digital poppy, you will be able to download it, FRONT SIDE and BACK SIDE,
- Save the downloads to your computer for retrieval when you want them

3. Use your digital poppy in your emails attaching it to the signature in commemoration of whom you dedicated your poppy to. It's a nice way to remember a family member or someone you want to remember who has served.
