

## Interview of Joe McGillivary

I enlisted for the Korean War, August 28, 1950. I was one of the 1000 they wanted. The first 1000, was mostly World War II vets. They didn't want to train the new ones. Overseas in 1943, they put me in the Winnipeg Rifles, 1943. By putting me there, I missed that first division of PPCLI. They went to Sicily and Italy. I missed that because I was doing the sniper training for the Winnipeg Rifles. That's how I missed the draft for the first division. I was 18 years old. I was born 1933, and I enlisted in 1941.

I took my basic training at Fort Osborne Barracks in Winnipeg. I went to England, it was a place called Strude Park in Surrey, when I finished my advance training. I left for England on April 1, 1942. I didn't stay to long in Fort Osborne. Strude Park is very close to Aldershot, very close. That's when they placed me on that sniper thing.

They taught us map reading and shooting, all about the rifle, night marches, mostly map reading. You had to be good on a map. You had to know where you were. They would take you someplace in Scotland, take you there blindfolded, leave you there until night and then you would have to find out where you were. You had to be good on a map to pinpoint yourself in Scotland. It was quite hilly there. That makes a difference, the contours of the land. You had to go by the stars, the sun and the moon. That's what we would use later on. Luckily I was pretty good on the map, I never got lost. It was pretty hard when you had never seen a country before to try and find your way out and you can't ask nobody. In the war, that came in handy. We did other training too - by ship, sea, landing craft - while in Scotland. That was in preparation for D-Day in Normandy. They called it "Combined Operation" training. It was not only us, but other battalions. Lots of them, British, Americans, everybody. Not just a few. We trained there all the time. We never stopped training. Even when we went back to the unit, we still trained. Still trained with the rifle to be a good shot. I was pretty good.

When we finished our training, we knew that the invasion was coming, but they never told us when, what day, until we got on that ship. We got on the ship on June 4, 1944. Then we were getting ready for the invasion on June 6. After that we learned

that we were on the first wave, an assault wave. There were lots of soldiers killed, some of the shelling directed on the landing craft, some of them drowned or wounded. That's when my work started, when we landed, as a sniper. I was never in one country, I was moved wherever they needed me. There were 8 of us, 8

snipers. Four white men and four Indians. The four white men were all killed and the four Indians came back, though some of us were wounded. I was wounded on August 14, 1944 at a place called Falaise. That's where we caught the Germans 6 times, we trapped them. Got in a circle and they were trying to fight their way out but we wouldn't let them out. That's where I was wounded. Even our Divisional Commander was wounded. He was in the next bed to me in the hospital. He was Major General Keller. He was wounded.

I was gone for a month in hospital. They told me when I was discharged from the hospital that I could go back to England and stay there until the war was over. They just asked me and I said NO. I don't want to go to England, I want to go back to the front, back to my unit. So, that's where they put me. I stayed with them in the same position (as a sniper) until the end of the war. They always thought us a good shot. Most Natives were very good on the rifle, matter of fact, all of them that I know. That's how they used to live in the old days. That's how they picked me.

I was good on the map. I was on the front lines most of the time, I had to learn to soldier. I could even pinpoint where the artillery was coming from and that was a help to. One time a British officer put down his papers and I said what is your position on that gun fire we just heard. I told him mine. He told me that I must have seen his papers. I told him that that was my calculations. Then he placed his beside mine, and they were both the same. He thought I was copying from his calculations. I told him that I don't do that, I was trained for that. He thought it was remarkable that a sniper would know this. You had to go by the contours of the land. You had to know all that. Many times I would just check where I was and I would be right on the spot.

You were expected to shoot whatever movement you had on the front lines, the Germans you know. On the front lines, that's

where they need you the most, to pick off whatever is coming at you, just knock them off. That's the main thing. You weren't in no different company, you know. The A, B, C, and D; any one of them could be in front. Actually you belong to the support company, the headquarters company. That's quite a ways back from the front. Then I was finished over there I would go to headquarters. Go rest for a while. Then they would call me up again. Sometimes we would go on patrols, 3-5 men. We would just patrol. Never singly, at least 3. Six was a good patrol. Find out what's going with the Germans. That's sniping. I would be there as long as they needed me, that company. No matter what happens to them, you have to be with them, until you get the order to pull back. Sometimes you were there for a month, on the line, without no help. They were getting short of regular soldiers and the young recruits that had come were not too good on the lines.

You have to keep an eye on them too. That's what happened towards the end. I was there the whole day, 24 hours. No sleeping, not on the front lines. If you have a chance during the day, when nothing was moving, you would have a little sleep then, right there, on the frontlines.

I didn't feel nothing. I would just shoot them as they come. That's what they were paying me for. If I didn't get them, they would have gotten me, that's the way I look at it. You can't back out, that's one thing. You got to get what is coming at you, by using donuts or artillery or aircraft. I wouldn't help anybody that was wounded or anything, like medically. You can't help. You got other jobs to do.

#### **THE CAPTURE OF GERMAN GENERAL KURT MEYERS**

We were following that Falaise Gap, that General got away on us. It was night time and he slipped away, a German general. His name was Kurt Meyers. I got his picture here someplace. General Meyers. He got away on us. The war went up to Holland and Germany. Before we got Germany, I was the one that captured that General. I got him in a house. When I got him, and he didn't want to come with me. He didn't like that I had captured

him. I told him, "You don't come, I'll shoot you." I already slammed a shell home, and I would have shot him right there in the livingroom. An officer told me not to do that, and I caved in. A major that had just come from Canada. You don't do that, he told me, "You'll be up for murder." I told him to look what he had done to our people. He had shot lots of them. Anyway, he took him. About the only time I saw him was there. I don't know his name. He was a major. But I was going to shoot him anyway.

There was only two of us. It couldn't have made no difference. It was a hazard of the war. That major just come in there by accident. I couldn't have been charged with nothing. I shot a lot of those Germans. I was doing my work. That was what I was trained for. He didn't want to give up to me anyway. We were on the move and the Major happened to come through there. He heard some of the conversation before he came in the door. Then Meyers started moving. I was going to shoot him anyway. I was going to shoot him. I just about shot him and the Major right there. That's how mad I was with him. That's what I was going to do. He was nothing to me. There would be no witness there or nothing. I didn't do that. I would have guilt today, if I had done that. But I let him take him out. The Major took him behind the lines, up to the prisoner of war compound. I never seen him again. I heard he was in Kingston, that's when I heard that they put him the Canadian army just to get him out of there.

They didn't make me a Captain because I got him. It just happened that I was searching that house and I saw him in there. I knew who he was. I had his picture. We were always hunting for him.

He was in Kingston penitentiary for 25 years. He was up for war crimes. When the trial was over, they sent him to Kingston. He worked in the library. That's the job they gave him. After a few years in there, they let him out and put him in the Canadian Army as a Captain.

He shot quite a few Canadian POW's. That happened on June 9 and 10, 1944, just after D-Day. We were facing them. We were facing his outfit at that time. He was a Colonel at that time. I remember that very clearly.

Well, by keeping him in Kingston, they aren't going to let him go and enjoy fresh air away from the prison, where they held

him. They sent him to B.C. as a Captain in the Canadian Army. I don't know how long he was out there. I have no idea what happened. It was the Canadian government that put him there. He finished his sentence then he went back to Germany. Today he is dead. He died when he was 56 years old, in Germany. He died in his sleep. He died with his boots on. I don't know what killed him. He's gone now. All these things that I tell, like landing on D-Day, and sniping; it was always in front of us, we were all fighting. The S.S. mostly young boys, 12 years, 13, 14, 15 years old. The oldest was about 19 years old. They were all young. We shot them first, before they got us. It was tough out there. They were the ones that were shooting the prisoners of war. That were their orders, to shoot them.

### **D-DAY LANDING**

I was not the only one on D-Day, you know. I remember two from Cumberland House, George Butt and Napoleon Norman. I seen Napoleon on June 9, 1944. That's the last time I saw him. He was wounded that night and the Germans took him. He died that night on the road to the hospital. They buried him in a field somewhere. A farmer found him, found the grave anyway. That's how they found him. George Butt was killed in battle. There were many Indian Veterans that I seen, even overseas. Some, I forgot their names, some I remember, some have died.

We were not all in the same regiment. We were placed in different regiments. Very rarely, maybe one or two were placed in the same regiment. Like Napoleon Norman and myself, we were in the same regiment. That was the Winnipeg Rifles. There was a guy in Prince Albert. He was a Merasty, he was in the same regiment. I met him one time in Prince Albert. He asked me what regiment I was

in. I told him Winnipeg Rifles. He said that he was a batman, working for the officer. I forgot his first name. He was on D-Day too. He was from Prince Albert. That's where I met him, only once. He was in D Company. The officer I was working for, I forgot his name, later became a Colonel. A Colonel of the outfit after the other one was killed. I forgot his name.

## VE DAY

I was in a place called Aachen, Germany. That's when the war ended for me. May 5, 1945. That's when the war ended. We were on guard duty that time of the morning. We were listening to the news when they said that the war was ending. They didn't sign it until 3 days after. I didn't feel jubilant or anything. We were immune to anything that would make us happy or anything like that. We just took it as it came. That's the way I did it. We didn't jump up and down just because the war ended. That's one thing I know. After you have been so long in the combat, you know to be on guard all the time.

Ten days after the war ended I was on my way to the Far East, to go fight the Japanese and help the Americans. We were going to form a new division for that. To start off with, we were just regular soldiers, I don't know what kind of training they had. One thing, we did some American parades and weapons, that's one thing that we did do. The advance party went from Fort Osborne, that's where they were going to ship us back to. No, it was Portage le Prairie, that's where they were going to hold that position. I came back here for a short leave, to Cumberland, and while here the advanced party went to Fort Benning, Georgia; the advanced party. I was on leave. When I went back again, I reported to Portage le Prairie from here. When I got there, the place was empty. There was nobody there. They had moved to Fort Osborne. The war had ended in Japan.

They shipped us to the States on the Queen Mary. It took 4 days, 20 hours. One of the fastest ships at that time, troop ship. Everybody; some going over and some coming back. We landed in New York. We just came through, had some leave. Some were posted to Fort Osborne. I was in Cumberland when the war ended, on August 8, 1945, something like that. Then I went to report. They still kept me for 6 to 8 months at Fort Osborne. We didn't do no training. We did some work for them, but no training.

I was discharged on November 21, 1945. Almost the same day that I enlisted.

## LOOKING BACK

There was no work in those days, just farm work or whatever you could find. So, a whole bunch of us decided to join the army. The pay was \$.90 a day. You got medical and board. The farm pay was \$.80 a day, so that was \$.10 more. We worked for \$.80, we worked in Nipawin. We tried to enlist there but we were too young. We had to go into The Pas. I was still too young, but we got in.

We wanted to go fight for our country. That's the main thing that I know. We expected the country to look after us when we came back, too. A lot of that never happened. When I got off World War II, Patton took my address and said that he would find me a job.

I got nothing. I am staying here and I am still in the hole. The government helped us with \$2300.00, that's about all we got, nothing else. None of us got land.