

Interview of Peter Pelletier

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I started with the 64th U Battery from Yorkton, and Kamsack. We went overseas in 1943, they broke us up for re-enforcements. I ended up with the 23rd SP Regiment. Self-propelled, 25 pounders.

I was seventeen years old. I was living down in Katepwa, at the end of the lakes. It was pretty hard then to get a job. It started getting better in 1939 or 1940. I joined up October 9, 1941. My father was dead then. I lived with my mom. There were still 4 of us at home.

My older brother was gone, they joined up about a year earlier. The oldest brother joined the 14th Field of Engineers, most of them are from Lumsden. My second brother John joined 6076 Battery from Indian Head. They were a field regiment - 25 pounders. John was killed in Montecino, in May 21, 1944. I was overseas. In England.

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I was in Indian Head on a Saturday. This Captain was catching everybody, asking if we wanted to join. I know my old man didn't want my brother to join up. The old man was in World War I. He sort of lied to the old man. He told him he was going to see about a harvest excursion. I remember him sitting around thinking about it, talking about it. I think I joined more for the adventure.

Around here then, there was just farm work. It was just a spur of the moment decision. There were about 5 of us from the Indian Head area. They just took our names. We had to have our medicals at Indian Head. Then we headed to Regina.

After I joined, we stayed with three different batteries. There was the 65th Anti Tank, and the 101st from Moosomin. We stayed right there in Regina at the basic training centre. We were there for about 2 months. The 65th and the 64th were sent to Brandon. The 101st went to Winnipeg for advanced training. I think I was in Regina once before that. It was different. It didn't really bother me that much. I was more interested in training. I hardly ever went downtown. We were stationed at the Exhibition Grounds. I got into a little trouble, when I

joined up, with the discipline. It took awhile. It pretty well was basic training in Regina. When we finished advanced training we were drafted for overseas, March 1942.

When we finished advanced training, we were put on draft to go overseas in the first part of March. When I got to the last doctor

in line, he told me to cough, cough. He told me I wasn't going anywhere. I had a hernia on my left side. That put me back for awhile. I could have ended up with some other infantry regiment or worse. I had an operation and spent 34 days in the hospital in Brandon. That's when I came home for 30 days sick leave. Then I went back to Brandon and met two other chums from up north, from Kamsack and Yorkton. They were caught for being too young. They were sent back.

Our regiment was training at Shilo when I came back off leave. The other two were still in Brandon. When I got back to Brandon, they shipped the three of us back to Shilo to our regiment. When we finished there, we went to Naniamo. We were there about 11 months. We would go to various areas of the island for patrol. We would go for 6 weeks and then come back for a week. Then go again.

When they broke us up to go as reinforcements in March, all those guys went then. There was Metis and Indians. I had one little special friend. He was killed in Holland. When we broke up for reinforcements, our 21st regiment, he ended up in the infantry. I was lucky, I ended up back at artillery. We left Nanaimo in May, 1943, for overseas. We had sent them different regiments. We went for training at Camp Petawawa. I remember we went through Moose Jaw the 24th of May, 1943. We also went to Debert, Nova Scotia. We were there for about 2 weeks. Then we went overseas. I went on the old Queen Mary. I had a very good place. I was one of the gunners up on top as a guard. The ones we had was about a 3 inch. They were short, like a field gun. It was beautiful. We went about the middle of September. We landed up in Scotland. We were sent down to England by train. We didn't stay long in Scotland at all.

I was with the 4th armour. We didn't go until July 12, 1944. We were supposed to go D-Day plus 7, I think. Things didn't go according to plan. It was about the middle of July, before we got there. France was heavily bombed. They had just took Caen a few days before we got there because it was still

smoldering when we got there. That was the hole for the armour to get in. I don't remember about fear, we back so far most of the time. We weren't very often up close. We sat for 2 weeks when we first went in.

We were getting fired on. Mostly 88's (heavy artillery). All you heard was a crack, bang! We got a few mortars. You didn't know where they were going to go. We were there for 2 weeks until that drive started, on August 7, when they started to head for Falaise gap. That was pretty heavy action. The next morning, we had a few casualties. We kind of got into the wrong place. The captain made a bit of a mistake and we got pretty well right up into the infantry. That's where we were getting mortars.

I was number three, a gunner layer. I was a bombardier until I went to the other regiment. But I stayed number three. When I

went to the other regiment, the stripes went too. Now, about shooting anti-tank. The only time we shot over open sights, I was on leave in Scotland. They were shooting over open sights about 150 yards. The tank got a little too close to them. That's what they told me when I came back from leave. They told me I had missed the best part. I never had the pleasure of shooting a super charge. When we practised, it was too hard on the barrels.

We went in July, and in March we spent 2 weeks over there behind the Rhine sitting behind smokescreens and stuff, getting ready to cross it. I went on leave before we crossed it. When I came back, they had already gone, way up ahead.