# Canada Remembers Times

Veterans' Week Special Edition – November 5 to 11, 2012


# Canadians Take Vimy Ridge

In 1917, Canadians took part in a First World War battle that even today is a national point of pride. The scene was Vimy Ridge—a long, heavily defended hill along the Western Front in northern France near Arras. The British and French had tried unsuccessfully to capture it earlier in the war. On April 9, 1917, it was Canada's turn.

Early that morning, after months of planning and training, the first group of 20,000 Canadians attacked. Through the snow and sleet, Allied artillery laid down a "creeping barrage"—an advancing line of precise shell fire. Soldiers followed closely behind the explosions and overran the enemy before many of them could leave their underground bunkers. Most of the ridge was captured by noon that day, and the final part was taken by April 12. Canada had done it but victory came at a cost—approximately 11,000 of our men were killed or wounded.

It has been said that Canada "came of age" as a country that day. For the first time the four Canadian divisions, uniting more than 100,000 Canadians from coast to coast, served side by side and achieved one of the greatest victories in our country's history.

Photo: LAC PA-004388

*A tank advancing with infantry at Vimy Ridge.*

## Mud and Death at Passchendaele

In the fall of 1917, Canadian troops in Belgium fought in the Third Battle of Ypres, better known as the Battle of Passchendaele.

The autumn rains came early that year to Flanders Fields. The fighting churned the flat terrain into a sea of muddy clay. Trenches filled with cold water and collapsed. Shell holes overflowed with muck. Men, equipment and horses that slipped off the duckboards (wooden walkways in trenches and on paths) were sucked into the swampy mess—often never to be seen again.

The Canadians took over from the battered British forces who had been fighting there since July. On October 26, the Canadians began to advance on the enemy through often waist-deep mud. They were pounded by German artillery and machine-gun fire. It was a nightmare of dirt and death. Finally, on November 10, 1917, Passchendaele was captured. Once again the Canadians had proved their valour, by succeeding where others had not.

What was the cost to capture those few kilometers of land and the ruined remnants of the town? There were almost 16,000 Canadian casualties.

Photo: LAC PA-002156

*Canadian Pioneers laying duckboards over mud.*

## National Peacekeepers' Day

Canada is unique in many ways. An example of this can be found on Sussex Drive in Ottawa. Lots of countries have war monuments but *Reconciliation*—Canada's salute to peacekeepers—is the only national memorial in the world dedicated to peace support efforts. This awareness of the importance of preventing wars, not just fighting them, is also behind another original Canadian creation—National Peacekeepers' Day.

Photo: DND IS2002-9012C

*Canadian Peacekeeping Monument.*

On August 9, Canadians stop to honour those who have served and made sacrifices in our country's peace support efforts over the years. This date was selected as it was on this day in 1974 that a Canadian Forces transport plane was shot down in the Middle East, killing nine Canadian peacekeepers—our country's largest single-day loss of life in a peace support operation.

## Standing Up for Freedom in Libya

Canadian Forces members have put their lives on the line in many places around the world over the years. In 2011, they found themselves facing a new challenge—helping to protect the people of Libya from the repressive regime that had ruled their country for decades.

After a popular uprising in this North African country was met with violence by Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi, the United Nations (UN) authorized an arms embargo and a no-fly zone to help protect its civilians. The Canadian Forces stepped up immediately, first to help evacuate Canadians and other foreigners who were trapped by the fighting, and then as part of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led air and sea campaign to enforce the UN resolutions.

Our air force patrolled the skies, refuelled NATO warplanes and bombed pro-Gadhafi forces that were threatening civilians. Our navy cruised the Mediterranean Sea off the Libyan coast, protecting the NATO fleet, boarding vessels to search for smuggled weapons and helping to stop coastal raids on the city of Misrata. It was dangerous duty—HMCS *Charlottetown* came under enemy fire during the mission, the first time that has happened to a Canadian warship since the Korean War.

In the end, the Gadhafi regime was toppled and a new era has begun in Libya. At the mission's peak, approximately 650 Canadian Forces members served in the theatre of operations. Fortunately, no Canadian lives were lost.

Photo: DND IS2011-6002-055

*A CF-18 Hornet fighter takes off from an Italian air base during the NATO air campaign.*

# The Dieppe Raid

The year 1942 was a grim time during the Second World War. Germany occupied much of Western Europe and its armies were advancing in North Africa and the Soviet Union. The Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, pushed for the opening of another front to help relieve the pressure on his battered forces. The Allies did not yet have the resources to invade Europe, but they did decide to launch a major raid on Dieppe, France. There they would try out amphibious landing techniques, gather intelligence and hopefully force the Germans to divert troops away from the Eastern Front.

Almost 5,000 Canadians came ashore at Dieppe, Puys and Pourville in the early morning of August 19, 1942. The German defences were strong, however, and things quickly went wrong.

**John Grogan of Ontario was there….**

*"We knew what we were supposed to do all right. We were to get to land and get over the beach as quickly as we could and get up over the sea wall. But on landing, I guess the first thing I recall is that . . . the beach was lined with people all lying there . . . I just couldn't understand what they were all lying there for. But they were dead . . . and the ones that I had waved good-bye to that morning . . . all of these people . . . all dead in such a short space of time."*

More than 900 Canadians were killed and almost 2,000 more were captured. The hard lessons learned at Dieppe helped save many lives when the Allies came ashore on D-Day two years later.

Photo: LAC C-014160

*Aftermath of the Dieppe Raid.*

Canada

# The Canadian Forces in the Congo

One of the most challenging missions ever faced by Canadian peacekeepers was the United Nations (UN) effort in the Congo from 1960 to 1964. This large African country had been a Belgian colony for 90 years before gaining its independence in 1960. Unfortunately, the new nation was immediately plunged into chaos as a result of the political in-fighting, inter-tribal tensions, famine, mutiny by the army, international interference and the widespread violence that ensued.

The UN soon sent in peacekeepers to try to restore order and stability. It was a major undertaking—eventually a UN force of more than 20,000 personnel would serve in the country, including more than 300 Canadians. The UN troops found themselves in a new kind of peace support mission. Violence and weapons were everywhere, but they were able to prevent break-away portions of the country from splitting off. They also helped push out foreign mercenaries who were contributing to the instability. In the end, however, the UN forces were not enough to stop the greater forces of upheaval rocking the Congo and they departed in 1964. Two Canadian soldiers died during that mission.

Sadly, the situation in the Congo has remained troubled and Canadian Forces members have again been serving in the country since the late 1990s to try to improve the situation.

Photo: DND UNC63-23-9

*Canadian soldier at a Congolese defensive position in 1963.*

# Remembering the South African War

The year 2012 marks the 110th anniversary of the end of the South African War—the first time that large numbers of Canadian soldiers served overseas.

Our young country sent troops to South Africa in 1899 to help Britain put down an uprising by Dutch settlers and bring the entire region under its control. Fighting so far from home in such an unfamiliar setting was very challenging. The Canadians, however, soon earned a reputation for skill and tenacity in the Battle of Paardeberg and the Battle of Leliefontein. During the war, five Canadians earned the Victoria Cross, the highest award for military valour.

The war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging on May 31, 1902. The Dutch settlers surrendered their independence in exchange for aid to those affected by the fighting and for eventual self-government. By the end of the conflict, more than 7,000 Canadians had volunteered for service with approximately 280 losing their lives (most from injury or disease caused by the harsh conditions) and more than 250 being wounded.

Photo: CWM 19820205-003
© Canadian War Museum

*Canadians on the veldt in South Africa.*

# The First Ukrainian-Canadian General

Joseph Romanow was born in Saskatoon in 1921. One of many Ukrainian-Canadians to volunteer during the Second World War, Romanow joined the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in 1940. He first saw action piloting in anti-submarine (U-boat) air patrols and escorting convoys. After a short stint in England, he was transferred to Burma where he flew Dakota DC-3 transport planes and dodged Japanese fighter aircraft. While in Asia, he helped train Gurkha soldiers and served with them.

After the war, Romanow played a role in helping bring more than 35,000 Ukrainian refugees to safety in Canada.

In the post-war years, he graduated with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. Romanow then rejoined the RCAF and earned a master's in aeronautical engineering. He would later work on the Avro Arrow jet program and was the officer responsible for the final installation and operation of Canada's first nuclear missile site in North Bay, Ontario.

Photo courtesy of Mary Romanow.

*Brigadier-General Joseph Romanow.*

In the early 1970s, Romanow spent three years in West Germany helping NATO reorganize its air command structure.

The first Ukrainian-Canadian to become a general in the Canadian Forces, he died in Ottawa, in 2011, at the age of 89.

# 'Hard-Over' Harry

Henry "Harry" DeWolf was born in Nova Scotia in 1903. He became the most decorated Canadian naval officer of the Second World War. Under his command, HMCS *Haida* earned the reputation as the "fightingest ship in the Canadian Navy." It was responsible for sinking 14 enemy ships in just over a year. Many of the battles took place at night in the English Channel, when DeWolf secured his reputation as a fearless and skillful tactician. He was known to his crew as "Hard-Over Harry" for various bold maneuvers off the coast of France (the nautical term 'hard over' means to turn the ship's wheel sharply).

Photo: LAC PA-134298

*DeWolf on the bridge of HMCS* Haida *in 1944.*

During the post-war years, Captain DeWolf commanded the aircraft carriers HMCS *Warrior* and HMCS *Magnificent*. He died in 2000, at the age of 97, and was buried at sea. There is now a waterfront park named after DeWolf on the Bedford Basin in Nova Scotia.

# The War of 1812

Tensions between the United States (U.S.) and Great Britain had been growing over economic and political issues for some time when the U.S. declared war on Great Britain on June 18, 1812. The fighting would primarily take place in the continental U.S. and in Upper and Lower Canada. Naval battles also occurred on the Great Lakes and the Atlantic coast.

Although preoccupied with their conflict with France in Europe, the British managed to repel several U.S. intrusions into Upper and Lower Canada with the help of their loyal Aboriginal allies and the Canadian militias. The battles of Queenston Heights, Lundy's Lane, Crysler's Farm and Chateauguay were some of the key events of the war. In April 1813, the Americans attacked York (present-day Toronto), where they burned the Parliament buildings.

After Napoleon's fall in 1814, the British were able to focus their attention on the fighting in North America and send three large armies to the continent. British forces attacked Washington, D.C., and burned the White House in August 1814.

After years of fighting, both sides were tired of paying taxes to sustain a war that was going nowhere, and merchants clamoured for the resumption of trade. Peace negotiations began in late 1814 with the Treaty of Ghent ending the war on February 17, 1815. The results . . . almost 4,000 soldiers killed in action and both sides claiming victory.

# The Will to Live

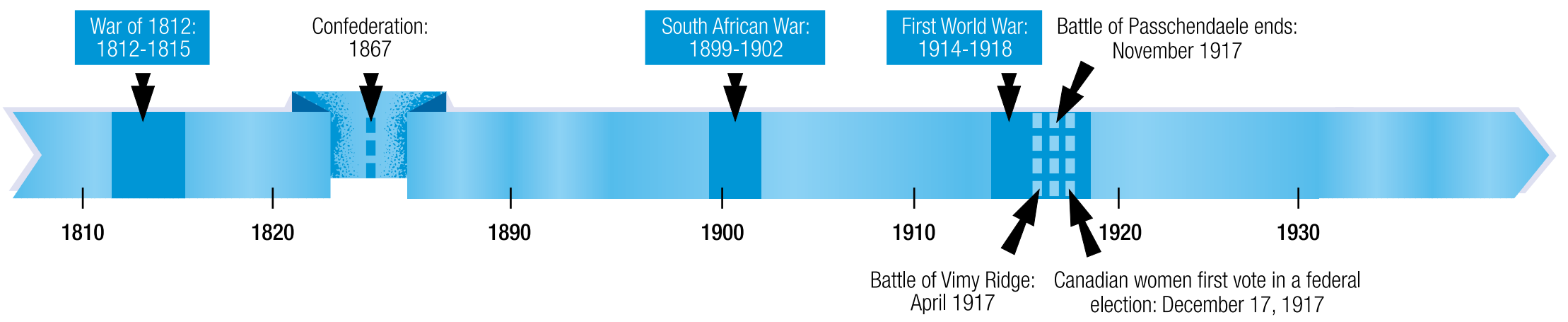
Image from the Military Museums Mural of Honour (courtesy of the Military Museums).

*Curley Christian after the war.*

Ethelbert "Curley" Christian was born in the United States in 1882 and he settled in Ontario as a young man. He volunteered for the army during the First World War, one of the many brave Black Canadians who did so.

On April 9, 1917, Curley Christian was serving with the Winnipeg Grenadiers during the Battle of Vimy Ridge when artillery fire buried him in a trench. All four limbs were crushed by debris and the wounded soldier was trapped for two days. Found barely alive, he cheated death again when two of his stretcher-bearers were killed by enemy fire while carrying him from the battlefield.

Curley Christian miraculously survived but unfortunately gangrene set in and doctors had to amputate his arms and legs. His positive demeanor remained, however, and he would go on to marry, become a father and live a long and active life until his death in 1954. He is the only Canadian quadruple amputee to survive the First World War.



# Super Spies

**In wartime, getting information on the enemy's plans is very important but challenging. This is where spies come in. Often secretly working behind enemy lines, it is very dangerous work. If captured, they can expect harsh interrogation and even execution. Many brave Canadian spies, like the ones mentioned below, risked their lives to help the Allies achieve victory.**

## Special Agent Guy Biéler


Image courtesy of Norm Christie / www.cefbooks.ca

*Book about Biéler written by his daughter.*

Gustave "Guy" Biéler was born in France in 1904 and moved to Montréal at the age of 20. When the Second World War broke out, he joined *Le Régiment de Maisonneuve*. His French background and perfect English led him to be recruited by the "Special Operations Executive" in London for espionage training.

Although badly injured while parachuting into occupied France in November 1942, he organized and led the French Resistance's "Musician" network. Based in Saint-Quentin, the network attacked fuel depots, factories and transportation targets in a large area of northern France. Its sabotage efforts were so effective that the Germans formed a special team to eliminate it. The Gestapo finally arrested Biéler in January 1944. Despite the extensive torture and starvation he suffered at the Flossenbürg concentration camp, he revealed nothing to his interrogators. The Germans executed Biéler in September 1944.

Biéler was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Order and made a Member of the Order of the British Empire. Today, a street in Saint-Quentin and a memorial in Montréal bear his name.

## The Spy from PEI

Clifton Stewart was born in P.E.I. He had a knack for electronics and, by the age of 19, he was a budding amateur radio genius. One day, two RCMP officers went to the family farm and informed Stewart that the British secret service wanted to recruit him. They somehow knew that he was an electronics whiz.

Photo courtesy of Stewart Family.

*Clifton Stewart during the war.*

Young Mr. Stewart was sent to the British Security Coordination Office in New York City, to work on the "Rockex" project with a handpicked team. The machine they developed was used to encipher almost all secret telegrams between London and New York during the Second World War.

Going by the code name W5 (because he was the fifth spy recruited from the Western Hemisphere), he moved on to Camp X in Whitby, Ontario. There he honed his craft with other coding and demolition experts. Stewart was then sent on top secret missions in occupied Europe. Dropped behind enemy lines, a team of agents would set up radio communications with "the spy from P.E.I." hauling a briefcase containing a coding machine. Information was gathered and messages sent. Mission accomplished, the team would fly back to safety.

What exactly were these missions? Well that is still not entirely known. . . . Stewart died in P.E.I., with his secrets, at age 91.

## A Man Called Intrepid

Manitoba's William Stephenson was a pilot in the First World War who earned several medals for bravery. His plane was shot down; he was wounded and then captured by the Germans, but managed to escape. He would return to service in the Second World War in a very different role.

Photo: The Intrepid Society

*Sir William Stephenson*

Stephenson became chief of the British Security Coordination (BSC) and the brain behind "Camp X." It was a secret training facility for Allied spies, established near Whitby, Ontario, in late 1941. It featured "Hydra," a sophisticated communications encoding centre. Very few people were aware of the true purpose of Camp X, including Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King.

Allied agents were trained there in silent killing, sabotage, demolition, map reading, weapons and Morse code. Once ready, the agents were dropped behind enemy lines to do their work.

Ian Fleming, later famous for writing the James Bond novels, trained at the camp. His Bond character was supposedly based on Stephenson and what Fleming learned from him. Colonel William "Wild Bill" Donovan, wartime head of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services, credited Stephenson with teaching Americans about foreign intelligence gathering.

The camp was later abandoned, its buildings demolished or relocated, and its records destroyed or locked away under the *Official Secrets Act*. Today, the former site of Camp X is known as "Intrepid Park," named after Stephenson's wartime code name. A monument honours the men and women who trained and worked there.

## Did You Know?

Canada was far away from most of the fighting during the Second World War, but we were not safe from enemy attack. In late 1944 and early 1945, the Japanese released thousands of large bomb-carrying balloons that high-altitude winds blew across the Pacific Ocean.

Hundreds of these explosive devices reached North America and some landed in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. The Japanese hoped the bombs would start forest fires and spread panic, but very little damage resulted.

## A Family Tradition at Sea

Ronald Lowry, originally from the Bay of Quinte Mohawk Band in Ontario, was 17 when he applied to join the Royal Canadian Navy in 1949. The Korean War erupted in 1950 and Lowry soon found himself aboard HMCS *Nootka* on the other side of the world.

A sonar operator, he kept watch for enemy submarines and torpedoes off the Korean coast. Lowry had also been trained in demolition work. He used these skills when he worked with South Korean and British marines in commando raids to destroy enemy bridges, railways and other strategic installations.

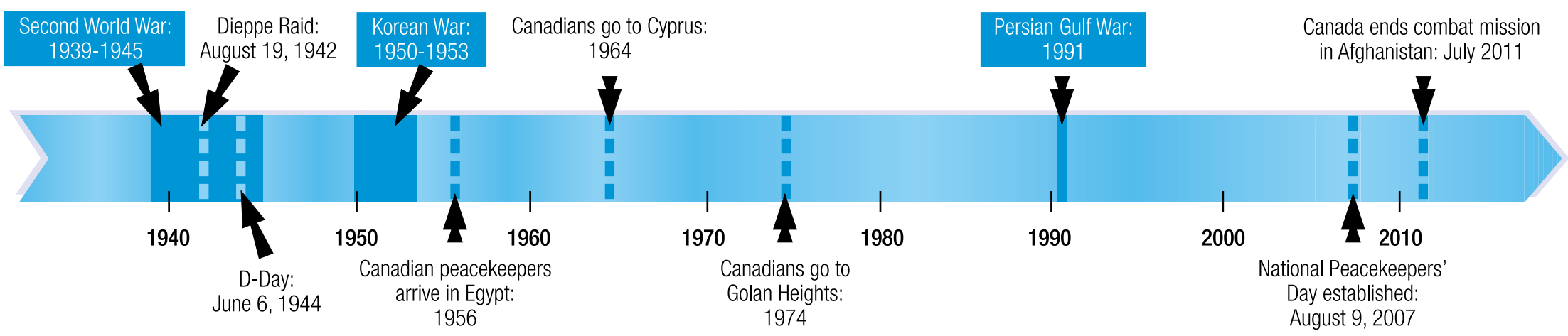
Following the war, Lowry served aboard mine sweepers, cruisers and patrol vessels before retiring after almost ten years in uniform. Coming from a family with a strong history of military service, the tradition continued with Lowry marrying a Wren (a member of the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service) and four of his five sons also serving in the Navy.

Photo: VAC

*Ronald Lowry in 1955.*

## Did You Know?

In 1918, during the First World War, a German U-boat (submarine) captured a Canadian trawler off the Nova Scotia coast. The Germans put a small crew aboard the trawler with weapons and a radio, and then set off on a three-day cruise of destruction. The ship was well-known to the fishing fleet and could get within rifle range before anyone noticed its German flag. Seven schooners were captured and sunk before the trawler ran out of coal. The Germans then scuttled it, ending its short career as an enemy warship.



# The Sawdust Fusiliers

An urgent need for lumber in the First World War led to the creation of a special auxiliary service: the Canadian Forestry Corps. Also known as "The Sawdust Fusiliers," it was created to supply the huge quantities of wood needed on the Western Front. For every soldier, an estimated five trees were required to build living facilities, make crates to ship food, weapons and ammunition . . . and even for coffins.

The British government concluded that nobody was more qualified to harvest timber than the Canadians. Instead of shipping the wood from Canada, however, our lumberjacks were sent over to cut down forests in the United Kingdom and France.

Photo: CWM 19930065-858
© Canadian War Museum

*Proud members of the Canadian Forestry Corps show off their muscles.*

Through the achievements of the Canadian Forestry Corps, the British armies in France became self-sufficient in timber and trans-Atlantic shipping space was freed for vital reinforcements and supplies.

## Did You Know?

Helicopters were used for the first time on the front lines during the Korean War, proving essential in the evacuation of wounded United Nations troops. Because there was a relatively static front line during the second half of the war, field hospitals could be located near the fighting and the helicopters did not have to fly far. More than a thousand Canadians were wounded. About half remained in the area to receive medical attention while the more severely wounded were airlifted to Canada.

# The Falcon of Malta

George "Buzz" Beurling was born in Verdun, Quebec, in 1921. In September 1941 he joined the Royal Air Force (RAF). His first action was escorting bombers and flying fighter sweeps across the English Channel.

Shortly after his first kill over Calais, France, in May 1942, Beurling was posted to the Mediterranean island of Malta. The "Falcon of Malta" shot down 17 enemy aircraft in just 14 days and his total of 27 kills was the most by an RAF pilot over the island. For his accomplishments, he received the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Distinguished Flying Medal, and the Distinguished Service Order.

He owed his combat success to good eyesight, excellent shooting skills and the ability to fly his Spitfire like no other pilot would dare. His aggressive style saw him shot down four times over Malta, however, suffering several injuries. On October 31, 1942, while being medically evacuated to Britain, his flight crashed into the sea off Gibraltar. One of only three survivors, Beurling eventually returned to the cockpit with the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Photo: LAC PA-037422

*Beurling marking his kills.*

Squadron Leader Beurling was the most successful Canadian ace of the Second World War, ending his military career with 31½ confirmed kills.

# Capitaine Bonhomme

Photo courtesy of Mireille Noël.

*Michel Noël during the war.*

Michel Noël, born Jean-Noël Croteau in 1922, grew up in Québec City. He volunteered with the *Régiment de Hull* in 1943 and joined the *Army Show* to entertain the troops. He served in the Aleutian Islands in November 1943, and was later sent to Europe, where he fought in the Battle of the Scheldt and in the Netherlands. While in Bergen Op Zoom, Noël was severely wounded by an explosion. A piece of shrapnel stayed in his heel for the rest of his life.

Following the war, Noël went on to become a famed author, singer, radio personality, comedian and actor for more than four decades. He created the well-known character *Capitaine Bonhomme* and popularized the expression "*Les sceptiques seront confondus-dus-dus!*" (The skeptics will be baffled!). He died in 1993.

# A Good Neighbour

Not all Canadian women spent the Second World War years in uniform or in coveralls. To the women on the home front, Kate Aitken's voice was akin to welcoming a good friend to their kitchen. Mrs. A, as she was fondly known by her listeners, dispensed household hints, gossip, down-to-earth advice, and current events on her CBC Radio show "Your Good Neighbour." Her broadcasts even provided a week's menu based on the considerations of rationing and the produce in season from Victory gardens.


Photo: VirtualMuseum.ca - Museum on the Boyne

*Mrs. A leading classes at Waterloo Station in London, England. 1945.*

The Ontario native was also a speaker, interviewer, educator and cookbook author. As the conservation director for the federal Wartime Prices and Trade Board, her slogan "Use it up, wear it out, make over, make do" also became a poster. Her "Remake Review" tour even travelled across Canada with new ideas for remaking clothing. Mrs. A's wartime popularity was so great that in 1945 alone, she received 260,000 letters. She really was a good neighbour!

# Highway of Heroes

Canadian Forces members have served in Afghanistan since late 2001 in support of the war on terror and to help stabilize the troubled country. The most dangerous part of Canada's mission there was in the Kandahar region from 2005 to 2011. Kandahar was a hotbed of insurgent activity and our soldiers had to constantly be on guard anytime they left their camps to go "outside the wire."

Sadly, more than 155 Canadian Forces members have died in Afghanistan over the years. People have honoured them by lining the overpasses of Ontario's Highway 401, between Trenton and Toronto, which fallen soldiers travel on their return to Canada. Flags fly, fire truck and police car lights flash, salutes snap, and men, women and children respectfully stand as the convoy of vehicles passes by. On a stretch of road now known as the "Highway of Heroes," Canada remembers.

Photo: Pete Fisher / Nesphotos.ca

*Canadians paying respects along the Highway of Heroes in Northumberland County in 2007.*

# Touchdown for Remembrance

Ontario's Jake Gaudaur is a Canadian hero. A fighter pilot during the Second World War, he also won Grey Cups as a player and an executive. He was the commissioner of the Canadian Football League (CFL) from 1968 to 1984. Many football players like Gaudaur have also worn a military uniform and exemplified the attributes of Canada's Veterans: strength, perseverance, comradeship, courage and contribution to community. The Jake Gaudaur Veterans' Trophy is presented each year to the CFL player who best personifies these qualities. Jake Gaudaur passed away in 2007, at the age of 87.


Photo: VAC

*Jake Gaudaur Veterans' Trophy.*

## Did You Know?

A rock memorial honouring fallen Canadian soldiers in the Panjwa'i District will remain in Afghan soil long after our troops leave the region. The stones represent Canadian soldiers who died in the area. Members of the *Royal 22e Régiment* took the stones from the memorial and buried them in a nearby trench. This emotional ceremony took place just weeks before the end of the longest combat mission in Canadian history, which lasted from 2001 to 2011.