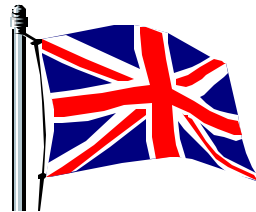




*The Royal Canadian Legion  
Branch 322  
111 Hunt Street  
Ajax*



# *The Hunter News*

*Souvenir Edition*

*November 2004*

*A Tribute To Our Veterans*

*A Special Recognition Of Comrades*

*Ben Severs*

*Doug Haigh*

*George Chaput*

*Rod Nicholson*

*Doug Ferguson*

*Ed Fraser*

*Norm Lawton*

*Bill Anderson*

*Nancy McDonald*

*Bernie Bedworth*

*Oscar Beaulieu*

*Bob Hair*



*For some, war is a memory that haunts their dreams and forever casts a shadow over their lives. It is a nightmare that never goes away — a reality that has left scars that will never heal.*

*For them, war has taken far more from their lives than any disease or age ever will. The people most affected by wars are our veterans, and they are the reason for our freedom.*

*Only those who have lived it, truly know what war is like. We can thank them, remember them, shed tears for them, but we will never truly understand what a veteran feels or how it has affected them.*

*All we can do is offer our hand in thanks, give our appreciation and respect, show them we care, and let them know that we have not, nor will we ever let their memory or all their sacrifices go unforgotten.*

*We thank you veterans — We will remember!*

*Bruce Sharpe*

*It is important  
to recognize our veterans.  
They sacrificed their youth and innocence  
for the sake of future generations.*

*These members of our branch  
played a major part  
in the defense of freedom and democracy  
on the world stage.*



## *Comrade Ben Severs*

Ben was born in 1922 and grew up in the Harmony Road and Highway #2 area of Durham along with his parents, two brothers and two sisters. As a point of interest the house he lived in became Fire hall #4 in Oshawa.

In September of 1939 at eighteen years of age he joined the Ontario Tank Regiment and his first Company Commanding Officer was Sergeant Major Robert Andrews who interestingly enough was the father of our own Butch Andrews.

In 1940 Ben was sent to Camp Borden and trained as a tank driver. His tank regiment escorted the first group of German prisoners of war that were captured in Dunkirk. They were then transported to Canada and taken to Espanola Ontario.

In 1942 he was transferred to the Lincoln and Welland Infantry Regiment and was posted in Newfoundland where he met his lifetime companion Jean. In 1943 they traveled to Aldershot, Nova Scotia where they were married. Two days later Ben was sent overseas.

In Germany his first action came with the raid on Spitzbergen with the Number One British Commando Unit. Their involvement was the destruction of two radio towers that were sending signals to German submarines.

Ben served in France, Belgium and northwest Europe. He was wounded in a Bren Gun Carrier in the Falaise Gap in France. He was the only survivor in his vehicle of that military strike. The three other members of his crew were killed. Ben was lucky to have survived although he did have to recuperate for a month in the hospital with a concussion.

Ben's greatest memory of the war is the Liberation of Holland on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

After the war had ended in 1945 Ben returned to Canada with the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Repat Division who were the first group to be repatriated at home. A short time later he took a job at the War Assets Building, which was near the present site of the Ajax hospital.

Branch 322 opened in 1941, Ben became a member along with Tom Veitch in September 1945. Four years later he became President of the Branch and served from 1949 to 1950. He also has been chairman of almost every committee that has been established in the Branch. He was awarded his Life Membership in 1984 and the Legion Meritorious Medal on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1987. He has served the Branch for fifty-eight years and this year is the first year he has not held a position due to the fact he feels he would like to take a break. Ben also served on Ajax Town Council in 1946.

Ben and Jean have three children and four grandchildren. Their oldest son Ken is an Engineer in the oil industry and lives in Calgary. Their second son Bob is a doctor of anesthesia and lives in Owen Sound. Their daughter Marnie is a lab technologist and has worked at the Oshawa General Hospital for the last twenty-five years. Marnie of course is a member of our Branch as well as her daughter Katie and her husband Bill Pelky. When Katie joined the Branch it was one of Ben's proudest moments.

Ben had been involved in the last few years with organizing the Seniors Day dances along with Annie Thompson who passed away last year. He has decided to retire from that this year and hand the project over to others. One of Ben's wonderful comments when you ask him how he is doing is "not worth a damn."

Well needless to say, he has plugged a few dams for all of us in his time. Ben not only is a gentleman and a great veteran, he is also one of the many heroes that we have in our branch who should be recognized and appreciated for their bravery and undaunted commitment that gave us this great country and the freedom that we enjoy today.



## *Comrade Doug Haigh*

Doug was born on July 17<sup>th</sup>. 1924. He lived in the east end of Toronto with his parents, one brother and his sister. Doug's father, Charles was a veteran of WW1. His younger brother Wally joined the army in 1941 when he was only fifteen years old. He was very tall for his age and told the recruiting officer he was eighteen.

Doug joined the army in 1942 when he was eighteen and did his basic training for three months in Brandtford, Ontario. His advanced training followed at camp Borden. He was then transferred to the Vimy barracks in Kingston, Ontario where he became an Infantryman and a Signalman.

Doug was sent overseas in July 1943 with the Royal Canadian Signal Corp celebrating his nineteenth birthday aboard his ship, Queen Elizabeth 1st. One week later he was deployed to the Toronto Scottish Regiment and trained as a Bren Gun Carrier Driver and Operator with a #19 Signal Communications set.

In late June of 1944 Doug landed on Juno Beach with the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Canadian Division and headed for Bayeau, France. They fought from Carpique airport outside of Normandy to Caen where they encountered heavy resistance across the Orn River. After two days of fighting Doug was seriously wounded. He spent a week in hospital recuperating from wounds to his back and shoulder in Bayeau. He was then transferred to the 19<sup>th</sup>. Canadian General Hospital near Birmingham England for an additional three weeks of rehabilitation. After recuperating he joined the #3 Repat near Ardershot, England.

Doug commented that during the war there were some good times and very bad times. He spoke to me of the killing and the suffering that occurs in battle and in the end he wished somehow it could have been avoided. He feels that all the human loss was not worth it and hopes and prays it will never happen again.

He met his wonderful wife Enid when he was stationed at Cove, just south of London in September of 1944 and they were married on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. 1945. Doug came back to Canada, landing at Halifax in March 1946. Enid came to Canada four months later to be reunited with Doug and start a family.

He joined the Todmorden Legion Branch #10 in April of 1946 and transferred to the Ajax Branch on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1950.

Doug has held several different offices with the Executive Committee at Branch 322 over the years as well as being elected President three different terms from 1983 to 1985 and from 1988 to 1990.

Doug and Enid have four children, seven grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

Doug Haigh is a very colourful individual who shoots from the hip and tells it like it is. As well, he is a very dedicated family man with a great sense of humor. Like so many of our courageous veterans he once put his life on the line for all of us. I value and respect him for his many accomplishments and I know that all of the members of our Branch that know him do as well.



## *Comrade George Chaput* *(DFC)*

George was born on September 10th 1923. He lived on a farm with his parents, five brothers and two sisters in the French community of Letellier Manitoba, which is near St. Jean Batiste, thirty-five miles outside of Winnipeg.

During his teenage years he wanted to be a pilot with aspirations of being another “Billy Bishop.” So, on September 11th, 1941, he joined the Royal Air Force. He wanted to go where the action was, and to see the world.

Since pilot training took two years, and being told many times that the war would be over by the end of 1942, he decided that to get to England sooner, he would train to be a gunner. He was sent overseas in January of 1942, and landed at the Reception Centre at Bournemouth in the south of England, where he spent four weeks at the Operator Training Unit to be his second choice, a Tail gunner.

His first squadron was the 425th. This was just a group of hundreds that had to be ready for action, on a moments notice. Going where the action was and seeing the world, was about to begin.

His first assignment was dropping mines in the Port of France and in many other entrances to the ports of Central Europe. These mines would play havoc to many of the German ships and submarines trying to enter. It was a very dangerous assignment, due to the fact the Canadian planes had to fly very low. They became extremely vulnerable to the German Flack anti-aircraft vessels that were prepared, and waiting in the waters below. The loss of life was extreme. Each day during these maneuvers, thirty-five to forty Canadian and Allied planes would be lost.

During the war George did not have any friends with the exception of his crew. This was done intentionally he noted. The fact was, the less people he associated with, the less he would have to despair over, if they did not return from one of their missions.

During this period he was also assigned to drop bombs over Germany. These missions were to destroy the ammunitions and steel factories in the Ruhr Valley. During these invasions, they were again constantly under fire by the German Flack guns. Fortunately, his only physical injury was a Shrapnel wound to his wrist. He was wearing a Bulova watch that his mother had bought for him at the time that protected him. He said it took a licking and stopped ticking.

After his fifteenth raid over Germany he was stricken with Tonsillitis and had to be hospitalized for a month. He was released from hospital and joined the 427th squadron and was involved in six raids over Hamburg in one week and was known as the Battle of Hamburg. His first tour of duty was completed.

George came home to Manitoba on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1944 and was very much afflicted mentally by his experiences. He said that he was always afraid, not knowing whether he was going to survive from one day to another. His first tour was over.

But something of a surprise was waiting for him. His mother told him that the R.C.M.P. were looking for him because he was a Draft Dodger. Well George went and turned himself in and the problem was straightened out very quickly because of clerical error.

Within a month he was back in England and joined the 419 Squadron and was assigned to an additional twenty raids over Germany. His last raid ironically was Friday 13th of February 1945. On his way home they ran out of gas, and had to make an emergency landing two hours from home.

George came home to stay in April of 1945. He very quickly deteriorated mentally and physically in a few short months. He had gone from one hundred and twenty five pounds to eighty-four pounds and was hospitalized with a nervous breakdown. In the hospital he was subjected to radical shock therapy that worsened his condition. Months later he was released from hospital and trained in an accounting office.

In 1952 he joined the military once again and went to Korea. Due to his accounting experience he was assigned to the Field Cashier office. When he came back to Canada he was posted in the Area Pay office in downtown Toronto.

George met his wife Genevieve, at the Downsview Air Force Sergeants Mess. She was there visiting her sister and brother-in-law. Genevieve was a nursing sister in the army. They were married on June 10<sup>th</sup> 1953. They have two girls, one boy and four grandchildren. Judy lives in Kingston. Terry lives in Oshawa, and Michael works for the radio station on Orillia. Sadly Genevieve passed away from cancer on August 16th 1999.

The events I have just written about are only a tidbit of information that we discussed. This is a man who has not only has received numerous military medals for bravery, but he was decorated with the prestigious Distinguished Flying Cross. This Silver Cross is awarded for an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty performed while flying in active operations against the enemy. He had flown fifty missions and was not even twenty-two years of age when the war ended.

As I stated in my previous editorial, we have many heroes in our Branch. George Chaput is surely one of them. He will openly reminisce about his experiences and make lithe of his many dangerous involvements. He is a really good guy with a great sense of humour. He has earned, and deserves, a great deal of respect from all of us. What more can be said.



*The  
Distinguished Flying  
Cross*



## *Comrade Doug Ferguson*

*(MM)*

We have all heard the term “prisoner of war.” Until recently I have to admit, they were military personnel I had only read about in the newspapers or saw on television. Well, we have an eighty-seven years young member in our branch, a past president in fact, who was a prisoner of war, in a Japanese prison camp. His memories and stories are absolutely astounding and terrifying.

Imagine having been captured by the enemy, beaten, and forced to live in conditions so bad, that being caught trying to escape would have meant the punishment of being be-headed. For those trying to escape, this was not even an issue. In fact, it would have been a welcomed departure from the filth, the sickness, the dying, the starvation, the torture, and not to speak of deplorable inhumane non-existence of medical treatment and medicines. A few prisoners did successfully escape, and fortunately, lived to talk about their traumatic times.

The Japanese responded to these escapes by reinforcing and electrifying the camp’s fences, erecting arc lamps around the perimeter and increasing the number of guards. A number of the POW’s were shot while trying to escape and others were executed when their plans were discovered. Doug Ferguson was one of those who sculpted a plan, and successfully escaped from Japan’s dreaded camp Sham Shui Po.

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Doug was born in Hamilton Scotland, eleven miles outside of Glasgow on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1916. He lived with his mother and father, older brothers Jim, and Sandy, a younger brother Bill and sister Nan. The military and war was nothing new to his family. Doug’s father was a veteran of WW1 and unfortunately was partially disabled losing a leg while in battle. Regrettably, his brother Jim was killed in action in 1944 while fighting in Italy. Bill, who many of us know, is also a member of our branch. He was also in the army with the Royal Engineers. Sandy died a few years ago; he served with the Royal Canadian Engineers. His sister Nan who lives in Australia, served in the Royal Air Force as a photographer during WW11.

Doug joined the army in 1936 with the Royal Engineers. He did his basic three month Field Battalion training and the six months of Specific Engineer techniques training in Chatham, England. He was then transferred to the Searchlight battalion near Auldershot. After the completion of his training it was understood that war had been avoided due to the fact England and Germany had signed a Peace Treaty. But, Hitler as we all know had other plans and attacked Poland in August of 1939.

In 1938 Doug was shipped to Hong Kong with the Royal Engineers of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Aircraft Searchlight Division and the 40<sup>th</sup>. Military Engineering Company.

On the morning of December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1941, the Japanese attacked Hong Kong, by air and their army came over the border at Shamshun with 80,000 troops. Altogether the British and Canadians had a total of 10,000 troops, no air force, no navy and no hope in hell of keeping the Japanese out. For the next two and a half weeks and especially Christmas Day they fought hard against the Japanese all over the island of Hong Kong but on the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup>, they surrendered to the enemy and that ended their part of the war. Doug and his comrades were taken to the Shamshuipo prison camp in Kowloon on the mainland of China. This was actually a British barracks in the pre-Japanese days where the Middlesex Regiment was stationed.

Malnutrition soon began to take its toll due to the fact they were only given a small portion of boiled rice twice a day. Scratches and bruises turning septic and no medicines or drugs to cure them became a life and death situation. Dysentery was common to all and weakened everybody. Then there was an outbreak of diphtheria, which took many lives. With sickness and death all around him and being very weak and malnourished himself, Doug began to ponder very seriously of trying to escape. He thought he might as well die trying to get out as to sit and wait for death.

On August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1942 when a typhoon came into the area and with the torrential downpour of rain, he decided with his comrade Les Howarth to implement their plan of escape by cutting through a barbed wire fence in a drainage ditch with sentries only four or five feet away. They cut a hole through the barbed wire fence with pliers they had managed to acquire and once through, repaired the fence to allow them more time before the Japanese would realize they were missing.

This story does not end here. They still had four days in which they had to travel mostly at night to avoid being recaptured. Doug was very weak and could hardly walk. He acknowledges the fact that his friend Les Howarth was much bigger and stronger than himself and saved his life by actually carrying him when he needed help.

With the help of villagers and guerilla fighters Doug and his comrade eventually met up with a British Army Aid Group where they were fairly safe but still in Hong Kong Territory. Through all of this Doug got weaker and weaker and his legs had swollen up because of malnutrition and he was unable to walk. His comrades rigged up a chair and carried him to Waichow where he received medical attention.

During his stay there they had several bad air raids in which the Japanese bombed and machined gun the town, killing and wounding hundreds of people. He survived all of these horrific attacks and eventually went to India where he received medical attention for malnutrition and gastric enteritis.

The unfortunate part of this story is the fact that I have only documented about one percent of the actual events that Doug has experienced. The war ended in 1945 and Doug was honorably discharged on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, having served 9 years, and 126 days with the regular army.

Doug was married to his life long companion Margaret on December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1944. Margaret of course is also a past member of our ladies auxiliary. They have lived in the same house on Admiral Street since 1956. They have five children and seven grandchildren. Doug has been a member of our legion since 1959 and served as president in 1964-65.

Doug was decorated with the prestigious Military Medal for Bravery (MM) and Mentioned in Dispatches. He is an extra ordinary gentleman in every sense of the word and without a doubt, one of our great and courageous war heroes.



(MM)  
*The Military Medal  
For Bravery*



## *Comrade William "Bill" Anderson*

Bill was born in 1924. He lived in the east end of Toronto with his parents, a sister and older brother. Unfortunately he lost both parents when he was very young and as a result was placed in the care of his grandparents.

In 1937 at the age of fourteen he joined the Militia. At the beginning of the war he enlisted in the Army Armored Corps and was sent to the military base in Newmarket, Ontario. He was then transferred to Camp Borden for six weeks of basic training. Due to the fact the secret of his age of sixteen was revealed, he was forced to stay at the camp for an additional eighteen months. His pay scale was immediately cut in half to seventy-five cents a day. He took advantage of this opportunity and trained as a pastry chef, and cook.

In 1942 he was sent overseas to England with the Armored Tank Division where he was engaged in the Battle of Britain for eight months. His primary duty at the time was to direct and insure the safety of the people of London by helping and directing them to the underground shelters when the air raids began.

Bill was then transferred to the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders and sent to the Italy where he was engaged in combat for eighteen months, fighting from Naples in the south to Pisa in the north. He then went through Belgium, Germany and participated in the Liberation of Holland. During this time he was very lucky, having received only small shrapnel wound to his leg. He also had an unfortunate accident when he lost a toe when one of his own tanks ran over his foot. But like he says he is grateful he is here to talk about it.

Bill came home in 1945 on a two-week leave and enlisted for Japan. However, the war ended there with the dropping of the Atomic bomb.

In 1947 he married Camille Lake. He has one son, four daughters, eighteen grandchildren and eight great-grand children. Unfortunately, Camille, his wife for fifty-three years passed away in 1999.

Bill graduated with a Graphic Arts degree from Ryerson Institute and was involved in the printing field for forty-nine years. He involuntarily retired at the age of sixty-five.

He is a Life Member of the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders, Toronto Ontario. He was also a member of Branch 637 in Oshawa where he was a very active participant in the Poppy fund before transferring to Branch 322.

Bill returned to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of Holland in 1995 and 2000 respectfully. He is very proud of the fact he has been awarded the Central Mediterranean Medal, European Medal and the Liberation of Holland Medal.

He is still very active, in good health, an avid sports fan, and loves to tell jokes. He has joined the Friday night dart league. He says fate was good to him and he is very thankful that his final card was not dealt years ago.

Upon closing let me state that like so many of our WW11 Veterans, Bill was involved in many of the great battles that changed the course of history. He will openly talk about his military experiences and hopes that we will learn from him and all of our Veterans who were overseas. I appreciate, and thank him for his bravery. He has seen it all.



## *Comrade Ed Fraser*

Try to imagine being twenty-one years of age in the British Army fighting in North Africa, in a horrific world war, far away from your home and family. Try to comprehend being captured by German paratroopers. You are thrown into a ditch with many of your comrades and the Germans soldiers are pointing their machine guns at you. Then, once again, try to grasp or imagine what it must have been like to think that you are about to be executed.... Well, we have a great veteran in our branch that went through those excruciating times, and had those dreadful thoughts and feelings.

Fortunately, as sayings go, it wasn't his time, or his card wasn't dealt, or lady luck was with him. Maybe, we should just believe his guardian angel was protecting him that day. It is absolutely ludicrous and mind-boggling to try and comprehend what our brave veterans went through years ago. That was sixty-four years ago. Ed Fraser is now eighty-five.

Ed was given a reprieve. He was herded onto a German ship and sent on his way to Italy to be placed in a prisoner of war camp. Ironically, as luck would have it, his own comrades from the Royal Air Force sighted the ship about a mile from shore and sank it. What is remarkable is the fact the ship only sank forty feet and landed on a sand bank. The Germans soldiers on board evacuated, leaving the prisoners behind to be bombed by their own comrades for the following four days, killing many on board. Eventually two strong swimmers swam to shore to alert the Brits.

Well, this is one of the few incredible experiences that Ed had to tell me in our short time together. Ironically, what amazes me is the fact that when I approached him and spoke to him with regards to the fact I was researching and writing short stories on the experiences of the veterans in our branch, he said he really didn't have anything significant to talk about. I guess that's the nature of war hardened brave men.

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Ed was born in Greenock Scotland, which is just outside of Glasgow, June 25<sup>th</sup> 1918. He lived with his mom and dad and his older brother Samuel. His military involvement commenced in 1937 when he joined the 77<sup>th</sup> Highland Field Regiment Territorial army, which was part of the British Expeditionary Force and shipped to Aldershot in England for Military Field Training.

He was called up for regular service on September 10<sup>th</sup> 1939, two days before the war broke out. He was shipped to Cherbourg in France. He was involved in action in Belgium, and then returned once again back France to do battle in Dunkirk.

After this tour of duty, Ed returned to Andover, England for further training for six months and then off to the conflict in Algiers in North Africa with the 77<sup>th</sup> Highland Artillery Field as a gunner where he was captured.

Due to the fact Ed was rescued as a prisoner of war he was not allowed to join his old regiment, which was proper procedure. He was taken out of battle and sent to Alexandria in Egypt to supervise Egyptian labour with the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers. He was honourably discharged from the military on April 24<sup>th</sup> 1946, and transferred to the British Army Reserve until June 30<sup>th</sup> 1959.

Ed worked as a machinist in England until 1963. He then traveled to the United States with his wife Elizabeth and his son and daughter. Ed lived in New Jersey for seventeen years and is an American citizen. He moved to Canada in 1978 at sixty years of age and worked as a millwright for five years before he retired. He has been a member of our branch for twenty-six years.

Ed's son Edward lives in Thailand, his daughter resides in Pickering, and his son-in-law Neil McWatt, is also a member of our branch. Unfortunately, Elizabeth, his wife of fifty-four years passed away in 1996.

Books are written, and movies are made of the kind of dangerous escapades that Ed was involved in. What I have written about this brave warrior, is only a small morsel of information this man experienced. But as he stated, defending his country and freedom was something he had to do, wanted to do, and like so many of his brave comrades, some who never came home, answered the call and were victorious.



## *Comrade Norm Lawton*

Norm Lawton was born on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1920 in Saint John New Brunswick. He lived with his mother and father, older sister Marion, and an older brother Richard.

One day in 1936 Norm asked his older brother where he was going and his answer was, "I'm going to join the Signal Corp." His second question was "can I go." That was the start of Norman Gregory Lawton's career in the military.

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Norm enlisted at the St. John's Armouries with the #7 District Signals and Royal Canadian Signals in the non-permanent militia and started his introduction and instructions into radio theory to be a radio operator. Every summer he would be sent out to different training camps to improve his knowledge and promote his skills in the radio and communications field. He attended training camps in Sussex New Brunswick in 1936, Camp Borden in 1937, Sussex again in 1938, and the on to Kingston Ontario in 1939.

In August of 1939 he was asked to report for duty at the Armouries in St. John. He enlisted with the #7 District Signals on September 1<sup>st</sup>, where he volunteered like most of his buddies to go overseas. This was just prior to the war that broke out on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. His unit name was changed to the #4 Fortress Signals Atlantic Command and they were told they would not be eligible for the draft and would be exempt from going overseas. They were instructed to stay in Canada and protect the homeland.

Norm was assigned to the Partridge Island at the entrance to St. John harbour for a few months where he worked with radio and switchboard communications and as a wireless operator. In addition to this, he was also on a Navy vessel towing targets for artillery practice. In May of 1940 he was sent to Gaspé Bay Quebec to protect the harbour. He states that at the time and unknown to the Canadian public there were a great number of ships being sunk in the St. Lawrence River and of the coast of Gaspé by German submarines. At various times some of the survivors of these ships would land at his base. The sailors that were in serious condition due exposure to the salt water and oil were flown to Halifax. Later they went out to see if any German sailors from the submarines or strangers had visited any of the local villages.

Norm's first sad experience of the war was when a number of our young sailors who were staying with him on the base for a couple of weeks. They went aboard the HMS Racoon and later were torpedoed off of the Gaspé coast. There were no survivors. His next painful experience would come later in 1942 when he was to receive the sad news that his older brother, Fl. Sgt. Richard Lawton Air Gunner was killed in a crash of his Lancaster bomber on the border of England and Scotland. He went overseas in July 1942 and died six months later in December.

Norm showed me the original letter that was sent to his uncle, to be relayed to his mother. I wondered when I read it how many families have received that terrible dispatch. The first few words of the correspondence tell it all. "It is my painful duty to inform you." Then, continues to state how he was killed, where he was killed, the date of his funeral, which was on December 21<sup>st</sup>, and concluding with the finality of it all, buried in Silloth Westmoreland, England. He was just another soldier, another son who gave his life for freedom, another mother with a broken heart.

In May of 1943 Norm was transferred once again to St. John for a month, before heading to Kingston Ontario for further training and also a line wireless communications course. From there he was sent to Windsor Nova Scotia for special instruction and handling of all types of different weapons, and grenade practice. At the end of July in 1944, he went to Halifax and boarded the Empress of Britain He was on his way overseas to Liverpool England.

Norm arrived in Liverpool on August 4<sup>th</sup> and was stationed at the Signal Centre that was located just outside the city of Farnborough at Cove. A month later he landed in France on Juno Beach where he then traveled to the city of Caen, to join the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division where he was assigned to Company A Headquarters with the A Section #1 Company Division Signals. Norm recalls that he can still see the terrible destruction that took place in the city, caused by the intense bombing.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division then proceeded through the city of Rouen, where the French people greeted them by putting flowers on their trucks. Norm states it was a wonderful boost for the Canadians morale. Finally, they moved on to Ghent Belgium, for a much needed rest and regrouping. They were treated with the utmost respect and billeted out to the many families in the area. They then traveled through the sniper infested Eeklo Belgium, then on to the coast to take the city of Boulogne.

In Boulogne, they encountered incredible resistance. A battle ensued for the good part of a week. The Canadians attacked the heavily supplied German infantry that were using Ack Ack guns in their pill boxes and concrete shelters with everything they had, and held their own, until the allied air forces mounted their assault. That was the final blow. The German soldiers that survived the onslaught surrendered. Norm recalls seeing six high ranking, impeccably dressed German officers, with their highly polished boots walking towards them waving white flags. He says it was very impressive.

This was only one of many battles that Norm was involved in. His regiment battled all over Europe. He fought in France, Belgium, Holland and finally ending in Aurich Germany on May 4<sup>th</sup>. The war ended the next day. In November 1945, Norm returned home safely to Halifax aboard the Queen Elizabeth, and a waiting military band, then home to his family in Saint John.

Norm applied for a position with Veteran Affairs in Saint John and was accepted. He was put in charge of the task of organizing veteran records and personal files. He also joined the Legion in Saint John. A short time later he met a wonderful young lady named Isabel Johnson who was a nurse at the Saint John General hospital. They were married on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1946. A year later they immigrated to the U.S.A. to live with an uncle in St. Louis Missouri who longed to have family members by his side.

He was immediately employed with the Ford Motor Company in St. Louis. Also at the time he studied railway communications, and ticket agent coordinating. Upon completion, Norm went to work for the railroad outside of St. Louis and was responsible for the day-to-day activities in the area. Norm was also a member of the Canadian Legion in St. Louis and eventually became their Post Commander. He then moved on and worked for the railroad in Louisville, Kentucky.

Norm moved back to Canada in 1960, accepting a position with Canadian Pacific Railroad in Toronto. He then moved to Ajax employed by Dowty and transferred to our legion. His final move would take him to Pickering Hydro, in the construction section. He has been retired since 1984. Norm and Isabel have been together for fifty-seven years. They have a son, a daughter and five grandchildren.

Norm Lawton is a very impressive individual when you get to know him. A true gentleman in every sense of the word and a loving family man He is a practicing Mason and Shriner, and a active member of the Jimmy association. As well he is as an avid radio amateur. He is a very honest and humble man who is constantly involved with the number one, and most important thing in his life, Shriner's Children's Hospitals

The awards, and plaques, and pictures of his family and also friends from all over the world that he has in his home, draw your attention. He is another veteran of our branch who at one time put it all on the line for this country, and asks for nothing more in return than just to be remembered. Oh yes, something else that he had put away that he should be very proud of, and certainly has earned .... his medals.



## *Comrade Rod Nicholson*

Most sixteen-year-old Canadian boys of today probably think about playing sports for their high school teams, getting their drivers license or maybe asking a girl to the school prom. When Rod Nicholson was this age he wanted to look like the older boys in town who were all dressed up in their army uniforms. So, in 1942 with work being very scarce, and little ambition to stay in school, he decided to join the military. He was still three months short of his seventeenth birthday.

Rod was born in Glace Bay Nova Scotia on May 7, 1925. He was the seventh child to be born into the family, with three more to follow. He has five sisters and four brothers.

He lied about his age and joined the military in Sydney, where he was shipped to the 6<sup>th</sup> District Depot before being transferred to Aldershot for his initial basic and advanced training, and then eventually, attached to the North Nova Scotia Highlanders.

It didn't take very long before the issue of his age would be questioned. After being pulled from a parade square, and under intense questioning by a Capt. Donovan, he confessed. He was told that he would not be eligible for the draft, but that he could stay on in another capacity, which he accepted. That other capacity Rod was to find out was, ice cream detail. This new duty only lasted a month and he asked to be released. He was told that his situation was an irregular enlistment, and that he would be subject to recall, when he reached the age of eighteen.

Rather than wait to be recalled, Rod joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. In September of 1943 he was shipped to Lachine Quebec for six weeks basic training, before being sent to the 6<sup>th</sup> Supply Depot in Moncton New Brunswick for five months. He was then transferred to the RCAF station in Nova Scotia, and attached to the 121 Squadron.

Besides being in charge of supplies, he was a Drouge operator. His duty was to fly and drag a target a quarter of a mile, to a mile behind his plane, at an altitude of between two and ten thousand feet, for target practice, for the navy and army vessels below. He recalls that on a few occasions the ground fire got a little too close for comfort, once cutting the Drouge cables attached to his plane.

On November 26<sup>th</sup> 1945 and with the war over, Rod was released under classification 'C' and was subject to recall whenever the RCAF deemed it necessary. He then went back home to Glace Bay, married Rita DeCoste and worked as a coal miner for six years. Rod got fed up with never seeing the light of day, especially in the winter months, so on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1954 he re-enlisted in the air force and made it a career, until May 7<sup>th</sup> 1975. He retired from the military when he was fifty years old.

After his departure from the air force in 1975, Rod went to work at Concordia University in Montreal for ten years. He was in charge of safety and security, before retiring at age sixty. He then moved to Ajax in 1976 on the insistence of one of his daughters.

Rod and Rita kept up the tradition of large families. They had eight daughters and one son. All of the girls live in Canada, scattered from coast to coast. His son lives in Orono, Ontario. Unfortunately in 1992, Rita his wife of forty-one years passed away of Lou Gehreg's disease. Rod was also in poor health himself at the time. He went directly from his wife's funeral to the hospital and had an operation for cancer of the prostate.

He states that he is very thankful that he has had a tremendous eighteen years of retirement. He loves golfing, taking regular trips down east and his visits to the Legion. He has been involved with our Branch for many years and received a Life Membership.

Rod is your easy going down-homer who has served this country faithfully in the military and reserves on different occasions, spanning a career of over thirty-three years. He also acknowledges the fact, had his age not been questioned years ago when he first joined the army, things could have turned out quite differently. His first regiment, the North Nova Scotia Highlanders, were involved in the invasion of France on 'D' Day in 1944.

Rod Nicholson has earned a great deal of respect from his peers. The dedication and loyalty he has given to our country and military is recognized and greatly appreciated.



## *Comrade Nancy McDonald*

Nancy Agnes McDonald was born in Melbourne, Australia on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1914. She lived with her mother and father as well as two younger brothers, Jack and Ritchie. Her father was a veteran of WW1, having served in the Australian navy. In 1924, her family moved to Scotland. They eventually immigrated to Canada in 1929, settling in the west end of Toronto.

At fifteen years of age she joined the work force, taking on odd jobs before finally securing a position with Kodak Canada for fifteen years. Nancy requested a leave from that position in 1942 and joined the Air Force. Her priorities at that time were to assist in the war effort. She joined the first group of women to volunteer and support the cause. She did her basic training in Toronto, at the #6 Manning Depot before being transferred for eighteen months to the flying station in Aylmer Ontario. A training ground for young pilots.

There were approximately two hundred women on the base. They worked in the control tower, in the orderly rooms in the hospital, in the accounting department, and also in the MT section, which was used for servicing and maintaining military jeeps and trucks. They also worked in the kitchens. They were responsible for the extremely important task of folding and packaging parachutes, and also in the photography department. Many of the women were qualified mechanics, repairing the aircraft. Nancy was given the responsibility of stocktaking of parts and inventory control. She was sent to a Mobile Unit in Toronto before being finally transferred to Fingal, Ontario near St. Thomas where she stayed until the end of the war. She was discharged from the military in August 1945.

The position Nancy held at Kodak was no longer available or so she was told, so she changed her direction and applied to the Department of Veteran Affairs and started her training as a hairdresser. Upon completion she went to work in the east end of Toronto, working in a salon with a man named John Huska, who previously had also been a mechanic she knew in the military. She was later told that her position at Kodak was available, but she declined the offer from her previous employer.

John and Nancy eventually married and applied for a wartime home in Ajax. They were granted a residence on Admiral Road and moved to Ajax in 1953. They have a boy and two girls. Her son Wayne lives in Vancouver. Katherine her oldest daughter lives in Ireland and her youngest daughter Nancy resides in Courtice. Unfortunately, her husband John passed away at the age of fifty-eight in 1973 of a fatal heart attack. He was working in the Works Department for the town of Ajax.

Nancy re-entered the workforce and took a position with Hanksraft, a baby food and necessities company in Ajax. She was also employed at the Ajax hospital, being responsible for the sterilization of medical instruments. She then took a position with Surefit, an upholstering company in Ajax.

Nancy joined the Legion in 1972. As fate would have it, her life would take a turn for the better. She met a handsome young man named Donnie McDonald. They dated for three years and were married on June 21<sup>st</sup> 1975.

Nancy and Donnie moved to Peterborough for ten years. Donnie was employed with Bovis Homes. They eventually moved back to Ajax in 1985 to stay. They have been happily married for almost thirty years.

Nancy is a Life member of our branch. Years ago when the Ladies Auxiliary had been disbanded, she took on the responsibility for many years of organizing and purchasing food for funerals, as well as other various Legion functions. She was also involved with helping to organize bazaars, sporting events, and also purchased trophies and things of that nature.

Think about all the women you admire then think about why. Chances are they exhibit confidence in who they are, and it makes them more appealing to those around them. Nancy McDonald takes excellent care of herself, her home, and those she holds dear.

She is one of the many females that served our military well in times of conflict, and one who did not get the recognition she deserves. She is a special person who bestows elegance, charisma, and integrity. She has certainly been a valuable asset to our country, not to mention our branch. A lady with class.



## *Comrade Bernie Bedworth*

*"Appearing This Week Birmingham Bernie."*

I remember seeing that banner over the entrance of my Uncle Bert's hotel, the Mansion House on the Danforth years ago. Bernie was a piano player who entertained there quite often in the late 60's and early 70's, and a person my uncle thought very highly of. Little did I know I would meet the legend here at the Legion, forty years later.

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The youngest of four sons to Arthur and Clara Bedworth, Bernie was born in Birmingham England on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1925. His father was a veteran of WW1, having served in the British army. His older brothers were also all in the army.

At the age of fourteen, Bernie left school to take an apprenticeship as a machinist and fitter with the R.C. Givings Company in Birmingham. He stayed with them until he was conscripted into the Royal Navy in 1943. In fact he also received a conscription notice from the army as well, which was his first choice. He was told he was going to be in the navy. Bernie and his family were not happy at all with this decision, due to the fact that his father and brothers had all been in the army.

He reported to the H.M.S. Gosling, which was a Training Depot for nine weeks, where he had his introduction to navy procedures with regards to military machinery. He was then transferred to the Hednesford Air Force Base just outside of Birmingham for three months. His machinery skills allowed him to train at servicing and repairing the aircraft. This location was very convenient, allowing him to go home some weekends.

He was then transferred to the H.M.S. Dadelas Naval Base just north of Portsmouth England, going aboard the aircraft carrier H.M.S. Searcher. This vessel had a crew of three hundred men and twelve aircraft. They sailed to Roseneath not far from Edinburgh to pick up and join a support convoy before heading out to the North Atlantic.

The aircraft on board protected the convoy. Using their radar and Sonar equipment, they were used to seek out and attack the dreaded German U Boats who were a major threat in all areas of their intended route.

In the early months of 1945, ironically as fate would have it, there was an electrical explosion on board the aircraft and Bernie and a few of his mates were seriously injured. Bernie sustained multiple head injuries and a hernia. He was sent to the hospital in Roseneath and operated on before being transferred to a hospital just outside of Aberdeen. There he was given a fourteen day sick leave to further recuperate. He was then re-examined and found to be medically unfit due to his injuries, and discharged from the navy. He returned home to Birmingham where he joined the Home Guard and went back to work as a machinist and fitter.

Bernie decided to immigrate to Canada in 1958. He worked as a machinist in Orillia, before taking a position with Stackpole in Barrie for three years. He then transferred to Scarborough where he was the shop foreman with the firm for twenty years, before finally retiring. He then moved to Ajax to be closer to his daughters and took up residence at Falby Court.

Bernie has been playing the piano since the age of ten. He played in his older brother's band when he was a teenager touring all over Birmingham. He eventually formed the Stan Ross Band and entertained at the famous Butlin's Holiday Camp in Skegnes on the east coast of Britain.

He has played in many bands all over Ontario for many years. In fact he still entertains the elderly every Wednesday afternoon at the Sunnycrest Nursing Home in Whitby.

Bernie has been a member of the Legion executive for many years and held the position of Sick and Visiting Officer. He has two daughters and one son. Linda lives in Ajax, and Pamela lives in Newcastle. They are both members of the Branch. His son John resides in Birmingham England. As well, Bernie has seven grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Something very interesting. Bernie is the only person in all of Canada with the last name of Bedworth. He certainly is one of a kind, and definitely a very popular and well respected member of our Branch.



## *Comrade Bob Hair*

Robert (Bob) Hair was born in Denny Scotland on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1925. He attended Denny Public School, and Denny High School in the County of Shropshire, just north of Glasgow.

In 1941, at fifteen years of age he joined the Air Training Corps. He enrolled in a basic radio and electrical course that was available, as well as the mandatory “square-bashing.” Bob also pre-registered for the Royal Air Force prior to his eighteenth birthday, and was called up in April 1943.

Bob furthered his radio and electronics training in the RAF radio schools. He was immediately posted, because of this valuable training to the South East Asian Command, and arrived in Bombay India in September 1944. Bob recalls that when he first landed in Bombay wearing shorts, he was very conscious of his white knees that were showing, because that labeled him as “just off the boat.”

Bob served in numerous signals and aircraft units responsible for ground transmitters and air equipment in Risalpur, the northwest frontier, which is now Pakistan and in Assam, northeast India, north of Burma until August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

Bob returned home to the UK in April of 1947, just prior to the participation of India and was posted to the RAF flying school, which was a training facility for Fleet Air Armed Pilots. His military life came to an end when he was de-mobbed in November 1947.

After taking a short period of time to adjust to civilian life, Bob was employed with Pye of Cambridge Ltd., a television plant in Cambridge England as a television technician. In April 1951, only a year after marrying Alice Forsyth, his life-long companion, he was transferred to their Canadian plant here in Ajax, located adjacent to our legion here on Hunt Street. He arrived in Canada on May 24<sup>th</sup> 1951, and held a position in the broadcast equipment division until 1965.

Bob obtained employment with television station CFTO as a staff management engineer. He retired from that position in May 1990 after being employed there for twenty-five years.

Bob and Alice still reside in their first home in Ajax on Woodhouse Crescent, since moving here in 1952. They have two daughters and one grandchild. Moira lives in Richmond British Columbia, Laura resides a little closer, in Whitby Ontario.

There is a common denominator when it comes to the profiles of the veterans that I have interviewed. Bob fits that figuration completely. They have all been hard working, responsible, family-oriented individuals, who at one time put their country ahead of everything else. On behalf of all of the members of our Branch, I would like to thank and acknowledge Bob Hair for his dedication and contributions to the military. It is because of veterans like yourself, we now enjoy the freedom that we have today.



## *Comrade Oscar Beaulieu*

It is called Canada's "Forgotten War." 516 Canadians died in the United Nations' struggle to repel the communist forces that invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950. To the people they helped liberate, the Canadians were heroes. Yet those who made it home returned to an indifferent country, and a government that took 40 years to officially acknowledge their sacrifice.

Oscar Victor Beaulieu was born in Bigwood Ontario, a small community just a few miles south west of Sudbury on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1931. He was raised on a farm by his mom and dad, with his six sisters and five brothers. Oscar and all of his siblings went to the local one room school consisting of approximately fifty students being taught grades one through eight. Tragically the patriarch of the family, his father, passed away from a thyroid condition when Oscar was only nine years old. Unable to meet the necessary financial commitments the farm was repossessed by the government, forcing his family to vacate, and move to a smaller home in the nearby town of Alban.

At the tender age of fifteen he'd had enough of school, and decided to move to Bracebridge to make his fame and fortune, working as a labourer in the sawmill. That only lasted two weeks. He found out very quickly that being a "smart ass" was not the right approach when he made fun of an insignificant freak accident that his boss encountered. He lived a little bit of a vagabond's life for the next couple of years, working as a lumberjack in Bracebridge, as a miner in Valdor and Roven Quebec and back to the sawmill in Bracebridge once again. He hitchhiked his way to Terrace Bay, and went to work for the Ontario government, constructing a dam to supply electricity for a large portion of northern Ontario. He also worked on the construction of Highway 69, between the French river and Burwash.

In the spring of 1949, Oscar moved to St. Catherine's where various construction companies in the area employed him. In the fall, the construction business was almost at a standstill. The future looked very bleak, and with the uncertainty of when things were going to pick up, he decided to change direction. He headed down to the local Armouries and joined the army.

Oscar was sent to Sunnybrook hospital in Toronto for his physical testing, before being shipped to Valcartier Quebec for six weeks of basic training, and advanced weapon training. He joined the Royal 22nd Regiment, known as the famed Van Doos, a military unit that represented our French speaking population. He was told his battalion was being sent to Korea as part of an Allied Forces peacekeeping contingent. This would also include Canadian soldiers from the Royal Canadian Regiment, and the Princess Patricia's Light Infantry.

He spent thirteen months in Korea, but certainly not in a peacekeeping capacity. His battalion was part of the Canadian Special Allied Forces that defended the 38th parallel, which is the border of North and South Korea. They were involved in many major battles defending the territories and borders of their comrades, and played a very entragal part in stopping the advancement of their enemies, the Communist Chinese, and North Koreans.

Oscar is a very emotional person, but with due cause. Speaking with him regarding some of his experiences was not easy for him to re-live. His recollection of losing friends in battle, and also his frustration of some of his comrades dying because of their lack of training still haunt him. Witnessing some of his own young comrades firing weapons that they were not trained to use, and accidentally killing themselves or, some of their own brothers in arms, is something he will never be able to forget. "We were not trained to use a Sten gun, and our pistol training was only for a few hours," he states.

The combat, the casualties, and the loss of life that he has experienced in the Korean conflicts, are still very vivid in his mind. He feels that the Canadian forces were ill prepared, and under-trained, to be involved in a foreign war, in a foreign land. "It was never fully explained why we were even there in the first place," he explains. There was very little communications he feels with his superiors, but, he states, "I did what I was told, I was a soldier, I followed orders."

Oscar came home to Canada and continued his Special Forces training as a paratrooper, knowing full well that his services might be required again in Korea at a moments notice. Fortunately he was discharged on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1954. He stayed with his mother in Valdor for a month before moving to Montreal where he stayed for nine years delivering appliances for Melody House and eventually delivering milk for what is now Bordens. He states he once delivered a television set to the famous actress Lauren Becall.

In 1963, he applied for a position with the Post Office in Toronto and was accepted. He met his wife Lise, in 1963 through a mutual friend. They were married April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1957. They have three children, twins Denis and Denise, and a younger daughter, Ginnette . They also have five grandchildren. Oscar and his family settled in Ajax in 1989, and both Oscar and Lise retired in 1992. He has been a member of the Branch since 1995.

Oscar has always been a hard worker all of his life. A man who he did whatever it took, to care for his family. He is a very devoted father and husband. During the Poppy campaign, he is recognized as one of our most active members. He put his life on the line for our country years ago. Like all of the veterans of our Branch, he is a special person.

The Korean conflict might be called the “Forgotten War.” But, Oscar Bealieu and all of his comrades who were in battle over there, and those who lost loved ones over there..... have never forgotten. Neither should we.



*It has been an honour for me to have  
interviewed and written a short biography  
on each of these true heroes of our Branch  
I thank them for their honesty and integrity*

*We are very proud of their commitment,  
bravery and heroism during times of war  
The sacrifices they made will not be forgotten*

*Bruce Sharpe*



***The Royal Canadian Legion  
Branch 322  
111 Hunt Street  
Ajax***

*Hunter News  
2004*

<i>Ben Severs</i>	<i>Doug Haigh</i>
<i>George Chaput</i>	<i>Rod Nicholson</i>
<i>Doug Ferguson</i>	<i>Ed Fraser</i>
<i>Norm Lawton</i>	<i>Bill Anderson</i>
<i>Nancy McDonald</i>	<i>Bernie Bedworth</i>
<i>Oscar Beaulieu</i>	<i>Bob Hair</i>

*We are proud of your commitment  
and the sacrifices you made*