remembrance: METIS VETERANS

WORLD WAR I
1914-1918

WORLD WAR II
1939-1945

KOREAN CONFLICT
1950-1953

remembrances:

METIS

VETERANS

Interviews with
Métis Veterans

Gabriel Dumont Institute
of Metis Studies and
Applied Research Inc.

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Cover Artifacts Saskatchewan District Headquarters Museum, The Armouries, Regina

Cover Artifacts Layout by Dianne Shannon

Cover Photograph by Pat Holdsworth

Design and Production by LM Publication Services Ltd.

Typeset by Lines & Letters Inc.

Printed in Canada by Allied Printers Ltd.

Special thanks to the following for their funding assistance:

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Remembrances: Métis veterans

ISBN 0-920915-36-1 soft cover; ISBN 0-920915-38-8 hard cover

1. Métis – Interviews. 2. Métis veterans – Canada – Interviews. 3. World War, 1914-1918 – Personal narratives, Canadian. 4. World War, 1939-1945 – Personal narratives, Canadian. 5. Korean War, 1950-1953 – Personal narratives, Canadian. 6. World War, 1914-1918 – Veterans – Canada – Biography. 7. World War, 1939-1945 – Veterans – Canada – Biography. 8. Korean War, 1950-1953 – Veterans – Canada – Biography. I. Gabriel Dumont Institute of Métis Studies and Applied Research. II. Title.

FC129.V4H87 1994 940.4'8171 C94-920195-2
E99.M47H87 1994

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of Metis Studies and Applied Research Inc.
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Dedication

In publishing this book, the Gabriel Dumont Institute expresses heartfelt gratitude to all Métis who fought for our freedom, and to those who died in the cause. This book is dedicated to Métis veterans everywhere, and to their families, too, because they also faced the consequences of war. The stories here are a sample of the many experiences of Canadian Métis veterans. Too many of these stories remain unrecorded and will be lost, so it is with special respect that we thank those who have shared their stories with us within the covers of this book:

John Amyotte
Dorothy Askwith
Leo Belanger
Maurice Blondeau
Euclide Boyer
Ron Camponi
William Carriere
David Dumont
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Joseph Fayant
Leon Ferguson
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Norris Petit
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Owen Sanderson
Lawrence Sayese
Charlie Umpherville

Contents

Preface

The idea of this book was considered a long time ago. In the late '60s and early '70s preliminary work was started by the Métis Society of Saskatchewan (MSS). At informal meetings of veterans their experiences in the military and afterwards were discussed.

Finally in the mid-70s, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission published a short book on notable Aboriginal activists. At the same time, Murray Dobbin was conducting interviews in the Métis communities and adding to the store of oral history materials of the MSS. Some of these materials later became part of the Oral History Collection of the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Metis Studies and Applied Research. Dobbin continued to work in this area and subsequently produced a book titled *One and a Half Men.*

In the mid-1980s, the Gabriel Dumont Institute began the Métis veterans book project. Don McLean, an employee of the Institute at that time, undertook interviews with veterans throughout the province of Saskatchewan. At that same time, other employees of the Institute, such as Ed Nofield, conducted some interviews and collected some wartime photographs, books and memorabilia.

After Don McLean left the Institute, a number of people were assigned to the book project. They were Anne Dorion, Leah Dorion, Dave Hutchinson and Rick Desjarlais. During this time Norman (Pete) Durocher also did field work in the summer.

During the early stages of producing this book, many people assisted in its development in whatever way they could. We would be remiss if we did not mention them here. They are: Mary and Barry Beament, La Ronge; Norma Belanger, Regina; Harold Brunning, retired and member of Royal Regina Rifle Regiment Association; Beverly Cardinal, Regina; Ken Carriere, Regina; Steve and Helen Chaboyer, Cumberland House; Louis Dorion, Prince Albert; Mrs.

Dave Dumont, Prince Albert; Maureen Eyre, Regina; Joe Goulet, Pine Island Outpatient Centre, Cumberland House; Claude Goulet, former CAF, Cumberland House; Keith Inches, Armouries Curator, Regina; Peter Matwiy, member, Royal Regina Rifle Regiment Association; Winston McKay, former Area Director of Métis Society of Saskatchewan; Dougal Nabess, retired CAF, Cumberland House; Chester Rutherford, Secretary-Treasurer, Royal Regina Rifle Regiment Association; Alice (Mrs. Jean-Baptiste) Settee, Cumberland House; and Erma Taylor, Regina.

Of course, no part of this project would have moved forward without the active participation and support of the members of the Saskatchewan Métis Veteran's Association and their respective regimental associations: 16th/22nd Saskatchewan Horse, Fort Garry Horse, Korean War Veteran's Association, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, Royal Regina Rifles Regiment District Headquarters Museum, Armouries, Regina, Saskatchewan for which we are grateful.

We wish to thank all the people who helped with this book. Whatever errors contained within it belong entirely to those of us who had the privilege to work on it.

At a Graduate Studies presentation I made some time ago on Métis veterans, I was asked why the Métis are so proud of their war veterans. It didn't take long to answer. For people like me, in this country, I never would have had the opportunity to attend graduate school if it hadn't been for the Métis who served because they were the ones who made better education, housing, medical care and social services possible. I, and many others like me, benefited from their sacrifices and their struggles, and because of that, we are proud and we are grateful.

Thank you.

Anne Dorion
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
July 1994

Introduction

"Tradition," wrote a Regina *Leader Post* reporter in a special dispatch from Lebret on September 18th, 1943, "enjoins on the descendants of those brave pioneers of the western plains, a devotion to religion and patriotism, and particularly the faith of their fathers. The majority of the men enlisted are all direct descendants of men who took no active part in the Métis Rebellions of 1870 and 1885, although their sympathies were with their leader, Louis Riel. Through the teaching and spreading of the principles of British Liberty, these men are today in the ranks of the great patriots, and have donned the garb of the fighter for liberty and justice."

Many of the Métis veterans interviewed for this book probably wouldn't argue that "tradition" played a significant role in their decision to enlist. Yet the veterans' motivation bore little resemblance to the romantic assumptions of the *Leader Post* reporter. Wilfred John Henry, a World War II veteran, speaks of a much different "tradition":

"I joined up to make money. I was getting $1.10 at first. I thought that was good money. It was better than fifty cents a day hauling wood into town. $1.10 a day, free clothes and all that, free board and room. That was the reason I joined up. I wanted to help my folks out. Give them half my pay. I thought this was the real thing. I could send my folks a few dollars because I knew their problems and what their conditions were. When I was home, I used to haul cords into town for them ... fifty cents a cord. It wasn't much money, but I helped my folks out the best I could."

For Métis veterans like Wilfred John Henry, the tradition underscoring their decision to enlist was characterized by poverty and alienation. Certainly this idea is not new. Many veterans, both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal, joined out of poverty and a desire to belong. Yet what makes Métis enlistment unique are a number of sociocultural, historical, and political circumstances. By tracing: i) the dissolution of Métis Community Law (through the Hudson Bay Company's enforcement of British Common Law); ii) the introduction of the Manitoba Act of 1870, which fragmented Métis extended families and rendered impossible the development of a Métis enclave; and iii) the execution of Louis Riel in 1885;

we uncover a rationale for substantial Métis enlistment in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. As a result of such events, many Métis found themselves relegated to the margins of Western-Canadian society, living on road allowances and working for meagre wages, "scrubbing bush", or as farm labourers.

This is not to suggest that the Métis military contribution was not significant or honourable — it was in fact, both. It is to say, however, that the very events that preceded the subjugation of Métis peoples also, ironically, ensured the availability of a sizable volunteer military force. Certainly some veterans joined out of a sense of adventure and others, patriotism, but on this issue I believe the veterans' stories speak for themselves.

On their return to Canada, many of the Métis veterans returned to less than a hero's welcome. Intolerant of unacceptable social conditions and mainstream attitudes, a number of veterans became community leaders, participating in the development of successful housing, education, alcohol abuse counselling, recreation, and cultural programs. Further, in response to the inequitable distribution of military benefits, the veterans formed the Saskatchewan Métis Veteran's Association (SMVA). This association is now, along with the Saskatchewan Indian Veteran's Association (SIVA), under the umbrella of the National Aboriginal Veteran's Association (NAVA). Perhaps no one spoke more passionately to the issue of equitable treatment for Saskatchewan Métis veterans than Ron Camponi, a Korean War veteran, whom I interviewed shortly before his death in the fall of 1993:

"I honestly think that the Métis and the Aboriginal veterans were really shafted. The method they used to keep us informed was definitely bad for Aboriginal veterans. I don't know if it was intentional or just bureaucratic bungling, not knowing that there were veterans on reserves, in the north, on trap lines, in small villages and some places that aren't even villages. The method they used to inform the veterans was definitely bad for the Aboriginal veterans. Many of the Métis lived on road allowances and when they came back from the army they went right back to the road allowances. Some of them couldn't read; some couldn't write. Some couldn't understand the language; they only knew their own language, Cree. There was never anyone who went out to inform them of benefits they were entitled to. And to think that Indians had to give up their treaty rights to join the army! They never knew what their rights were. But veterans do have rights to land and to education for their children. This probably went on from the First World War, right through to now."

It is clear that despite their contribution, Métis veterans continue to pursue full recognition. Yet to explain this any further would be fruitless ... listen to the voices of the veterans themselves, and draw your own conclusions.

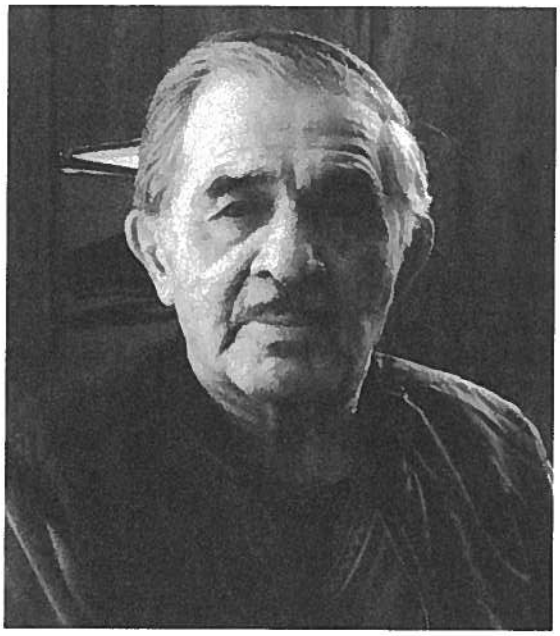
Dave Hutchinson
Fort Smith, NWT
November 1993

John Amyotte

I **was working on a dairy farm for** just about enough to eat. So one morning I told the boss that I was going to join the army. He thought I was looking for greener pastures and I told him I was going to try. I walked to Indian Head, 12 miles away, where I signed up with 76th Field Battery, RCA. I don't know how long we stayed at Indian Head, living in tents and taking our basic training, the foot drill and everything that you're supposed to know, but from there we were transferred to Petawawa, Ontario, where I trained for the artillery on the 25-pounder guns. Then we took the boat from Halifax and landed in Scotland and finally were transported to Aldershot, England. We stayed there for about a year and did practically all our training there. We went all over England for gunnery schemes, learning how to operate guns.

Then I was sent to a different artillery outfit, The 9th (Toronto) Field Battery, RCA, and we were sent into action in Italy, where we fought for 18 months. Our first fight was in Monte Cassino. We had quite a battle at Coriano Ridge, but we managed to get through it. I remember that at Cassino we were in one position quite a while. The food truck used to come in at 12 noon, and the enemy got to know that the food truck was coming in and they would start shelling. Everyone would have to jump in the slit trenches. We lost some men, but I was lucky.

We had our good times and bad times. We fought until we got an order to move, and we didn't know where we



John Amyotte came from Lebret, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from August 1st, 1940 until October 20th, 1945. He was a Gunner in the 60th/76th Field Battery, RCA, and served in the United Kingdom, Europe and the central Mediterranean. His medals include: 1939-45 Star, Italy Star, France and Germany Star, Defence Medal, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and War Medal (1939-45).

were going. One time I had laundry out; it was being done by a lady in that area. I spoke to her in Italian and asked if my laundry was done. She said, no. I told her that I had to have it; we were leaving Italy. She asked where we were going I told her I didn't know; I was leaving the country and I didn't even know where I was going. We took a boat to France, but only the officers knew what was going on.

We landed in Marseilles. From there we went to Belgium, Holland and, finally, into Germany. While we were in action, nobody got leave. You just kept on going until everything was clear. The army decided what they wanted to do, how far to advance, and we supported the infantry while they were advancing. We would lay a barrage over top of them and keep lifting the range, moving ahead of them until they got to their fighting positions. The infantrymen were the boys who took the beating, that's for sure. We just supported them, laying

down the barrage in front of them when they were advancing, but they are the ones who took the casualties and just kept on fighting. They were a darn sight closer to the enemy than we were. If we saw a target, maybe a convoy, we would blast them, but we never knew until they gave us the cease fire whether we got the objective or not. In the middle of the action, you didn't know what was going on. Only when you had to prepare to move did you know you did something.

I had two brothers, Paul and Frank Amyotte, in The South Saskatchewan Regiment. They landed in the Dieppe Raid and they had quite a battle. One brother had to throw his pack away and swim to the barge that was evacuating them. A German soldier picked up his pack and found his pay book inside. Two years later my mother got my brother's pay book in the mail from Germany. The German soldier wanted to know if this boy had been killed in the Dieppe raid. I thought that was very nice of him. My other brother transferred from The South Saskatchewan Regiment and was with me in the 76th Field Battery, RCA after we got into France.

I was lucky; I didn't get hit, just got a busted ear drum from the gun blasts. I was right beside the gun all the time. Some of them got it, that's for sure, but I was lucky. If you were wounded you got a pension, and I got everything free from the Department of Veterans Affairs; medical care, glasses. They've been pretty good to me.

I was discharged in 1945. After that I worked in construction for 15 years, at a sawmill in the Yukon for 11 winters, and on the oil rigs. All my experience of the world came from the army. I saw a lot of countries, which I'd never have seen if I had been in civilian life. I liked the army. M

Dorothy Askwith

I went to a recruiting depot in the Birks Building in Saskatoon. I thought I'd make some inquiries as to what qualifications you had to have for enlistment. I was passed on from one person to another and pretty soon I had stacks of paper: "You take this paper here. Now you go for your medical." I had to run up to City Hospital for a medical, back to the Birks Building and on my return they made me sign on the dotted line, and I enlisted, all in one day. I had tickets the length of my arm: meal tickets, sleeper tickets. I was to be on the CNR train that evening, and that was it; I was on my way to Ottawa.

I had to be on the train at 9 o'clock, even though departure wasn't till 5 or 5:30 the next morning. Already I felt like I was being confined to barracks, but I don't think I had got over the excitement and understood everything that was going on, because it wasn't one step at a time, it was one big jump. It was just leaps and bounds, and next thing I knew I was eastward bound, the first time I had ever been away from home. I was elated, and had so many mixed feelings. For the first time I was going to be away from my mother and father and a family of 10 children. I thought maybe the separation would be a problem, but things were so hectic that I didn't even have time to think about home. And there was a joy to meeting new people. I was a little hesitant sometimes, feeling my way around, but really it was great. I just fell into it like I was born to be there.

It had been my dream. At home I had felt rather left out. There weren't any girls. There were Métis girls in the city,

but I didn't have a job; I hadn't even completed my grade 12. I was the oldest, so I quit school much sooner than I would have liked to, because of shortage of funds in the family, trying to feed 10 mouths. This was just after the Dirty Thirties and times weren't very good. I never recall having an abundance of anything; clothing, housing, food. We had the basics to get by on and that was it; no luxuries. I always dreamt of getting away from home, somehow making a buck, so I was elated when I was offered $1.25 a day in the services. Prior to that I had been making 25 cents an hour as casual labour. And this was going to be steady income. The fringe benefits, too, were a great attraction; I'd have clothes, my medical would be paid for, and the travel was so exciting.

It was a first and I've never regretted it. I don't know how to describe it, really. It was such an experience, such an advantage. I felt so lucky to be able to qualify. My cousins in the city were not interested in anything like that, not the girls, so I was all by myself, the only girl from the Métis community here at that time who went into the RCAF. There were a couple of other girls I'd heard of who'd gone into the army, but my favourite colour was blue; khaki wasn't my colour at all.

I went to Upper Rockliffe for my manning. I stayed for six weeks and it was quite an experience. "We serve that men may fly." That was our motto. Each of us was wide open for any trade; wherever you were needed, that's where you went. Because I didn't have qualifications in any profession I jumped here and there and all over the place: the parachute section, the post office, serving officers in the mess hall (which I didn't like too much, because self-consciousness got the better of me, serving senior officers). As you moved from one station to the other, it opened new doors and there were new jobs. I worked at a service flying training school at Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. In the bombing and gunnery school at Kimberline, Manitoba, I ran a projector, showing pictures of aircraft for the guys in the bombing and gunnery school. The gunners would be sitting in there with their guns. They were learning to identify and target on the enemy aircraft.

I loved that; it was great, meeting so many different individuals from different parts of the world. I'd been an introvert and didn't meet new people, but this really got me out of my shell. Since that time on I've been a "people" person who always wants to be with others. I don't much care for the retirement life I have today, sitting here and not having people around. I was also in Moncton, New Brunswick; St. Hubert, Quebec; and then in Aylmer, Ontario for transport training. I had decided that I'd like to drive. I didn't even own a bicycle prior to joining the air force, and here I was trying to drive a vehicle. But I thought "Here's another dream come true, another opportunity, if I could just learn how to drive." They didn't deny you anything; you could take almost any trade if you passed a test and they felt that you could give it a shot. I qualified, and I went. I got my license and I'm still driving. It was great; it was a wonderful experience.

It was all educational. I benefited an

awful lot. I don't know what I contributed to the air force; it seems to me I was a little selfish. I did all the gaining. Some of the older girls got overseas. That made me feel a little left out, seeing a poster on the board that said so-and-so was going overseas, and having a little farewell for them. Those of us who were under 21 and too young to go felt cheated. I wished the war would last for 10 years or so, so I could qualify, but the war was ending when I turned 21.

D-Day was in the spring and I stayed on until October. I was based in Yorkton on D-Day, but there was no more need for those training schools after that. They were closing one school after another. I was to be posted to Claresholm, Alberta, but before I moved, the orders came that Claresholm was being closed. So I was sent to MacLeod, Alberta, but then that base was to be closed, too. Finally, I went to a repair depot in Calgary and spent the rest of my time there. I had relatives in Calgary and I wanted to stay as close to home as I could, because otherwise it was too difficult trying to get home on a two-week pass; you spent all your time on the train.

My mother had been very apprehensive about the military life. She saw military people on the streets, and there was a lot of drinking, because it was party time when you got a leave or a pass. Mother was afraid of us being introduced to alcohol. I was just 17 when I enlisted, so she gave me a lecture, "I don't want any drinking. The first time I hear of you drinking, all I have to do is write a letter and I can get you out." Of course, poor mom, what can she see when I'm three, four or five provinces away? Her fears were realistic, because that's what it was all about; we were introduced to alcohol very quickly. At the beginning I was a little hesitant to drink anything stronger than beer; my idea of alcohol was that you wouldn't get drunk on beer. Now, since I've worked with people with addictions, I know better. In those days we called it relief drinking. We were under a lot of tension, especially when we heard the daily war news and heard about relatives and close friends being killed or wounded. There was a lot of apprehension. I would think that I was the fortunate one, because I was here, and not really involved in the direct fighting, such as my husband was. But we still felt the trauma when bad news came.

Discrimination? Everybody was so involved in what was happening with the war that nobody was involved in such pettiness. I don't think you bothered to look at the colour of your buddy's skin, especially the guys who were involved in warfare. A couple of guys who are cousins of mine said, "Who the hell ever stopped to look at colour? We were both so gall darn glad that you could get a place to duck into; who gave a damn who's with you? We were there together, two lives." That's my feeling; everything was too serious to think petty like that.

I had a couple of casual gestures of discrimination from a senior officer. When I went to salute him, instead of returning my salute he'd just raise his hand and say "HOW." That just stunned me; it floored me, but what do you do? A friend of mine said, "They'll never listen to you. You're just going to get yourself

in trouble, so dummy up." So "dummy up" I did. I never went to complain, even though the women had their own senior officer I could have talked to. I thought, "It's just pettiness," and I simply avoided the guy from then on. If I saw him coming, I'd about-turn or make a right or left turn and go somewhere else to avoid an encounter with him. When I think about it now, I realize how ignorant he was, but it was the only situation. In the bunkhouse there were a lot of different nationalities, and most of the time I was the only one of Native ancestry. I never heard any remarks. Whatever we were involved in, we were always a team. I felt very comfortable; otherwise I don't think I would have hung around.

A lot of wartime marriages didn't last; mine didn't. There's no courtship; it's a hurry-up thing, right now, and then they're gone overseas and you're left behind. While he was away I had three years to grow up and when he returned I was looking at a stranger, because people change when they go through that traumatic situation and, in his case, being wounded. And then, being 21 years old, I wasn't ready to settle down; I was Miss Know-It-All. I had a lot of experience and I just wanted to do my own thing.

After my discharge in Calgary I worked there for a few years. My mom was a diabetic, and at the age of 50 she took a turn for the worse, so I decided to move back to Saskatoon. All my younger sisters had jobs and had moved out, and I felt I had left my parents in a lurch, too, by going into the air force. As the oldest, I had always been by my mom's side prior to the war; her helper, cook and baby sitter. After I returned I met another man. My sister had married his best friend and that's how we were introduced. We were married in 1952 and here we are, more than 40 years later.

For the first six years we didn't have any children, and we had a lot of young friends, so it was party time every weekend. Alcohol became quite a problem for me. I call myself a recovering addict, an alcoholic. I went to Alcoholics Anonymous after my twins were born. You cannot do two jobs; you've got to do one job and do it well. I was making party time quite a full-time job and it was making my home life unmanageable. I wasn't happy; nobody was too happy. Thank goodness I had a choice. There were no treatment centres at that time, but there was Alcoholics Anonymous. I ran into AA accidentally; none of our friends that we drank with mentioned AA. When you're young you never look at alcohol as a problem. We had to change friends; that helped a lot. My AA sponsor and his wife were very supportive; he was a veteran, too, and had quite a drinking problem. His wife had been left with two children while he went overseas, so she understood our story.

There are a lot of good people in AA, and once I get into something, I like to jump in with both feet, so I really got involved in AA and learned about the whole program. When treatment centres started to open, particularly the Native Alcohol Program, it opened new doors for me. Because my husband was English and I didn't have much involvement with Métis people or Native people,

I didn't even know there was non-status or treaty. I thought a person was either reserve or lived in the city. But when my stepbrother, Clarence Trotchie, became the director of the first Native alcohol treatment centre in Saskatoon, I wanted to know what it was all about. And he was secretly wishing that I'd come forward, because he wanted some help. I sat through lectures and observed the people in treatment, absorbing whatever I could, and I thought, "I could do this!" Clarence told me, "You know this AA program a whole lot better than I do, because you've been in the program and you've only been sober a year. If I make mistakes, please don't embarrass me and try to correct me in a lecture, let's discuss this by ourselves." We were learning and teaching one another; that's how we got started.

After 30 days I got into part-time work there. I had children going to high school at that time, so the part-time work let me still be the mother, get my working husband off to work, be home and have supper ready for him and the children when they come home from school. Oh, I was on the ball, and I enjoyed that very much. Some of the first people I worked with are still sober today; it's fantastic. As a people person, I just love that; patients are in for 30 days and then you get a new bunch. Then, whenever we needed staff, I'd give a chance to someone who was doing really well. That's how they got their jobs.

Before that, I didn't know that there were so many Native people in this province. The number of Native people that have come into the city since I've been working in the treatment centre is unbelievable. My dad had been a drinker. He'd bring home Native soldiers to our house, before I joined up, and they'd have a few drinks. He was just trying to be friendly. I'd never seen Native people like that in the city until the war broke out, and I think that was the beginning. People got out of the reserve and when they got out, like myself, they wanted to be in with people and they started migrating into the city.

Dorothy Askwith

I don't know what I acquired working here for 16 years, but I know that I am rich with friends. I can go anywhere in this province and I would know someone. So many friends and they're all recovering alcoholics; so many who are doing meaningful jobs today. That gives me such a good feeling. They were drunks and now are leading useful and meaningful lives. I encourage people who are in the city to keep coming to meetings, because that's how I recovered, not by going to treatment centres, but through meetings.

So life has been pretty good. I am so lucky to know so many people. What a drag it must be to live a boring lifestyle and then die. Alcoholics are lost in a lifestyle of drinking. All they know is drinking and drugs, sometimes from eight or nine years old. By their early 20s they're dead. We can turn that around, each and every one of us, every alcoholic, Native or otherwise. Wouldn't that be wonderful? When I was first involved in the program I heard people say, "I am a grateful alcoholic; I am so glad that I am an alcoholic." I thought, "What have they got to be glad for?" Now I understand. I'm grateful, too. If I hadn't had an addiction problem, I would have never even opened the big book of Alcoholics Anonymous and I would never have been introduced to a new way of life, living abundantly without a dependence on chemicals. I'm glad that I was an alcoholic, because I was exposed to this program, and we recovering alcoholics are a unique kind of people. We have lived two different lifestyles in one lifetime. I lived the addictions lifestyle and I know what the feelings are. I know the problems; I know the physical, mental and emotional trauma that I went through. And now I know the recovery and the abundant, chemical-free life. I wouldn't trade it for the world.

Turn on the radio and the TV; there's another drunken Indian, another one down the drain. It makes me angry. I will not be stereotyped. I say, "I don't know about you guys, but I've promised I will die sober. That's my promise, not to you or to anyone else, but to me; one Native is going to die sober." That's the whole purpose of the addictions program; that's my life there. The only sad thing is the internal Métis squabbling over the program itself. People want political power. Well, anyone who is going to be involved in an addictions program better have a heart for people and forget about the pay cheque that's going to be involved.

If you win one person from addiction, that's a life and that's what the whole war is all about. There's a battle to be won right now, and it's not fought with guns. This is a chemical war, and more Native people are dying in this war today than there were in the Second World War. So, you see, I've been through a lot of wars. M

Leo Belanger

I went overseas in early 1943 or late '42, and I trained in England for about a year with special amphibious tanks that we were going to use to open up the second front. We took our tanks in on D-Day, June 6, around seven or eight o'clock in the morning. We fought all the way past Caen and on August the 14th we spearheaded an attack at the Falaise Gap. That's where I got hit.

They shipped me back to England and fixed me up; then they flew me back into action. I fought in Belgium, and I was hurt again. I was back in England recovering the second time when the war ended.

In the tanks I was a radio operator, keeping communications between the tanks. There was a radio in each tank and a frequency for the whole squadron. Then we had an intercom to talk to the other crew members in our own tank. I also loaded the big gun and the machine gun. I could see out of the periscope, but I couldn't see anything else.

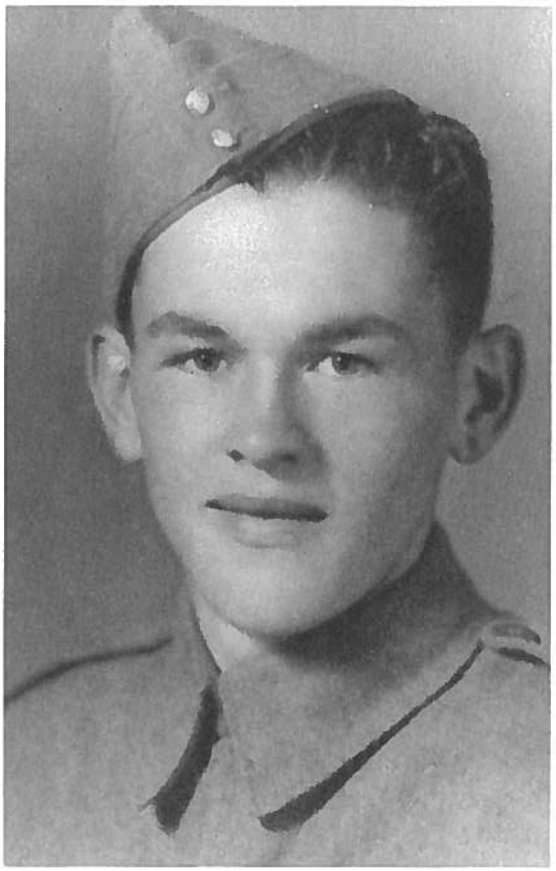
We were involved in quite a few attacks. On one attack there were about 14 tanks and only three of us came back. That was the only time I was scared; when we were withdrawing it seemed like somebody was following our back. I remember the day I got shot by the 88s. The 88s on the Tiger tanks were more powerful than the guns we had on our tanks. They were also more cumbersome, because they were bigger, but they had so much power their shells cut through a tank like it was butter. During the battle we came back and

reloaded. There was quite a gap in the enemy lines. It was the middle of the night, and we headed through the gap and then started spreading out. That's when we were hit and I was wounded. I was taken back to a hospital tent on the Normandy beach. From there I was shipped to a hospital near London.

When I was recovering there were rocket attacks on England. And before I went into action the first time, there had still been some aircraft bombings. I remember the air raid warnings and people going into shelters. We used to go dancing and the master of ceremonies would say, "Well, if anybody wants to go ...," but the band would start playing and nobody would leave. I think they were just used to it.

I don't remember being lonely very often. Maybe when I was hit. And when the war was over; it seemed a long time before I got into the boat to go home. I came home in January 1946 and they gave everyone a month off. Then you had to go back for your discharge. I wanted to get out. I'd enlisted when I was 19 years old and I'd been in for four and a half years.

I went overseas to Germany in 1992 to visit. I drove to France, Holland and Belgium, and walked on the beach where we had landed. But I couldn't recognize any landmarks or places; everything has changed. I visited the cemeteries of soldiers and was surprised how the people have been looking after them. It was a very good visit, and brought back a lot of memories. M



Leon Joseph Belanger came from Chagona, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from June 16th, 1941 to February 11th, 1946. He was a trooper in the 16th/22nd Saskatchewan Horse and The Fort Garry Horse, and served in Europe. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, the War Medal (1939-45), and the Normandy Medal.

Maurice Blondeau

I was born in the village of Lebret and I went to the public school there during the late 1930s and the '40s. I took my grade eight there and in those days it wasn't a bad education, probably the same as grade 12 today. I remember that on my way home from school I had to fight the white kids in a predominantly French town and also the Indian children at Residential School. I didn't know where I belonged, because they called me a dirty half breed. After communicating with my dad I straightened that out; I knew where I was, and what I was.

There were a lot of Métis people living along the road allowance just outside the town of Lebret. They called it Little Chicago. We lived on 15 acres of land my grandfather had purchased. The Blondeau's have been in Canada since the 1600s, first in Quebec, then one member moved to the United States, and my great grandfather moved to Saskatchewan from the States.

I went to Regina and took some more upgrading to get my grade nine. In 1949 I went to Winnipeg for a one-year mechanics course, but when I came back I couldn't find work. So on January the 7th, 1951, I hitchhiked from Fort Qu'Appelle to Regina at six o'clock in the morning in 36-below weather to join the army. There was a lot of recruiting going on at that time and I thought I'd give it a shot. I was 18 years old.

I was shipped to Victoria and did my general training in Work Point Barracks. If I could have got off that island by swimming I would have. Coming from the Saskatchewan prairies and having travelled only as far as Manitoba, I found

the West Coast kind of snobbish; the military had been established there so long. In December of that year I was stationed at Gordon Head, 129 LAA Battery, RCA B Troop. The housing was something they probably slapped together in the Second World War; it was always damp. One day at a big parade they called out for volunteers; they needed 12 volunteers for the first advance group to Korea. There must have been 200 of us who stepped out; I was one of them and I was shipped to Shilo in preparation for overseas.

It was a funny feeling to leave for war, something that I had never experienced before. There was some fear; I was leery about where I was going. To top it off, the band on the dock was playing "So long, it's been good to know you," and I thought of my country, which I loved very much. This is something I gained by the experience; it was a chance for me, as a cocky young guy, to go and do my part for my country. I thought it was time to explore something like that; I had the chance and I took it. There were 151 Canadians on that ship and 6,000 Americans. We left from Seattle and arrived in Japan in 22 days, where we stayed in Yokohama for a couple of days before moving on. I remember that the Japanese women were beautiful, and their way of life really was amazing. So many people. Their houses were only about six inches apart, and the inside dividers in the houses were made of rice paper.

We went from there to Inchon, Korea. That took two days by ship. About one o'clock in the morning they told us to get ready; we were getting off on landing barges. I could hear this bang, bang. It was enemy fire a long distance away, but I could hear it; my first sound of the big guns and I was scared, wondering what I was doing there, why I had volunteered. Once ashore, we travelled by train for about five or six hours and that's when I got my first taste of being shot at. About two hours out our train was ambushed. You could probably still find my finger marks on the wooden floors today. They were pecking away at us and I'll guarantee you, I was one scared young man. I didn't even look. I ducked down and had my head covered. But after that subsided and all the windows were shot out, we kept going to the end of the line where trucks picked us up and took us to the A Echelon. There we were assigned to different batteries. We had the 25-pounders there and they trained us on the job, right at the front. I was a loader. After four days we were shipped out to our gun positions in different batteries. I was on the guns for two months. Most of the action was at night, and I spent some time positioned in front of our own infantry.

The first time I was up there I didn't like it, because we were shooting at human beings and we could see them. But a human being changes when he gets in this situation, where it's either him or me and it's not going to be me. You get tough like that; but still, in the back of your mind, you're saying, "Why am I doing this?" I questioned myself, because I had volunteered to go over there. I'd done it because the UN was there and my country was there fighting, but when you're there you sure think about it. And it's something I'll never

the town of Lebret and with the Métis kids. That was healthy. They took down the big fence around the residential schools and let these kids free to have civilization, and the non-Natives started mingling with the Native kids.

As Métis, we were a forgotten people and a lot of times we didn't have any space, just road allowances. I remember those very clearly from when I used to travel with my grandfather. We'd go down the road allowance to dig seneca roots. You'd see the odd little shack up there, Métis people, and my grandfather would stop and have tea with them. Today it's a different story. When I was growing up in Lebret there was one street called Chicago Street and another called Jackrabbit Street. That was sort of a dividing line. There were also Métis who lived out on the south side of the valley, on top of the hill, and others who lived up east of Katepwa Beach, which they used to call Dog Town. Every time they came into town they wanted to get into a fight, so they called them the dogs. It's something that has really changed.

When I went to join the army, going to a big city was a real experience: so many people, so many different cars and, in those days, the old street cars you could ride for a nickel. I didn't know anybody. It was a shock. I suppose the city housing that the Native people could find in the 50s and 60s was better than what they'd had in the two decades before, but the housing discrimination was bad. All these people were starting to come into the cities unprepared. Our major Native groups in this province should have been out in the communities teaching these people before they moved into urban centres. They should have explained that you don't grab your family and your belongings and move into the city because of the bright lights. I always felt that the husband should have been the person to move into the city to find a job, get a house and then move his family. There is a responsibility for the Native organizations to help in preparing people.

I thank the army for the training that it gave me, and the respect. It was hard training, but I believe young kids who are dropping out of school should be put in the army for two years to experience the same training we got when we went in. When you spoke to a lance corporal you had to stand to attention; it teaches you responsibility and respect for other people. My father had told me, "Maurice, always feel as good as the person you are standing next to, but never, ever feel any better than that person. Always feel equal." I have always played that game, trying to never feel any better than anybody else. I get along with people very well and people are my life. Especially Native people; they need a lot of help today and in the Friendship Centres we are trying to give them that help. But I get along with anybody. I don't care what colour or creed, we are all human beings. M

Euclide Boyer

Originally we came from St. Laurent, north of Batoche, along the side of the south Saskatchewan River. I didn't have much schooling. I went up to grade eight in a country school in the Woodhill District south of Shell Lake, where my father homesteaded in 1929. There were six of us in the family, four boys and two girls. In those days it was pretty rough. You had no work. Well, there was work, but there was no money to pay you with. In the fall of 1940 I worked cutting brush from daylight till dark for 50 cents a day. And in the winter nobody had any work. So in November, 1941, I went north to Chitek Lake with a couple of other guys from home to find winter work. We drove in a cutter; it took us about two days to travel the 17 miles, but I found work there right away.

In the spring of 1942 I wanted to go and work on the Alaska highway. The wages were good, you didn't need many qualifications and they were just starting construction from Fort St. John. You could go to Edmonton those days and hire on as a truck driver. They'd give you a truck load and send you on. That attracted me very strongly, but I thought: before I go I might as well see if I get rejected from the army and then I'll be free. I didn't want to leave a new job and come back with a green card from the army. I didn't want to be in the army, to be a zombie, but I thought I might as well get it over with and maybe see if I could get rejected. So I went and joined up, and there was no way of getting rejected;

I passed A-1 and I was stuck there for three years. I was 20 at the time.

I took my basic training in Camrose, Alberta, and I was a bad boy for awhile. Coming off the homestead and working in the bush, I couldn't understand discipline. I preferred being my own boss. I ran away a few times from the army, just to let them know that I wanted to do what I wanted to do. And they punish you for that; put you in detention, and that didn't prove to be much good either. So, since I was a soldier, I went ahead with it. Because I'd always wanted to drive trucks, I joined The Royal Canadian Army Service Corps, but after awhile I learned that it was kind of a gimmick. They go by category. If you were A-1 you didn't get a chance to drive truck; you went right in with the rifles and machine guns. We took advance training at Currie barracks in Calgary. There were a few Indians and Métis, but in those days every fellow soldier was like a brother to you, so it didn't make much difference. We used to kid the guys from Eastern Canada. We'd ask them where they came from, and when they'd say Montreal or something like that we'd say, "You're not even in Canada. Canada starts from Winnipeg west." Most Western guys were real good. I don't want to brag them up, but they made first class soldiers. And if they trained on something, they took it seriously. Canadian soldiers proved to be the best soldiers in the front lines.

There was some pretty stiff training. They had to train you for action, and in some ways it was all kind of kids play, except that it was hard. There was a lot of exercise and lots of parade square. You had to understand the basic rules of regimental life, and you never did any thinking when you were in the army. They did all that for you. They always told me, "Boyer, if we can't break you, we'll break your mother's heart." And I guess they would do that.

After two years in Canada I went overseas for a year. We were supposed to go directly from Calgary to Halifax and get on a ship, but the car I was in on the troop train broke out with scarlet fever, so we got quarantined for 30 days in Nova Scotia.

Euclide Boyer came from St. Laurent, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from March 4th, 1942 to March 4th, 1945. He was a private in The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada, and served in Europe. He was awarded five medals.

A lot of guys were crying when we finally left. We had a Negro; more than one, but the races were all mixed up. There were a few Americans, too. Some Negroes on top deck had a recreation area with a piano. We were all in there, and some of those guys got on the piano and sang the blues. I can remember that very clearly, like it was today. Guys were breaking down in tears.

We landed at Southampton, England. The British got along pretty good with Canadians. And most of our guys got along real well with the womenfolk in England, even the Indians boys. The English girls weren't scared of them. They didn't know what they were; they thought they were just Canadian, and it was great.

First, I was transferred to reinforcement infantry, training for the infantry. Then, when I was ready to go, they sent me over with The Algonquin Regiment (RCAC), an Ontario regiment, and they called us the Mohawks. When I got into France, just out of Normandy, past Caen, I was transferred to The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada.

I never went into Belgium; never even got out of France. I was wounded and taken prisoner.

I received two gun shot wounds. As a matter of fact, I came back with a bullet in my shoulder and I carried it around for 17 years before it was taken out. I was hit when the enemy were cross firing on us in a little town. We were pinned right down and the Germans were on both sides of the road, well camouflaged so we couldn't see them. There were only about two in the regiment that didn't get killed or taken prisoner. That was about five miles the other side of Caen, a little place called May-sur-Orne. We were to take another little town, and they said the Germans had pushed back, but they were just well camouflaged and waiting for us. That was on the fifth of August, 1944.

We didn't know if we were going to live very long after we were taken prisoner, because we were up against the SS troops, some of the toughest men that Hitler had. They were all young fellows, under 20, and they knew nothing else but fighting. All that mattered at the time was hoping to God they didn't torture us too much. But they were good soldiers; they didn't treat us all that bad. The only problem was that you didn't have much food, and medical supplies were running low. They'd put bandages on your wound and wrap it up with crepe paper. When I got hit I had been laying down. A couple of guys standing behind a big tank came onto the road and they hollered to fire the machine gun and it went through me like a red hot iron, except that I hardly felt the one in the shoulder, because I was kind of numb, my shoulder already dislocated from hitting the ground when I had gone over an approach.

When we were first captured, they put us in an old barn. There were guards outside, but we were in pain and didn't feel much like going anywhere. I lost a lot of blood, but I was strong and I could stand quite a bit. We were only there a matter of hours before they moved us by Red Cross truck to Paris, where they unloaded us into a big hall that was the hospital. There were rows and rows of stretchers with wounded soldiers, and

they were not all Canadians. There were English, Americans and some Germans. I was on a stretcher by this time and I was getting weaker. There was no more room and no beds, so they put me in the nurses' office and that's where I laid for the night, on a stretcher on the floor. I was dry and I really wanted a drink of water. The nurses were Grey Nuns and they all spoke French, so I asked one of the nuns for a drink. I could get along with them real good in French, and they were very surprised. But you had to watch that, too, because most of the Germans could speak French, because they had occupied that part of France for over four years. A nun got me a cup of wine; you don't drink water in France. She was real nice, and she felt sorry for us.

I had a lot of pain, and the next morning they found a bed for me. Then a young wounded German soldier came up to my bed and started talking in good English. He said he had gone to university in London, England, and had been called back just before the war. Now they were telling him propaganda, that London was flattened by bombs, and he asked me if that was the case. I said, "No, that was never the case." So we sat there and talked for a long time. He said, "We don't want to fight either, but they're making us fight. What are we going to do?" He asked me if I smoked, and he said, "I smoke too, but our ration here is only three cigarettes a day. I'll give you mine. I'm going to quit smoking. If I only get three cigarettes a day, I might as well." It was different tobacco than we were used to. They were pretty nice, a lot of them, once we got talking. They didn't want to fight any more than we did. If they would have turned all our soldiers lose, they'd have been the happiest bunch you'd ever have seen, but they couldn't do that. The same went for the other side.

They moved us to Châlons-sur-Marne, 125 kilometres away, and it took about five days by train, because the Americans were bombing all the rail lines. We had only enough food for 24 hours and it was a son-of-a-gun to be hungry and, even worse, thirsty. When we arrived they moved 97 of us into a makeshift hospital where we were taken care of by German doctors and some captured American doctors. We had one American doctor who was of German descent and spoke German. We didn't have much food. All we ate was spaghetti soup twice a day. We got one Red Cross parcel while we were there and it tasted pretty good.

Eventually, the American army came through and pushed the Germans right out. The Germans just left us, but there was one sergeant who was with the German medical corps and he was supposed to leave on a bike in the early hours of the morning the day the Germans were leaving. He told our German-American doctor, "I'm not going. I want to stay. I want to be your prisoner. I hope you can get me in the medical services when I get back to wherever it is they take me." So when he was certain that the other Germans had gone, he took off his belt and pistol and gave them to the German-American doctor and said, "You're my prisoner now, but in a few hours I'll be your prisoner."

At daylight, they started looking for contacts with the American army to get us out of there. They finally found the Americans, and we were moved back to an Allied field hospital.

We were all glad to see the Americans, but the night before they came, the Allies had been bombing and shelling the town close by. We had all moved down into a shelter in the reinforced basement, and everybody was praying. Some didn't know how to pray, but they were trying. There has to be Someone up above, because that's the first thing you have in mind when you get really scared. All soldiers know it. If a soldier goes into action and comes back and says he was never scared, you can tell him that he never saw too much action. Fear is only human. A lot of our own soldiers, when they took German prisoners or came upon a dead German, took all the jewellery and valuables, but I never wanted anything to do with any souvenirs. I thought, if I can get back myself, that's souvenir enough for me.

At the first field hospital they brought some more Red Cross trucks and took us back quite a few miles to another field hospital, quite a way back from the front lines. We ate a lot of mouldy bread; it looked like bannock, but was very, very dark. You ate it because you were hungry.

During my years in the army, I found there was no discrimination once you were in uniform. It was the only time the Natives were equal to the whites. It's a strange thing. The general public is taught at home and in books about cowboys and Indians and stuff like that, so it's pretty hard for the Native people to make it in public life or otherwise, unless you're one of the top-notch scientists or doctors. If you really know your stuff you can make it, otherwise the general public is prejudiced against Native people. I get a kick out of it when I hear government people say they've got to educate the Native people. I say, before you do that, educate the white people towards the Native people. Let them know that those Native people are not just bums wanting to live on welfare. Give them something to do and they will get back on their own feet and do it very well.

But the Native people at that time, especially the Treaty Indians, were treated like white men once they got into uniform. They could go into a bar and have a drink alongside their white chums. Before they got into uniform, they weren't allowed to take a drink in public, and after they came home, those who were fortunate enough to come back, they were treated the same. Once they took the uniform off, no more socializing with the white people. They couldn't even go into a pub until many years later.

I decided when I left Canada that I wasn't going to get married overseas, and I didn't. I came back and I got married a year later. My wife's name is Helen Lucier. We raised twelve kids, seven boys and five girls. Except for one boy who was killed in an accident, all my kids are working at good jobs. Some are in business. I tried to get them through school, and some of them graduated. None of them have less than grade 11. I brought my family up without any social help, no welfare or anything.

I've served as president of the Northern Fur Conservation of Trappers Association. I sat on the Gabriel Dumont provincial board and on the board of the alcohol council, known as SNAC, as well as a local board at home. I'm also involved with the Métis Society. I worked and I made it with my own sweat and my own two hands.

But in the army I used to drink a lot to wash out all the sorrows and memories. Every soldier is your buddy in the army and it's very hard when you see your buddies dying on both sides of you. It's just very, very hard to take. I was always thinking that if your time is up, your time is up, and if it's not your number, you're going to get through somehow.

I think if you look at it in a broad sense it was worth it, because the Germans were defeated; there was something that we accomplished. The high-ranking officers said we were fighting for freedom and a free country. But 40-some years later, I wonder if that's true. Do we have freedom and everything that goes with it in this country? Everything around you is all regulated, and if you don't follow the straight line, there's the law to grab you and punish you.

I hardly ever think about the war, and I don't like to talk about it, especially with people who don't know anything about it. I find it much easier talking with a man who's been there; then we both know what the other guy is talking about. In Canada, before the war, times were real hard. People were really hard up. But they were close. Then, once the war broke out, jobs were plentiful and money started circulating. But when money gave people more independence, there was more trouble. I think what happens today is that everybody is too independent. I remember that even after I came back from overseas my only means of transportation were horses. It was slow, but when you met somebody on the road you could always stop and talk or say hello. Now you're driving 60 miles an hour and you don't have time to say hello. Always in a hurry to get there, but once you get there all you have to do is wait anyway. M

Ron Camponi

My father's name was Angelo Camponi. He was in the navy in World War II. I had a brother in World War II and after the war there were four of us brothers in the army: myself, Len, Bill and Tony, all in the same regiment, all on the same hockey team. It was a little confusing when they tried to broadcast the game. About 80 years total service, counting my dad and the four boys. When I went to Korea my brother was coming home and I took over his tank. A picture of three of us brothers on the tank was used in the *Legionnaire* magazine and in a daily newspaper.

Before I joined the army I was in Saskatoon, at Saint Joseph's School, which is now the Native Survival School. I quit at 15 and worked for a year delivering groceries. I joined up in 1942, when I was 16 years old. They wouldn't believe I was 18, but in those days the birth certificates were handwritten, so I bought some ink eradicator for 25 cents at a drug store and changed my certificate.

I didn't tell my parents when I went to enlist; it was sort of a lark and I didn't really think I'd be accepted. There were three of us who went together. We were all 16. Then the other two dropped the idea, but I went on with it and the next thing I knew I was in the army. My mother wasn't very happy, but my dad didn't mind too much, because he had been in the service in the two World Wars. My mother already had a brother overseas, so she was quite concerned about both of us. She eventually approved, reluctantly.

I took my basic training in Regina and then my advanced training at Camp Borden in Ontario. When we were ready to go overseas we waited for a draft. Everything was secret; you didn't know when you were leaving or anything. I woke up one morning and everyone else was gone. When I went on parade there were only a few of us who hadn't left with the draft the night before. I asked why I wasn't on the draft, and they told me I had to go see the adjutant. The adjutant asked me how old I was. I said, "Eighteen. You got my birth certificate." He said, "We also have this," and he pulled my baptismal certificate from the church. My mother had sent it without telling me. He gave me the choice of staying in or getting out, and said I would have to wait until I was 19 to go overseas. But I was only 16 and Borden in those days was all sand; I couldn't see myself staying on for three years in Borden, so I decided to get out.

I got my discharge and came back to Saskatchewan. By this time all my friends were in high school and I had matured a lot since I'd quit school. I couldn't tie in with them; they were worried about high school dances and high school girlfriends. To me, that was kids' stuff; I had been in the army for close to a year. There was a vocational training centre in the city for underage soldiers, but I wasn't told about that when I got out; I didn't even know it existed.

So I decided to join up again, a little over a month after I'd quit. Because they knew my age, I had to join in a rank called a boy soldier. Boy Camponi, I was called. I had to take my basic training again, the whole rigmarole. I was getting half pay, 70 cents a day. And then, when I had quit I'd received a clothing allowance of $35 and the regulations said that if you rejoined within six months of quitting you had to pay it back. On top of that, I re-enlisted in the middle of the month. So at the end of the month I got seven dollars; that was my big payday. I had to wait till I turned 17½ to go from 70 cents a day back to $1.40.

I was about 18 years old when the European war ended. I volunteered for the Japanese war and I was shipped out west, but then that war ended, too. I was shipped to a holding unit in Maple Creek before going on to Regina to get my discharge. I was quite a hockey player in those days and when I got to Maple Creek it was around November, so I tried out for a hockey team there and was accepted. The army kept me another six months to finish up the hockey schedule, so I actually got out on April 1, 1946.

By December the army was asking for people to go back in, and I wound up back in the army. I thought I'd go back in till I settled down, because it was hard to settle down after the war.

I rejoined and then I got married and before I knew it I had 10 or 12 years of service. I realized that you only have to go to 25 to get a pension, so I decided to stay. When I retired at age 46 I'd actually stayed 29½ years, counting all three times I was in the army.

I had started off with the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) in Calgary and went to Korea with their

B squadron. After I returned from Korea I was posted to Winnipeg for two years, still with the Strathconas, but on the instructional staff, working with the militia. In 1957 they re-mobilized three armoured regiments. One was the 8th Canadian Hussars (Princess Louise's). They took officers and seniors and CO's from the regular force to form the nucleus of this new regiment. So I went from Winnipeg to Gagetown, New Brunswick, as part of that regiment. Two years later we went to Germany and served there for three years. Then I was an instructor for three years at the armoured corps school in Borden. After that I was posted back to Gagetown, to my third regiment, The Royal Canadian Dragoons. I kept asking for postings out west and the more I asked for west, the further east I went. Typical army. But my last posting was to Regina, where I stayed for three or four years before I took retirement. My kids never really had a home, because the longest posting I ever had was about four years in one place; the rest were all two or three years.

Korea was something like the First World War. Everyone was dug in at the 38th parallel and it was like the WWI trenches. The terrain was hilly and they had their guns zeroed in on our trenches. There was a lot of shelling and a lot of patrols. The infantry went on patrols, and we were dug in, in our tanks, as support. The shelling was really hard on the nerves, because we couldn't go anywhere; we couldn't move our tanks. We were in one position all the time. It was terrible country for tanks, all rice paddies and mountains. If you ever got off the roads and into the paddies you almost disappeared in the swamps. So we didn't go up with our tanks; we just did infantry support. That was our action, depending on what you call action. The infantry would go out on patrols and we would cover them. We would register targets during the day and we would fire at night with the instruments, laying the shells on the targets, firing just ahead of them or wherever they wanted. It was a bloody war; people shooting at you and shelling you and people being killed. A lot of infantry were being killed.

At first they called it a police action, and as a result they didn't have to give all the benefits they gave to wartime people. Well, it was no such thing as police action; it was a bloody war. Any veteran from Korea will tell you, "My version of a police action and a war are not the same as the government's or the military's." But they have finally recognized it as a war and recognized the Korean veterans. It's about time, but now there aren't a lot of veterans left, because it took so long. Maybe that's what they waited for; I don't know.

I remember that 35 years after Korea I went down east and they gave out plastic badges, not medals. They finally came out with a medal in the last year or two, but I know that it was close to 40 years before they recognized it as a war. And only recently I heard through the grapevine that they were giving medals, recognizing it as a war. I was never notified, but maybe by then they didn't know where I was. I've still got the

plastic button that says I was in Korea. I had to send away for the medal.

At the time I was very patriotic. When I heard about the Korean War breaking out I was in a convoy of about 150 vehicles going up the Alaska highway for an exercise in Alaska. We were as far as Fort McMurray and we had to come back. I'd never heard of Korea before; I didn't even know there was such a country. Of course, it's propaganda; they tell you that you're fighting communists to keep your country free. I was doing my duty towards my country.

I first started to think about it later, when my daughters were going to university and protesting against the Vietnam War. Then I began to look back and think: the Korean people themselves weren't even fighting; it was us and the Chinese. As for the Koreans, we just used their battleground to fight the war, and then it ended up as a stalemate. I could relate the Vietnam War to the Korean War. Like the term "gook;" we all used that term over in Korea. They were just gooks. We were led to think that their lives were not nearly as important as ours. It's hard to admit that, but it's the feeling you got over there. It's geared into your head: we're far more important than they are. If one of our guys got killed, it hit home; but if a Korean got killed, tough luck. I don't know how many would admit that to you, but I started realizing that I was as guilty as the rest; I was calling them gooks. All they used the Koreans for was working behind the lines fixing roads, living in A-frames and working without equipment, dumping rocks. They worked in our kitchens and were house boys.

I realized then that I had had no business in Korea fighting a war. However, I had been sent there as part of the Canadian troops. When I see Desert Storm and other actions now, I can see all the politics involved.

After the army, I came back to Saskatoon and started working in the Native alcohol centre for about 15 months, and then I and two others started Saskatchewan Native Housing. We bought an old house ourselves; NAC itself had no money and there was no organization. Eventually I took over as manager. We also started Saskatchewan Native Rentals, and a non-profit registered charity that runs a camp at Chitek Lake. I was a founder of Saskatchewan Pack in Meadow Lake; it was a prefabrication outfit. We ran that for three years and had 24 people working, but we were under-financed. I've been involved with the Legal Aid Board, and the board of directors for the Family Services Bureau. We also got a leisure services program started and that led to the city having programs for Aboriginal kids. I served in the Métis Society for 20 years, ever since I got out of the army, and I've been president of one of the local Legions.

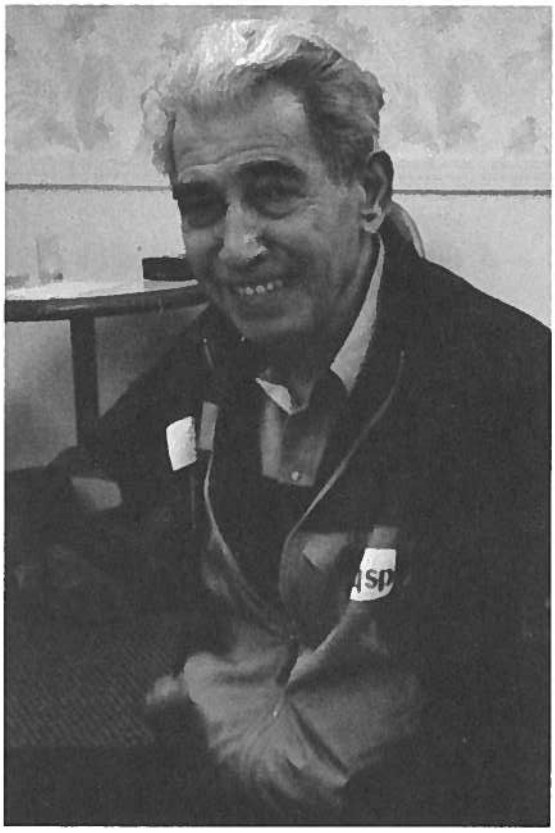
I've been pretty active, but I've had to have a leg amputated and my foot, and I was hospitalized for a long time. I'm still involved, but I think I might "disinvolve" myself soon; I'm getting a little burnt out. But it's awfully hard to quit when people depend on you a lot.

I honestly think that the Métis and

the Aboriginal veterans were really shafted. The method they used to keep us informed was definitely bad for Aboriginal veterans. I don't know if it was intentional or just bureaucratic bungling, not knowing that there were veterans on reserves, in the north, on trap lines, in small villages and some places that aren't even villages. The method they used to inform the veterans was definitely bad for the Aboriginal veterans. Many of the Métis lived on road allowances and when they came back from the army they went right back to the road allowances. Some of them couldn't read; some couldn't write. Some couldn't understand the language; they only knew their own language, Cree. There was never anyone who went out to inform them of benefits they were entitled to. And to think that Indians had to give up their treaty rights to join the army! They never knew what their rights were. But veterans do have rights to land and to education for their children. This probably went on from the First World War, right through to now.

The Department of Veterans Affairs should have a full inquiry. There are such things as widows' pensions, education and housing that our veterans didn't know about. But we never got any money to go out and research this, to take people up north who speak Cree. No money to run a DVA course here to train people about every benefit, every little loophole and every program there is available, so they can go out to find veterans and help them.

In our housing organizations we had Métis girls on our staff who acted as



Ron Camponi, 1993.

tenant counsellors. When they walked through someone's door, they could identify immediately with the tenants, because they were Aboriginal girls. They could speak their language and had been through the same thing. Kids on drugs; kids on dope; kids in jail; family violence. The girls we hired had gone through every bit of it, had matured and gone back to school and straightened their lives around. They could identify with their clients.

I qualified under the veterans land act, but I was still in the service at the time and I was moving every three years, so by the time I got discharged the deadline had run out to qualify for land. Yet I was in the service for 30

years. Bureaucracy; you have to have it, I suppose, but when you got a bureaucratic system, they always go by the book. There are no decision-makers who can change it or bend it or regulate it, so all you're doing is beating your head against the wall when you're talking to bureaucrats.

I used to have a sign in my office that said, "There are people who watch things happen; there are people who don't care what happens; and there are people who make things happen." I've made things happen; that's the way I am. I didn't do it for self-glory or anything else. I don't just say, "You owe us this and you owe us that." Instead, I say, "Look, we can do that program far better than you and here's why. At half the cost." When you know you're right, it's not hard to be positive. The only thing is to get the bureaucrats to think straight and to reach the people who make the decisions. Twenty years ago we said, "You owe us," and we had sit-ins and everything else. Now we go in and sit down and say, "Here is what's going to happen." That's the way I am.

Yes, I got a good education from my daughters when they started to go to university. They knew a lot of students that came across the border to get out of the draft. Being a military person, it was hard for me to swallow. The guys would come over with beards, and in the army a beard was a no-no. But it was either accept them or lose my daughters. I'm certainly not going to kick my daughters out because they go out with guys who have beards or are against the war. I started looking at things from a different point of view. M

William Carriere

I **joined up in 1941. There was no** recruiting office at Cumberland House; a policeman served as recruiting officer. We went by boat up to La Pas for our examinations, then by train to Saskatoon if we passed. There were seven of us, including my brothers, Alphonse and Jim. It was four days travel to Saskatoon, because we had to go by train and stay over in Hudson Bay one night.

In Saskatoon we stayed at the Exhibition Grounds. We stayed in the same building as the women recruits, and when I saw them marching I wanted to study what they were doing, so I said to the boys, "Let's go look at the ladies." They had wonderful drills. They had already been in the service for quite a while and they were teaching other new recruits. Then one of our captains came by. He gave us hell and kicked us out of there. I'll always remember that. We weren't doing anything wrong, just looking at the ladies, because we were so surprised to see how well they marched. But the officer called us down, "You're not supposed to be here." That's the way the army was. You had to have discipline to do things properly.

I remember our own marching, two groups turning at the same time and marching right into each other and bouncing back. We laughed so much we got hell for that, too, and were put in a real stiff march. But once you got used to it, it was easy. And I remember the first time I saw the older recruits, ones who had joined before us, come running in. They had rifles and they were kicking

everything and I was kind of scared. Those boys were really rough, because most of them were hobos, the guys that never got a job and had been roaming around in the city before they enlisted. Most of them were big buys, and I was kind of worried, because I'd never seen anything like that.

We stayed in Saskatoon for about two weeks of basic training and then went on to Niagara Falls on a troop train. At every town we stopped in, the army band played music. We had a wonderful time. We got to Toronto and marched there, then moved on to Hamilton and Niagara Falls. We trained there for about three months, going into the town on the weekends. Everything was nice; nothing was wrong there. I was young; we were doing lots of activities. There was good training and some boys were selected to go to school.

I turned down a lot of things that I should have taken, but I never wanted to stay on for a long time. I always wanted to come home. In the end, I spent over five years in the army, but the whole time my home was all I had in my mind. I could have had more training, could have gone to school and had the opportunity. They treated the boys nice that way. But I never forgot Cumberland, the place I was brought up, no matter where I went.

In Ottawa there was a range where I was trained to handle revolvers, machine guns and other weapons. With a rifle, for example, you had to know everything in detail about it and be able to name all the parts, so you could deal with a breakdown when you were in action. It was heavy training in Ottawa, and that's where I hurt my leg. We were running one morning and my knee went out. I didn't want to say anything, but they found out and I stayed in the hospital there for three months. My knee cap is on one side. In the end, I only got as far as Halifax. I got a pension for the injury, but it took a long time to get it. I should have received it as soon as I walked out of the service.

They were strict in the army, but they made a mistake when they didn't give the boys who came from up north enough travel time to get home on our leaves. We only got a leave every six months, and Cumberland was hard to get to. You went by horse and by canoe, because there were no roads then. It was four or five days from the train. But if you didn't get back to where you were stationed in time, you could be locked up for a week. And on the train a soldier paid half fare, but there were no half fares for the cost of getting from the rail line to Cumberland.

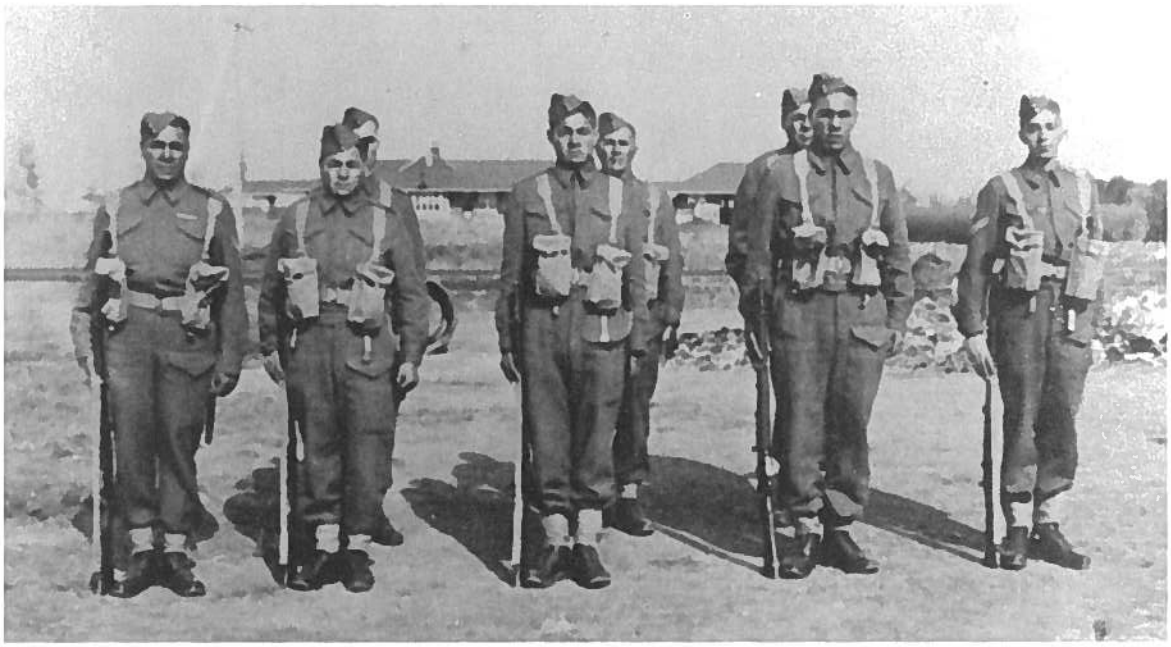
There were a lot of ways in which we got gypped because our home was so remote. If your wife had a baby while you were off in the service, you wouldn't even be able to hear about that right away. My oldest girl never got assistance from the army, because it was too late by the time I reported it. There were a lot of these things that faced the veterans from isolated places. They never got the help they needed. Housing, too, was a problem. Veterans in towns got help, but look at the house I live in. I tried to pay for it all myself.

We were left out of land assistance. Cumberland House was one of the best areas for farming, still is, and in those

days there was a lot of land available here. They should have trained the boys how to farm. It's good soil up here, but farming has never been developed. That would have been a great thing; there'd always be jobs. Why wasn't this rich country given to the Métis people? They should develop this country and provide good roads to the oldest settlement in Saskatchewan. But, you see, there are good roads only where the white man sets his foot. It's all muddy roads around here. La Ronge is the only place in the north where roads are not bad; white people live there. When only the Métis people lived there, the roads weren't looked after. We need a good highway into the north.

We've been mistreated, right from the start, right from when I was young. When I was young I hardly ever stayed in Cumberland. I went to work and I was always on the go. I worked in Manitoba. If I wasn't doing that I had my fishing equipment and I fished all summer. In the fall I did a lot of trapping. We used to dig seneca root, but where do you sell them today?

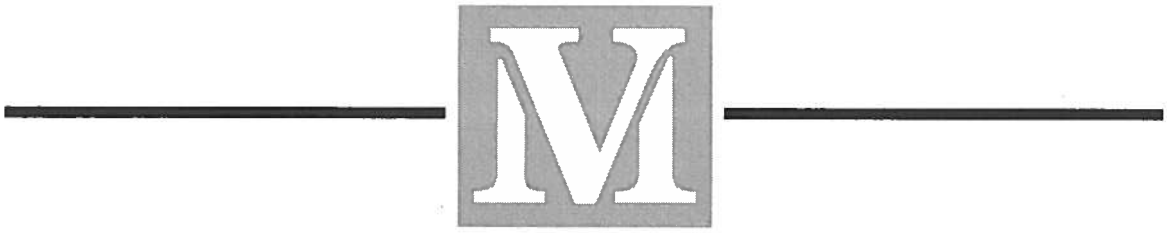
I was very happy when the war ended, but I had mixed feelings. I had wanted to go overseas in the worst way; three of my brothers were there. Instead, I waited in the army for my brothers. Jim was in Italy with The Saskatoon Light Infantry (MG), and I got a letter from him saying that he was in London and he'd be there for about six weeks. I got discharged from the army and I went to meet him in Saskatoon. It was rather sad to be there. There was lots of parents there. I was happy to see my brother, because it had been five years. He'd had a wonderful time. There was a celebration; not one car was allowed to run on the streets in Saskatoon. And I remember five kegs of beer and a big



Indian and Métis military members in front of barracks.

orchestra. We had a lot of fun, but there were a lot of sad things that I remembered. Still, it was nice to see your brother who you had joined up with in the same place where now they were having a big celebration for all the boys who came back. It was a three-day celebration. Then we went to La Pas and got a boat to Cumberland. Two days by train and two coming up by boat, and from there we were on our own.

I was married when I went into the service, about 50 years now. Once you made that commitment, you kept it no matter what happened. You asked the father and you promised him you'd stick with your wife no matter what. My father-in-law said to me, "I hope you can look after my daughter just like I did," and I said, "I promise you, I'll never leave her." It's a heavy responsibility. But today it's different. People live together and they have no responsibility. The government gets involved; I know we never had that assistance, but when I die, I'll still be a married man. M



David Dumont

I **enlisted with The Regina Rifle** Regiment because everybody else was joining up. A lot of boys were going, so I thought I may as well, too. That's all. It wasn't for glory; no way! Like the boys were saying, "I'd sooner be a live coward than be a dead hero."

We started in Dundurn and from there we went to Debert, Nova Scotia, then over to England in September, 1941, on the *Empress of Russia*. We had a Chinese crew and "wakey, wakey" every morning and I got so seasick that I only had one meal all the way across. Seven days sucking on oranges. In England we kept on training at Aldershot. I remember we weren't allowed light at night, and it was so black out you couldn't see your hand in front of your eyes.

We didn't know when D-Day was until a few days before, when we were fenced in. We had American guards all around our area and no one was allowed out, even if you had an accident. I remember one fellow broke his thumb boxing and couldn't go to the hospital without guards. We were there until we boarded the boat for France. I got seasick again. Everybody had been issued vomit bags. Oh, it was rough in the channel.

We landed about eight o'clock in the morning. The Americans were first because of a certain way the tide came in. When I hit the water it was too deep for me and I had to struggle. But we all had May West vests and it wasn't far before I started walking. We had these damn puttees; why they ever made us wear them I don't know. My pants were

David Dumont

filled with water and I couldn't run with them. I had to pull the pants out of my puttees to let the water out. I thought that was funny, but I didn't have time to laugh about it. There was a lot of machine gun fire. We were just lucky we never lost a man out of our platoon. I was with my sergeant; I think we even had an officer. We lost so many officers. Even though we didn't lose a man when we landed, we lost quite a few from counter attacks two or three days later when we were inland. I think we went three or four miles the first day, maybe more. We could have gone further, but our rear wasn't covered.

Then we stayed put, except to defend ourselves, until July or August. The Americans went this way and we went that way and we got a few thousand prisoners. Apparently we had a lot of aircraft, but I don't remember seeing any, except once when I saw them shoot down a German plane. Later I saw lots of aircraft when we were moving and our planes bombed ahead of us.

We went pretty well right across France on trucks, tanks and everything that we could get a ride on. At the Falaise we had to wade in, because they had flooded the whole thing. We had Frenchmen as guides; they knew where the roads were and all that. We had a struggle here and there going into Calais. Belgium was next. I had a little Frenchman that stayed with us. He was pretty good at welding. I gave him a rifle, but I had to let him go at the border, because he wasn't allowed into Belgium.

I didn't stay in Holland long. I'd broken my arm in France, but kept going anyway for eight days; I'll never forget that. Finally, they found out I had a broken arm, so I had to go to a hospital back to England; it was October, 1944. I didn't want to go back, but that was it. I was in the hospital for about three months, then I went to the Depot where I had a good job receiving reinforcements from Canada and sending them to France.

I got back to Canada on September 1st, 1945. I came home to Duck Lake during a one-month leave, and then I got my discharge. They kicked me out and they didn't say thank you; didn't shake hands or anything. In 1947 I found work on the railroad.

I'm glad I went through with it. I wouldn't recommend anybody do it, although I have a son in the air force. It's a shame you know. My sergeant went back to Europe once on a tour, but they treated the tourists like kids; "Hurry up! Hurry up!" and "Let's go!" If I had the money now, I'd go on my own, but not on a tour. I'd like to visit the beaches. M

William A. Dumont

I was 18 years old when I joined in 1941, and I went overseas in '42. I just felt like joining, that's all. I was working on the farm in Marshall. There were travelling recruiters, and my brother-in-law and I signed up. I went to Saskatoon the next day for my uniform, then did my basic training at Chipawa barracks in Niagara Falls. There were several other camps after my training: Niagara on the Lake and Borden, Ontario; Sherbrooke, Quebec; Debert and Cape Breton in Nova Scotia; and finally back to Borden. I was with the 16th/22nd Saskatchewan Horse, but they broke the outfit up when we were sent overseas and I went to The Regina Rifle Regiment. We went over in a ship with only one escort, a submarine, I think. We sailed from Halifax to Liverpool and I was pretty sick. We arrived in July.

I remember guys from North Battleford, and in the 16th/22nd Saskatchewan Horse down south they had a whole company of Indians from the Cote Reserve. There were white people with them, but the company had 40 or more Natives, and there were a lot of Natives in the whole regiment. When we were broken up they sent most of the Natives, the Indians from the reserves, to The New Brunswick Rangers.

I trained in the infantry, on reconnaissance and on tanks. We trained with hand guns and machine guns, then they transferred me to the Scout Platoon, because I could speak French. In France I was put in a Scout Platoon again, because my officer was a Frenchman

from Montreal and English was hard for him.

After D-Day and the push into France, I got as far as Falaise and then I was wounded; I lost a leg. As a scout I worked mainly at night and we used to go behind the German lines. I was working with the Free French underground and their contact, John Metier, a Frenchman from Caen, was with me all the time. I met him in Normandy and we were together most of the time after that. The night I was wounded, the 18th of August, 1944, he was the one who carried me back from the front lines. I was wounded by a machine gun; it blew my leg off. Oh, it was painful. A MG 42 fires I don't know how many rounds per minute, but it was so fast I got a whole burst of it. I didn't pass out, though. John came up to me and he said, "We will take you back to the stretcher bearers, where we can get something for you." They carried me back, but I don't know who was with him. That was the last I saw of John. They amputated my leg the next day. I'd been hit by tracer bullets and I had gangrene. I was sent to a hospital in Caen and then to the 102nd General British Hospital. I had been in action from June 6th to August 18th.

I remember the day we were bombed by our own planes. We took heavy casualties. After I was home again, I talked with our neighbours and good friends the Vanmeters. Roy Vanmeter had been an officer with the air force in that bombing run. He asked me, "Were you in Caen that day when we bombed?" and I said "Yes, I was." "Well, yes," he said, "We really felt bad about that." But he wouldn't tell me where the order came from.

William A. Dumont came from Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from June 18th, 1941 to January 30th, 1945. He was a trooper in the 16th/22nd Saskatchewan Horse and a rifleman with The Regina Rifle Regiment, and served in Europe. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal (1939-45).

I came home in 1944. It was an 18-day trip, leaving Liverpool and crossing the ocean by hospital ship, arriving in Halifax, then travelling to Saskatchewan and finally getting to Lloydminster the day before Christmas. That was a nice Christmas. M

Joseph Fayant

I was the eldest son in a family of nine children, and I was 19 years old when I joined the services in 1943. I joined up because things were pretty tough; there wasn't much work around. I thought, "What else am I going to do? Where am I going to make a living?" It wasn't that great in the services either, but at least you had your clothing and three meals a day, and you knew you had a place to stay at night. A lot of people joined because it was the only way they could feed themselves and their families; married servicemen got a little more pay.

I first signed up with the Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and worked as a maintenance man in a motor pool, a motor mechanic and driver. Generally, they wanted a driver that had experience with motors in case you had trouble on the road. I took my basic training at Dundurn, then we went to Maple Creek for advanced training, including combat training. After that there was more training at Wainwright, Alberta, and at a camp near Calgary. Then, in the fall of 1943, after a 30-day leave, I was shipped to Halifax and overseas to Liverpool.

The Atlantic crossing was cold and rough. After disembarking we went to Aldershot, not far from London, where we trained for six months. In England, people were very good towards the Canadians. When we got a pass we were always invited out to somebody's home to spend the weekend there. They had lots to drink and eat. I travelled to Scotland to track down the home of an uncle who had been a flight major in World War I and originally came from

Edinburgh. I met some of his clan in a little village just outside of Edinburgh; they were sure glad to see me.

In the spring of '44 we were shipped into Holland with the occupational forces, but I didn't stay there long because I had caught a bad virus and was sent home in a hospital ship. Back in Canada, I was in the hospital at Dundurn for nearly five months. That was about the time they started using the new drug, penicillin. I had so many needles stuck in me I was like a pin cushion, but it worked and I recovered.

The war in Europe was over in May. The Pacific war continued for only another three or four months, until they dropped the bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. I was discharged in August and came home. I tried to salvage a civilian life for myself, but that didn't work. I went to work on construction, driving a truck 12 hours a day and then driving a taxi for six hours; making a lot of money and saving a few cents. The guys I worked with liked to spend money. I did manage to save a few dollars working up north in Alberta; there was no way out unless you wanted to fly, so I worked seven days a week.

The police action in Korea started in 1947 when the Americans went over. In 1950 I was sitting in the bar with some friends, none of us doing anything. We heard the report: servicemen wanted for police duty in Korea. The next morning four of us went to the recruiting office and signed up with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, which was one of the oldest regiments and, as far as I'm concerned, one of the best. They gave us a 48-hour pass, and then we were shipped by train to Calgary for training.

After three weeks they hand-picked 32 of us to go to Fort Lewis, Washington, for five weeks training in small arms and unarmed combat. When I returned I was given a four-day pass, and I went home to Sintaluta for a visit. By the time I got back to Calgary, all my equipment was packed for me and ready to go overseas; all I had to do was just get on the train and head out for the west coast. The 32 of us left in October, sailing for Korea. The sea was good. There were American soldiers on the ship, and some American passengers that got off in Hawaii, where we stayed for one day before continuing. When we arrived in Korea we were an advance party of the Princess Patricia's, so we went to the American command looking for the best place to set up camp. They showed us around the country and we picked what used to be a convent. The buildings needed a lot of fixing up in order to be ready for the rest of the battalion when it arrived, so we hired a bunch of Koreans for next to nothing. It was rough for them; there was hardly anything to eat, so we were glad we could give them food and pay them for their work.

We were treated well by the Koreans, a lot better than the Americans were being treated. The people thought the Americans were overbearing. And I think the Canadian soldiers fought just as well as the Americans, even though the Americans had been over there ahead of us. We got all our rations supplied by the Americans. We didn't want British rations, because we figured you might as well eat dirt. Who wanted hard tack and

bully beef? The hard tack had to be soaked three days in hot water, it seemed, before you could chew it.

The land was very hilly and the soil was poor. The main crop was rice; they grew two crops a year, but they didn't get much at any one time. A lot of Koreans were working for big landlords, so they were getting only a portion of the crop they grew. There was a lot of hunger. As a matter of fact, we had two kitchens like they have in the Salvation Army in any major city in Canada, and people would line-up for blocks and blocks for noon and evening meals. We got along pretty well with the Orientals. There is always someone saying, "I don't like this guy; I don't like that guy;" but they have an inferiority complex or something. They like themselves and no one else.

The officers had their own private quarters and they always had somebody look after their clothes, pressing them, shining their shoes and their brass and what not. So did those of us who were NCOs. As a sergeant I had a Korean I called a house boy; sometimes they were called bat men. I called the house boy Tiny Tim, because he was so short. He spoke broken English, which he probably learned from being around American camps. His English got better as time went on; I was more or less like a teacher. We got along well; if I went shopping, he'd do all the bartering for me and he wouldn't let me get cheated; he'd argue hell-and-high-water out of the other fellow. He told me that, as far as he knew, his parents were dead, because he'd come from the northern part of Korea with all the other refugees.

I didn't go straight into combat. There were about four months on manoeuvres, acclimatizing ourselves and getting in physical shape to handle the mountainous terrain. Because there were hardly any roads, we had to carry a lot of our supplies on our backs. The roads that were there were filled with American trucks carrying supplies north and hauling out the wounded and the dead to the south. A lot of supplies were flown in, but there weren't enough aircraft and helicopters to fly all the injured out. The roads were only wide enough for one vehicle, because they'd been used for donkeys and hand-pulled carts. The Korean people hauled all their food to market that way. We'd see carts for three miles, all being pulled by manpower and only the odd mule or ox.

We drew our rations every morning. A dozen soldiers would haul the rations up to a certain area, then you went up and drew your rations for the day. When the guy that was handing out the rations wasn't looking, you would slip another can of supplement into your pocket.

Out in the mountains we dug two-man, slit trenches, three feet wide and six feet long. At night we'd cover ourselves with a ground sheet, rubberized on one side and canvas on one side, one sheet down in the slit trench and the other one to cover us up with, held in place with stones. It's a rainy country and in the winter there was lots of snow. The winters were only a month or two long, but with plenty of snow and cold weather. At night we'd keep the slit trench warm with canned heat, jelled alcohol. One of the two men was always on guard. We slept in four-hour shifts.

Our weapons included mortars and sten guns, and we had our artillery behind us.

When we received our first order to go to the front lines we started pushing towards the Yellow River, the border between North and South Korea. We saw plenty of action, heavy fighting not only for us, but also for the Australians, Germans, American and British troops. The enemy had to be pushed back across the river; but I was wounded before I could make it that far. The action was light at the beginning, because the Koreans had moved a distance north towards the river and set up a defensive perimeter. The heavy action started when we ran into that perimeter. That's how it goes; you don't know when you're going to get it.

Our hardest time was on one particular ridge we were trying to take. There was heavy mortar and small arms fire coming towards us, plus artillery. My company was sent out on a patrol to find out where the firing was coming from. So I went out with five men, spotted the source with my binoculars, and came back to tell the captain. He said, "Do you think you can put out that pill box where the firing is coming?" I said, "Yes, I think we can." I asked for volunteers first, but nobody would volunteer, so I asked Davie Brown if he'd come with me. I exchanged my rifle for a bazooka and I told Davie to bring a bren gun, and we started off. We had about three hundred yards to go in order to get there. We crawled down every depression and hollow we could find so that we wouldn't get fire coming down on us. When we got to an outcropping of rock I said, "When we go around this rock, I think we'll be close enough. We crawled around and there was the pill box. When we got within a hundred yards of it I put the bazooka up on my shoulder and told Davie to load me up with a rocket. He locked it in and tapped me on the shoulder to signal that it was ready. I sighted in on the pill box where the mortar fire was coming from and the slit from where the observers were directing the fire. I got a direct hit and blew that pill box all to hell. There was nothing left of it, and everything was quiet.

I waited for a while to see if there was any fire coming from it, but nothing. So I turned around and said, "Okay, Davie, let's head back." I got no response, so I yelled for him again and I started looking around. I could see where he was; I crawled over there and found my old buddy dead. He'd been hit while he was lying down, a shell through his heart. He didn't suffer; that's the only good thing. I crawled out, got back to my company and told the captain, "You'd better get a stretcher." Then I took two stretcher bearers, brought Davie back and radioed for a helicopter. They came in and picked his body up and took him out.

About four hours later, on that same ridge, one of our observers gave the wrong co-ordinates to the artillery. A half a dozen mortars landed among our company, and that's when I got it in the leg and above the eye. There were two others wounded and three killed. I thought I'd lost the eye completely, because it was full of blood and I couldn't see at all, but we had to stay put. We couldn't move until we got an "all clear," and it was quite a while coming, because we had to radio back

to the artillery and ask them what the hell they were doing and get them to stop shelling. We told them, "You made a hell of a mess up here, and you didn't make the mess with the enemy, you made the mess with us." It was the U.S. artillery, but it wasn't their fault; our observer gave the wrong co-ordinates.

We had medics right there to give guys morphine, injections, blood plasma, whatever they needed. Three helicopters took out the dead and the wounded. We weren't flown to the field hospital, but right to the hospital in Pusan. They gave us some medical treatment there and then we were flown straight to an American hospital in Tokyo. I stayed there for four and a half months. My buddies who were wounded with me were in longer than that, because they were injured worse than I was.

Joseph Fayant

While I was in the hospital my outfit was pulled out of the front lines and replaced by the Royal 22e Régiment (known as "Vingt-deuse" after battalion number). The boys had their rest and relaxation (R&R) in Japan, and they were stationed at a military camp in a place called Kobe, a seaport 10 or 12 miles from Tokyo. After the R&R, the Princess Pats were shipped home; all except me. When I was released from hospital I was reassigned and sent back to Korea. On board the ship taking me back to Korea I got acquainted with an American officer, and he asked me, "What the hell's the matter? Why did they send you back?" I said, "The military; half the time they don't know what they're doing." He said, "But why are you being sent back?" and I said, "I have no bloody idea, but I am not going back to the front unless I bloody well have to." So when I arrived and a Canadian officer asked me if I wanted to join the Vingt-deuse, I said, "No way. I'll join another outfit. There's an American outfit over here; I'll go to them." M

Leon Ferguson

Patriotism wasn't uppermost when it came to enlisting. Before I enlisted I was a farmhand, working in the Duck Lake area, which was my home. I was making $15 a month, and when I enlisted I made $1.10 a day, so the financial improvement was considerable. But mainly I joined because I was finding myself alone. My buddies were leaving. The guys my age were going into the service or had already gone, so I decided to tag along.

I joined on June 17th, 1941, and did my basic training at Camp Borden, Ontario. I started off with a transport company and then in 1943 transferred to The Westminster Regiment, 5th Canadian Division. We left for overseas in November, 1941, and landed in Scotland. Then it was on to England, where we stayed until the fall of 1943, when we moved to Italy.

I remember our ship was attacked by German fighter aircraft on the way to Italy; it was my first taste of the real thing. During the early stages of my tour in Italy I was with a transport company, transporting supplies to the front line regiments. There was shelling and other discomforts; almost as much danger in the transport company as there was in the infantry. The infantry dug in and the transportation units would bring ammunition, rations and fuel to various units. It was a bit touchy, so I figured, "Well, if you're going to do all this you might as well be in a trench and be somewhat safe." I decided to go to the infantry. I took a few weeks of battle training and then joined the motorized infantry; we travelled in personnel carriers, and when

Leon Ferguson

we were near an objective we'd get out and fight as foot soldiers. The worst of the action was when we left Italy and came to Holland. The fighting continued, right through from Arnhem to Delfzijl, until the end of the war.

There are a couple of incidents that I particularly remember. One day, north of Arnhem, we were walking around a barn and we heard somebody groaning. It was a German soldier laying there badly wounded. He had excreta coming out of his side. He asked for water, but we didn't dare give him any, because he had a ruptured stomach. We could see a wound under his arm, where steel was protruding. We didn't have a stretcher, so we found a ladder and placed him on that. Then the first aid stretcher bearers came and took him away. The corporal who took him away said he was still living when he got to the first aid post. He was some mother's son and, enemy or not, I hoped the poor bugger would make it.

A few miles from there, one of the tanks supporting us was involved in a peculiar situation. The tank was coming forward, an officer observing and giving orders from the turret. A German 88 tank gun opened up and the shell cut right through the turret. The tank commander was killed, and the driver got panicky and started backing up. The tank hit a huge tree and began climbing it until the tracks couldn't get any more traction. The tank got stuck there and finally stalled. The crew inside bailed out and went for cover. I remember stories like that, but I don't like hearing the stories that make almost everyone a hero. I was an average guy, not a hero.

We were in Holland when the war finished on May 6th. That I remember very vividly. We were still edgy, because some of the Germans out on the Friesland Islands didn't know the war was over and were still shelling us. The shelling finally ceased. The Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) tanks took over that part of the coast and we went back to small towns in Holland, where we stayed until October, when we went to England. Then we were on our way home.

While I was waiting in Holland to be sent home, I just about joined the occupational force. My buddy and I were in a line-up, but there were so many in line we said, "The heck with it." We had intentions of joining up for the Pacific, but we threw that idea out. There were guys who had just come to us as rein-

forcements in March, and two weeks after the war ended they volunteered for the Far East. They were sent back to the United States for training, but the war in the Pacific ended and so they beat us home. Smart kids.

I finally got back to Canada and was discharged on February 28th, 1946. When I was coming home to Duck Lake I thought, "The war is over; what now?" You have to compare the good times with the bad times, and the good times had superseded the bad times as far as I was concerned. But what was I going to do when I got home? Should I stay in the army? What should I do? Well, I decided I'd had enough of the army, so I got out for awhile. From '46 to '50 I worked in bush camps and mines, but I didn't like it out in civilian life and when the Korean War broke out four years later I joined up again.

I was with the Special Force. We trained in Wainwright, Alberta, and Fort Lewis, Washington. In December of '51 we were sent to Korea. The voyage by ship was very long; 21 days from Seattle to Hiroshima. From Hiroshima we took a train and then sailed by barge to Pusan, Korea. After that it was a train ride, then the last few miles were by truck and finally on foot. When we arrived at the battalion area it was night time, raining and slippery. I remember not knowing where I was going, falling, slipping up the mountain. I wouldn't want to do it again.

Positions in Korea were pretty well static and involved lots of patrols into

Leon Ferguson in Calgary 1989 – 75th reunion of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

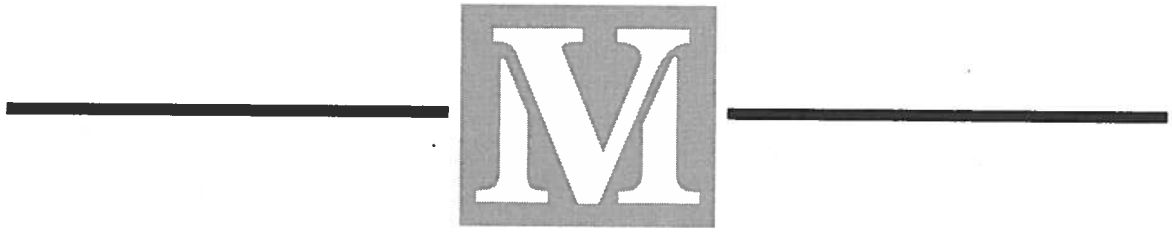
no-man's-land. The Americans were there, the Brits, Australia and New Zealand; Canadians had the Royal 22e Régiment, The Royal Canadian Regiment and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

I was with the Princess Patricia's, the same unit as Claude and Norris Petit. They came over later, young men, too young to be there, really. I remember the Wheelers, a father and son team from Manitoba. They led us into enemy territory. Later, the father got wounded. My brother, Ernie, was in Korea at the same time; he was a welder with the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), repairing tanks and other equipment. Before that he'd been with the airborne engineers. I remember other Métis from Saskatchewan. There was Claude's brother, Norris, and their uncle, Murray Petit, who was in the same battalion that I was in. Reo Pilon came later; he was wounded and had to be evacuated back to Canada. Jimmy Oulette, from Duck Lake, was killed. When we were leaving Korea, the last thing we did was visit the cemetery in Pusan to pay our respects to the soldiers who had died.

When I came back in 1952, after 10 months in Korea, I re-enlisted in the regular force and stayed there until 1972. I was posted to Germany in 1953, and while I was there I sure changed my attitude towards Germans. They were a very hard-working people and our presence was greatly appreciated. Of course, there were also financial benefits; the local bars made a killing. My family and I returned to Canada in '55, first to Calgary, then Edmonton. In 1966 I was posted to Germany again, where my family toured the country regularly. We were reluctant to return. I was posted to Saskatoon as an instructor for the militia in 1969.

When I reached the age of 50 I was a sergeant; that's retirement time. Also, I'd had a heart attack earlier, and I spent my last year on post-cardio rehabilitation. After retirement I sat around for awhile and then, in 1972, I joined the commissionaires. After six years of that I went to work for an electrical company that manufactured communications equipment. I remained there until the plant closed. I was 62 years of age then and I didn't look for work. I said, "Goodbye tension; hello pension," and decided that golf and fishing would be my top priorities from then on.

I've always been proud to be a Métis who served in the military. My great-grandfather was killed in the rebellion, just outside of Duck Lake. His son, my grandfather, was 15 or 16 years of age at the time. At Batoche there is a cross in the cemetery and his name, A. Laframboise, is inscribed there. M



Charles Fosseneuve

I **enlisted in Saskatoon in 1942** and took my basic training in Camrose, Alberta. I was there for four weeks and then went to Camp Shilo, Manitoba, for a week of field training. Then I was drafted overseas. Just like that. Well, I was a healthy man.

We waited about a week in Halifax before we could land ship. We went across in the spring of '42 by way of Greenland and Iceland, north like that, then to Scotland through the Irish Sea and finally to England. I went to the 13th Field Regiment right away, and I was with them till the war ended.

I was mostly in southern England, on the coast. All the forces were stationed there, because they thought they would have the invasion there. We also took a little bit of training at Inverney, Scotland, and we took some combined operations, naval operations, before the D-Day invasion. This included jumping into the water with our clothes on and the water was ice cold. You had to make it to shore.

I had two brothers in the army. John, the oldest, didn't come out right away; I guess he was too old. Gordon was at headquarters, but he was in the same battery I was. He was at headquarters, because they didn't put relatives together in action in one place. I remember the story of the Sullivan brothers, seven boys who enlisted in the navy. When their ship was sunk, all seven drowned. That's the reason why they wouldn't put two brothers together.

I was drafted into the 3rd Division of the Canadian Army, which was the main

body of assault troops for the invasion of France. There were 20,000 people in that division. We also had the 7th, 8th and 9th Brigades. I saw them landing on my birthday, the 6th of June.

We knew we were going to land in France. A week before, the first of May, we had been paid in French francs. They had us in a compound; great big fence, wire about 12 feet high, so the men couldn't get out. We were kept in there for a solid week. You couldn't go out. You couldn't talk to your friends on the street. Just keep away from everybody, so there'd be no leaked information. Security reasons, I guess.

We got into the landing craft about the 1st or 2nd of June, and we stayed in our landing craft for four or five days. It was all clumsy: metal, flat decks, open. We had four self-propelled guns, two tanks, a couple of supply vehicles, one jeep and I think there were two motorcycles. All that was crowded in the landing craft, and 60 people as well.

Crossing the English Channel was the worst ride I ever had in my whole life. We were going up and down, and it was miserable weather. Everybody was sick-headed and I threw up in the middle of the night. I told my partner, "We got to have a good drink of rum." We always had lots of rum, so I had a great big slug of it and that felt good. That's one thing we had, great big mugs and every night on the front line we used to have a good cold rum. Kept us warm, I guess.

I was a gun layer with the armoured corps. You do the same thing as a rifleman; you point and fire, but somebody else pulls the trigger for you. As soon as there is "set elevation," the sergeant behind you giving the order what the degree is, the gun is put at so many degrees and so many minutes and at so much elevation. As a gun layer you do that and as soon as you're finished you say you're ready, and the sergeant says "Fire!" and the other guy pulls the trigger. That's what we did, all the time. As soon as your gun is ready you say, "Ready." You aim and fire.

When we went in, we fired 200 rounds per gun right on top of our infantry as they were landing. We fired right over the top of their heads so the Germans would go down in their trenches. We landed in about six feet of water, ourselves with the tanks and everything. The tanks, jeeps and other vehicles had great big exhaust pipes way up in the air so that the water didn't get to the motor.

We landed at Courseulles-sur-Mer. I never got scared; not really, except for a plane that came around there and was bombing us as we landed. But after that we took on the German 7th Army and we got in some surprises. They didn't expect us. After we slaughtered them we just kept on going. There were just pockets of resistance here and there, and we took all the coast line, Calais and all the ports where our ships could bring us material, fresh food, bread and everything like that. Same with Holland; we took the Leopold Canal so the ships could come in and bring our supplies, because it would be a lot faster than a land route for our groceries.

It didn't take us long to go from France to Germany, because the Ameri-

cans went so fast, using planes and air drops. General Patton was in Paris before we even hit Calais. Old General Patton, he was the biggest general. I liked that guy. He had pearl-handled guns just like a cowboy. He was tough, like a soldier in the front line. He was right there with the boys. He was a real general. He didn't care for nothing. He told Eisenhower and Montgomery, "I'll be in Paris before you guys," and he did it.

We were in Nijmegen, Holland in 1944. We had gone fast after we pushed in, after we put the 7th Army in. We wintered about three miles from the German border and we used to go into Germany nearly every night. We got wet all the time; it was always snowing. Our slit trenches were wet and our blankets were dirty. We were lucky we had a mobile unit where we could go for showers. You'd go, take your blankets and clothing with you, and have a shower and come back with new clothing and clean blankets. It was stationed about half a mile behind our lines, and we used to have at least a hundred people at a time taking showers in there. If it wasn't for that, I don't know if I would have survived.

That's one thing I found out; when you're dirty and wet like that, boy, you don't feel very healthy. It's the same thing when you go out in the bush; you get cold, then you come to the house where it's warm and you feel a lot better right away. Every time the army did heavy fighting, it had to be dirty weather. I don't know why. Just miserable, rain or snow. That's the time the command would push. Every time. Sometimes it was so damn miserable, you didn't care if you died or not anyway. It was so cold you just wanted to get it over with.

The only time I felt pretty weak in there was the time we took the Falaise Gap. Just before we closed in our bombers came in, the Liberators, raining bombs. They were supposed to soften the ground in front of us; sweep bombing, they called it. But they struck the bombs all over the place, and they started dropping about half a mile behind us. I could see the doggone bombs coming down. I had a trench about four feet deep and I was far down. I just closed my eyes. I knew damn well that if something hit me I would never know it. That was the only time I got scared.

The funniest part of it was after the war. My son-in-law's dad had been in the air force. We were having Christmas dinner one year, and my son-in-law says, "Let's go down to Moose Jaw and go visit my parents." I said, "Okay." It was a long trip, so when we pulled in, his mother had supper for us and everything, lots to drink, and the old fellow started to talk. He knew I had been in the army. "Yeah," he said, "I was in the air force. Say, you remember that time us fools dropped these doggone bombs in the Canadian front?" I said, "You're the son of a bitch that done it. You and I will have a damn good fight in here before it's over." I laughed after that; I was just joking. But how can people meet at times like that? He was in the air and I was on the ground. That's the time my brother, Gordon, got blown out from the

slit trench. He wasn't standing up; he was laying down flat in the trench, but the bomb hit so close the concussion just threw him out. He was in the hospital in Belgium for a long time.

After all that fighting, about two months without a stop, we had five days rest in Ghent. The whole 3rd Division was invited to the city. They told each of us where to stop, and they told us the number of a house to go in. As soon as you stopped and opened the door of the vehicle to get out, a whole bunch of people shouted "Come home with me! Come home with me!" And we were all dirty from the front. My hostess could talk a little bit of English, but her husband could only speak French, so we used a book to translate. The woman asked me if I needed water warmed up and towels brought. Right in the middle of the room they said, "Take those clothes off and wash!" She wanted to wash my hair and everything while I was talking, they were so glad that I was there. Oh, they treated us nice. I remember there was a big army hut where there was always lots to eat. My hosts wouldn't let me go and eat, even though they didn't have anything except black bread and a coffee made out of roasted barley. So I told my host, "Why don't you come with me and get some food?" We went to the cook hut, and I said, "May as well take some home. Just help yourselves." We got a great big bag and loaded everything, mostly cans, cheese, biscuits and white bread from Holland. I could hardly carry it. When we went home that woman was so glad; she said it was the first white bread she'd seen in five years. After five days we started pulling out. The couple were both crying when I left, and saying, "We will never see you again."

After the war ended there must have been almost a million Canadians going home. I sailed on the *Ile de France*; it was so big it took us half an hour to walk around the outside deck. I think there were 20,000 of us on that ship. There was a swimming pool right in front you could swim in any time, but the water was ice cold. Some were more lucky, like Gordon. He landed in New York on the *Queen Mary*.

I came home in the fall, just before freeze up. I stayed all winter in the army in Regina. I was discharged in March of 1946, and then went out trapping for a

month. I don't remember how I felt. I was at Cumberland House. My mother was still living there, otherwise I would never have come home, because I had nothing else to come home for.

One thing about it, the military is where I got my education. You're well educated in the army. And you get discipline. That's the main thing, discipline. But I hope there'll be no more wars in my time. I hate wars. I hate seeing people get killed. That's the only thing I didn't like about the war; I hated people to suffer.

The army did know how to make things happen, though. For example, the Rhine River bridge. Today people say it's money, money, money, but in the army you don't talk about money. You do the thing that you need to do immediately. You don't wait for politics; you just go by the orders. On the Rhine they threw a bridge up overnight and we crossed our tanks and vehicles. In Cumberland here they can't build us a bridge. They say it costs too much money. I say, "Why don't they call the army and let them demonstrate their skill in bridge making?" M

Left, Charles Fosseneuve; centre, Gordon Fosseneuve. Charles Joseph Fosseneuve came from Cumberland House, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from February 19th, 1942 to March 9th, 1946. He was a gunner in the Canadian Army, and served in the United Kingdom and Europe. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal (1939-45).

Gordon Fosseneuve

I enlisted in late 1941, but they kept us for a while in Saskatoon and Regina, back and forth, so it was February of '42 before we were finally approved and sworn in. First they sent us to Camrose, Alberta for two months of basic training. For advanced training we were supposed to go to BC, but they made a mistake — the army made a lot of mistakes, they had too much to do, I guess — and our train took us to Winnipeg. It was a long trip, but as soon as we arrived the officer in charge said, "Sorry, boys; you have to travel some more tonight." It took them a long time to get a new train. When they did we jumped on and left, but we still didn't know where we were going. When we finally arrived, it was four in the morning, and then there was unloading, inspections and all the instructions for the next day, where to eat and all that. We finally got to bed, and at six o'clock the bugles sounded time to get up. I thought it was a hell of a life, you know, but that was just the start of it.

We didn't know what was ahead of us. Finally, the word came down, while we were on parade: you're on draft for overseas. They'd just call your name, "You're on draft. Get your stuff ready. You're pulling out in the morning." We walked or rode trucks into the little town nearby, and we filled three or four trains waiting for us on the track there.

We headed to Nova Scotia, just outside Halifax. We were told, "You'll be under a tent, but you'll get good grub, don't worry." When we pulled in, nobody seemed to know where our part of the camp was supposed to be, but finally we

picked a tent ourselves. It was a cook tent, and all we wanted was a place to stay and someone with us who could boil water, that was the main thing. We lived that way for a long time, waiting for a ship to come in so we could be taken across. I think they moved us there a little too soon; they didn't seem too sure about the ships, and the vessels were very, very busy in those days, hauling supplies and men.

Finally they found an old boat named *Empress of China* and they squeezed us in there like packed sardines. And we stayed there for two days before we left. There were to be 38 ships in the convoy, going across. Early one morning I heard buzzing like police horns all over the place. It was foggy, and the battleships or destroyers that were going to escort us were arriving, coming in at full speed. It was amazing.

When we were sailing, the ship would change course every half hour to confuse the enemy. Still, we ran into a German wolf pack of submarines, and were nearly hit by a torpedo. They fired one and we could see it coming. Someone yelled, "Here it comes boys; get ready to jump!" Looking over the rail, it seemed quite a way down. We almost jumped, but the torpedo missed us by inches. We were happy to be in one piece when we landed in England.

To get to our camp we caught a train at Victoria Station in London. The city was suffering big raids then, and we could see smoke here and there where fires were still burning after the bombs. We said, "Come on, boys, you are in a war now!" because that's what it looked like.

I went to the artillery camp at Aldershot. That's where I caught up with my younger brother, Charlie. One day a gun sergeant asked, "Are you related to Charlie Fosseneuve?" I said, "Yes, that's my brother." "Well, he's in my gun crew," he said. It just so happened that we were in the same outfit, same regiment, but we didn't know it because we were in different batteries.

We trained until June and it was monotonous. It's not fun to stay in one place and do nothing. The boys didn't know what to do with themselves and the army was scared that they'd start a revolution or something. We wanted to get going, to get into action. But no, they kept us back. No wonder you hear how much the Canadians did when they had a chance to fight; they'd been held back so long, they really fought and I don't mean maybe. On D-Day they went in a long way, four or five miles inland the first day.

We went into Europe to a big air field in Bayeux and completely surrounded it. There were 29 field artillery regiments ranging into that city, and after our planes bombed, we were called to open up. We started firing a barrage from maybe thousands of guns; just firing, firing, firing. The barrels were so red hot it was dangerous for the gunners; we had to be quick re-loading, because the breach was so hot. It's no wonder I'm a little bit hard of hearing today.

We fought all the way along the northeast coast of Belgium and Holland, right up to Germany. When we crossed the Rhine River at Cologne, German bombers hit us as we were sitting in the middle of the bridge. The road was

blocked; we couldn't back up, we couldn't go ahead. We were stuck high up on that bridge and just had to take all the bombing. By the river there was a big church with double towers. That's how I remember Cologne. Finally, we were able to move into a nearby forest.

I had been wounded earlier at what they called the Falaise Gap. There were small groups of the enemy here and there, all over the place. They wouldn't give up; they wanted to fight right to the last. They figured they could win, even though they were surrounded. I was at a hospital in Ghent for about a month, then in France briefly, and then I was sent to the front lines again, this time near Dusseldorf. My regiment was already there by the time I arrived.

We were in Germany on VE Day, near a little town. A fellow came up and gave us the news, "Well boys, it's all over." Nobody said bugger all; there was no yelling or anything like that. We just stayed where we were, sitting there, smoking. Finally, our gun sergeant said "Well, boys, he told us it's all over. Let's go and clean up the gun. Then we're going to have a good drink of beer some place." That's what we did, too.

I had to wait a long time in France before coming home, and I was getting tired of it. The Royal Canadian Legion had a program over there for the veterans. Anybody interested in taking a little higher education could go to school there in France. So I thought to myself, "I've got over a year to wait yet. I may as well go to school," and I did for three or four months. I did real well, and I was supposed to go and finish off my schooling in Toronto, but instead I stayed here and got drunk. I forgot all about my schooling and that's where I made a big mistake. I could have gone on then, right after the war.

Fortunately, you could learn a trade in the army. I had been good in the artillery and I worked with instruments quite a bit. It was all instrument work with sights and levels, and I picked it up just like that. So when I came home I was able to find a good job doing field work up north for International Nickel.

Maybe people reading this book will find out what we contributed, and about the poor treatment veterans have received. The government has forgotten about that, about what they owe us. Maybe a reader will think: "Why not help them out? The government was willing to make things right with the Japanese Canadians." There was a Japanese book about that problem; that's how the solution got started. M

Wilfred John Henry

I was with the 3rd Division, The Regina Rifle Regiment. I took my basic training at Ottawa and my advanced training at Camp Shilo in Manitoba. My oldest brother, Harry, was there, and when I was told I was being shipped out to Nova Scotia, Harry asked to get the same transfer. We did a lot of final training together in Truro, before going overseas.

In England they transferred me to The Highland Light Infantry of Canada. Bill Gibbs, who came from the same place I did, wanted me in his outfit. Bill told me he'd look after me, and I said I hoped he did, because I didn't know what was going to happen; it was so darn dangerous. He said, "Why the heck did we ever join the army?" Well, I joined to make money; $1.10 a day, which was better than the 50 cents I'd been getting hauling wood into town. On top of that, there were free clothes, and free board and room. So I joined up, because it would help my folks out. Their conditions weren't very good and I could give them half my pay, and they wouldn't have to feed me or buy me clothes. I told my dad that the money I sent home was to go on his machinery. I enlisted because I couldn't stand him not having any money. He was still hauling wood into town for 50 cents a cord.

I told them I was 18 when I joined up, but I was only 17. When I was in Nova Scotia the army found out my age, and they wanted to send me home for six months until I turned 18. I told them that I didn't want to go back home, I wanted to stay where I was. I could learn more where I was. I was in uniform and everything. They told me they wanted guys 19

years old, and I said, "That's okay; I'll be 19 some day." I finished my training there, was drafted for overseas, went to England, and there we trained again at Aldershot, right up until D-Day.

When we hit Normandy, we had to get off the boat quite a distance from the beach, because there were mines in the water along the shore. During our training in England they'd warned us to stay away from those big round balls floating in the water. They were dynamite, and when we arrived there were so many the landing barge couldn't get to shore. I was so scared; I didn't know what was coming next. I thought, my mother will be crying her eyes out right now, because she will have heard the news that Canadian troops had landed in France. A lot of guys never made it to shore. There were soldiers floating in the water like weeds. The Germans were prepared. Their air force was shooting at anyone they saw move. Their soldiers were lying there, machine guns set up, waiting for us to come. Thank God, we made it past the shore.

I was buried at one point. I jumped into a trench and a big shell landed close by and buried me. Those damn shells called moaning minnies, they whined like a kicking horse. You'd hear the whining and you wouldn't know where it's going to drop. I heard one, squatted down in my trench and it buried me. Old Bill Gibbs was looking for me and saw my hand sticking out. "Look, somebody lost a hand," Bill said. All of a sudden he saw the fingers move. So they dug me out and laid me on the ground. Lying there, I couldn't figure out where I was; all I could see was the sky and I felt the grass. I rolled over and Bill Gibbs yelled, "Henry, don't move! You'll give your position away." I asked what was the matter. He said he would tell me some other day. The whole earth was spinning so much I thought I was in an airplane. Afterwards I had headaches so bad that some days I couldn't eat. Your jaw bones move, you know. I was just lucky; if I had been hit by a shell, I would have been killed right there.

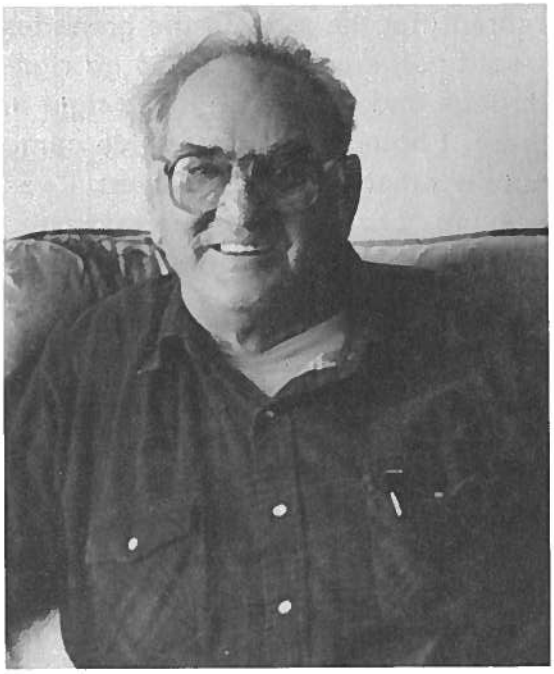
We kept going. It was very dangerous, because there were mines

Wilfred J. Henry came from Humboldt, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from January, 1942 to January, 1946. He was a private in the 3rd Division, The Regina Rifle Regiment and The Highland Light Infantry of Canada, and served in Europe. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal (1939-45).

underfoot and the enemy was watching and shooting at you no matter where you ran or turned. One time I hit the ground, and as I was lying on my belly I saw a mine right in front of me. Was I ever scared. I hoped to God nobody stepped on that thing.

One time I was running towards some trees when an aircraft spotted me and started shooting. The bullets were going right alongside my feet. I was half crying and saying, "Oh, Lord Jesus, save me, Jesus save me." All of a sudden I tripped and fell. I just laid there. I didn't move, and the pilot quit shooting. He figured he got me. It was a Canadian pilot, and I met him later. He said to me, "I got a burden in my heart. I wonder whose son I killed." He had thought he was shooting at an enemy, and had killed him. Then he got a message that he was shooting at his own troops. He described the event, and when he found out it was me and I was all right, he was relieved. The fear in those times was terrible. You never knew if you were going to lose your life, and that time I thought I was going to get a bullet in the head for sure.

You had to stick up for one another, because in the middle of battle you would be depending on each other for protection. The Germans were the same way, and the German soldiers were caught in the war just like we were. I spoke to a lot of German prisoners, and some of them said it was crazy to have a war. One prisoner told me that he had relations in Canada and now he would never be able to go see them. I told him it wasn't his fault. He was drafted; he had to go where he was sent, or else. He said



Wilfred John Henry

he would have been shot if he hadn't gone. And we had to be obedient, too. I met a lot of German people all through France, Belgium and Holland, and I made friends with a lot of them. I told them it was too bad that we had to have a war, and they understood.

I stayed right to the end, right to the finish in Germany. I was prescribed medicine to rub on my head, because I was still suffering so much pain I couldn't even comb my hair. I still carry a chunk of shrapnel. In Germany I had one in my wrist that I couldn't remove. It was sticking out and would hook on my clothes. I told a couple of guys to pull it out with a pair of pliers. They did, but did it ever hurt. Once, in Germany, I was walking in a ditch and the commanding officer yelled, "Hit the dirt!" I dived into a culvert. When everything was clear I tried to back out, but I couldn't. The hand grenades I was carrying were hooked on the ripples inside the culvert. I couldn't work my way back, and I was

scared that the pins on the grenades would come off if I tried to go right through and I would be killed right in there. I hollered but my voice came out the other end of the culvert. I was praying "Lord Jesus, you saved me before from being killed, save me again, Lord." What a fear that was. Fortunately, my legs were sticking out; some guys grabbed my legs and pulled me out, the grenades bumping along the ripples on the culverts on the way out.

I had nightmares of that experience for years after. I would wake up screaming, and I'd wake up my children. They didn't know what I was crying about. I gave my wife lots of trouble trying to look after me. I had so much pain in my head all the time, I couldn't stand it. There were times, before I was married, I just about took a gun and went into the bush and shot myself. That's how I felt.

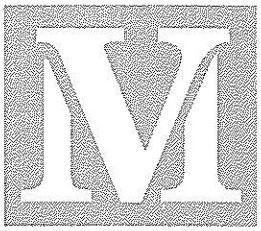
When I got married I could be quite a violent boy, when I had pain. But when I reported it, they told me they had no record of it, that it's never been reported that I was buried alive. My commanding officer knew it and the rest of the fellows knew it. The officer said, "Henry, you're alive, thank God; that's the main thing." I told him that I had pains in my head, and he was going to send me back and get someone else to take my place, but I didn't want to leave. Some of my friends might have been killed and I wouldn't know about it. I wanted to tough it out.

On my service book it says, "wounded," so why don't they have a record? My wife was working for John Diefenbaker at one time, and he helped to get a little bit. John went back and said that it wasn't enough, so I got a little bit more. He went back again, and finally, I was getting close to $2,000 a month. Now, they expect us to make do with $1,000.

The pain is continuous. I still get medicine from the doctor to rub on my head. I've said many times that I thank God I married a good wife. She looks after me. Sometimes I tell her where it hurts and she rubs it to help take the pain away. I take pills for the pain and sleeping pills to put me out. Sometimes I still scream at nights, especially if I've been talking about the war. It all comes back. During the Gulf War my wife had quite a time with me. It was like I was right there.

I couldn't go to work because I couldn't bend over without blacking out. The disability pension wasn't enough, but we had to make it do. It was more than what we are getting now. The minute I hit 65, they cut me right off. Other veterans have told me they have been able to get what they need and I should go after the Department of Veterans Affairs, but it's hard because I'm not able to make my case well. My memory has been affected. The pain in my head often makes me forget what I'm going to say.

Veterans need help. If they were in special homes or hospitals, it would cost the government a lot more. They want veterans to be independent and stay in their own homes. The people in government didn't experience what we did. They're from a generation that doesn't understand the pain soldiers went through. M



Cliff Hessdorfer

I enlisted in June, 1942, in the army reserve and in June, '44, in the active services. I was discharged for being underage, and I joined up again in March, 1945, and stayed in until I was discharged at the end of the Second World War. Finally, I joined the permanent force from 1948 to 1953.

During my two years in the reserve we used to go every summer to Dundurn for a couple of weeks. When I first got into the active army I took basic training in Prince Albert and Maple Creek, and the second time I enlisted I went back to Maple Creek and then to Calgary.

In 1948, when I was accepted for the permanent force, I went to BC and then Ontario. At first I was with the infantry; then with The Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers and I ended up with The Royal Canadian Army Service Corps.

In Prince Albert, in 1944, I started to get a pain in my chest, and it was never diagnosed, in spite of x-rays and everything. I had that same pain all the way through and it's still there. But in 1968 I went to a different doctor. My doctor was on leave and there was a doctor from England here. They asked me, "Do you want to see him?" I said, "Well, a doctor is a doctor." He sent me for x-rays and determined that I had ulcers. They could see the old scar in there. That's what it had been all that time, but they would never say it was ulcers. And it was that same pain when I first went on sick leave; that's when it happened. I was never sick or anything until then. If only I would have known that at the time.

I was out in 1953. I got married and

Clifford Albert Hessdorfer came from Wakaw, Saskatchewan, and was in military almost continuously from June, 1942, when he joined the reserves, to December 1953 when he completed his service in the permanent armed forces. He was a private and in the Infantry Corps, The Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers, and in The Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. He was awarded the War Medal (1939-45).

at that time the wages were low, a dollar an hour. I got into financial difficulty, so I went to the Department of Veterans Affairs and talked with a counsellor who, I remember, had one leg, maybe two legs, off. He was a very nice man. He said he couldn't do anything through the DVA, but there was a benevolent fund, money from the canteens. So he paid off most of my debts so that I could go to work without getting my wages garnisheed. I also owed a finance company, but they wouldn't pay off that, just the ordinary bills like the doctor, dentist, food, grocery store and the furniture store where I was behind. Then the counsellor at the DVA said I should apply for a pension. I told him the only thing I ever had was this not-yet-diagnosed disorder and my injured leg.

The injury happened at 23:59 at night while I was off duty, so they said I wasn't in the army. We were in the kitchen at the army camp in Wainwright, Alberta. A soldier was drunk and was manhandling everybody. I had army shoes on and they were pretty good, but when he flipped me, my ankle twisted, and was sore for a long, long time. Ever since then, when I was working I sometimes couldn't even put my shoe on. The army would say there was nothing wrong, but they only x-rayed my ankle. When they x-rayed my knee much later, in 1993, they found it had been fractured a long time ago. The DVA counsellor said there was no use claiming for the chest, because at that time it wasn't diagnosed, although I was taking amphrogel, tums, charcoal tablets, you name it. I had arthritis, too,

from before, so they gave me early retirement.

They gave me my full wages for six months and then put me on long-term disability. That was taken off when I reached 65 years old. All I get now is Canada pension and my old age pension. Instead of $690 disability pension, they gave me $508, straight Canada Pension. Still, it's better than before. Before, when you turned 65 it was straight old age pension; that was it. Now you get a little bit more. But if a man is entitled to it, he should get it. That's what I think.

I remember a lot of veterans. Bill Bourassa was in both World War I and II, and Walter McKay was in World War I. Albert Gordon was in I and II. And there was Alex Primeau, who married my cousin.

Bourassa was Veterans Guard of Canada, older soldiers who joined up for the Second World War and guarded prisoners of war. There were lots of others there, even in Prince Albert, at headquarters, for example. They were nearly all World War I veterans, and the instructors were from the permanent corps. Lots of them had been gassed, including McKay and Primeau. They only got veterans allowance; they never got disability. And they had to wait until they were 60 years old before they got any help.

My brother had a stroke when he was 60 and hasn't talked since. He had a spot on his lungs when he got discharged. He never did anything about it; he just kept on working. He was getting war veterans allowance, but there's a certain ceiling; I think now they just give him a homecare allowance or perhaps Canada Pension and a pension from the city. Before he had his stroke, I told him the difference between war veterans allowance and disability pension. "Oh," he said, "I'm working. There's no use bothering with it now." But it was too late afterwards.

At the end of the war they gave us financial help, and in 1946 I bought a sleigh and went partners with a guy who had horses. We teamed up and hauled until spring break-up. In the fall I did that again, but by then there were more and more trucks. Horses were becoming obsolete.

When I got discharged in 1945 you had to have grade 10 to get into the permanent force. So I wrote a letter and asked, and they accepted me on the IQ test. Later I took other courses, and when I was 45 years old I went to Kelsey and earned my grade 12 GED. It's different now. If I hadn't had a stroke it wouldn't have been too bad, but now I can't remember quickly. At night, you think of something you wanted to remember in the daytime; it comes back to you then. M

Edward King

I was born in 1925, at Cochin, Saskatchewan. I first enlisted in 1942, in Saskatoon, but they must have known I was underage, because I was rejected. Then I went back in April of '43, in North Battleford, and I was accepted, even though I was still underage. It happened this way: there were six of us Métis boys in a beer parlour and there were some soldiers sitting at our table. Somebody said that we should go and enlist, so we walked to the recruiting office, just a few buildings away, and we started filling out the forms for enlisting. But some of them couldn't write, so they were rejected right there. One was really young, so he was rejected, too. You had to be 18 and a half. It ended up that only two of us filled out the forms. We went for a medical in the next building, and the other guy didn't pass, so I was there by myself. I got my train ticket and meal ticket, and then I went to the hotel room they gave me, and I laid there by myself in the room thinking, "What did I get myself into now?"

I walked to the station the next morning and had breakfast, then I and another recruit caught a train for Saskatoon. We didn't talk much, and then there I was in the city, really green, no money. I reported, but I didn't have a uniform yet and they didn't really do anything for me. We just stayed there for a couple of days. There was a Corporal from Meadow Lake who teased me, because he knew I was underage, but I was tall and my height let me pass. From there I went to Regina, where it was the same thing. Somebody picked us up at the train station. There were

more of us now, but I still didn't know any of them and I didn't talk much. We stayed in a horse barn with great big bunks all over. We lined up for meals at a kitchen, and I went through all my tests, including another medical. Then I was sworn in. They kept me there for awhile, doing basic training and guard duty, sometimes on night shifts. I met some guys from Meadow Lake, most of them were Métis; I remember Edwin Morin and Louis Lambert, John Sanregret, Stanley Landry, Ray Delaronde, Edgar Holt, Albert Bishop, Charlie Arnault, a fellow named Clark. All except Clark and Holt were Métis. When we had our first leave I didn't even make it home. I only had my mother; what would she think about me going home in uniform? So I just went as far as North Battleford, met a few guys there and then went back to Regina.

We had a bulletin board with the lists of the men being drafted for overseas. We were drafted on the 16th of June and left on the 17th. About 20 of us took a train to a training centre in North Bay, Ontario. There it was education in the morning and in the afternoon it was army training. I found it very easy-going, a picnic after the life I'd had, trapping, camping way up north, firing rifles, moving at night sometimes, living out in the open with timber wolves howling around us. The army started us off with little 22 calibre rifles, very carefully: this is how you put the shell in and this is how you hold the rifle. Boring; I wondered if next we were going to do it by number.

Then there was advanced training at Camp Shilo in Manitoba. When we arrived there we could see paratroopers jumping out of airplanes. We took things like map reading. This was the real thing. When you passed that course, you were ready for battle. We were in a bivouac way out in the bush; we made trenches and went through an obstacle course with machine guns firing overhead. There were even casualties from ricocheting bullets. I finished my training later than my friends. I was late coming back from any level and they were a couple of weeks ahead of me, so I was left alone. Then I was shipped to Debert, Nova Scotia, where I met a new bunch of guys. There was an Indian named Pouette, from Calgary, and another Indian, William Daniels. Later, both were killed in the war. Daniels was an orphan kid from the Sturgeon Lake Reserve north of Prince Albert, and he was raised in Duck Lake. Three of them had escaped from the Catholic school where they'd been staying and taken a freight train to Saskatoon to enlist. They were only about 16 years old. He was in the engineers for a while, before he was rejected. He was a civilian for awhile, then enlisted again and that's when I met him. He was a happy-going person, always joking. He spoke Cree with me and we got fairly close.

I speak French and later, when I was in England, I ended up with a French outfit on account of that. When I had enlisted they wouldn't accept Métis as a nationality. "There's no such a thing," they told me. I was disappointed not to be recognized. I couldn't say I was an Indian, because you had to have a number to be a Treaty Indian. So they asked, "What mix are you? What part

European? What nationality of European?" "Well, French," I said. So, they wrote, "French" and nothing else. But I don't write in French, I just speak it. Later on in England, when they gave me French papers to fill out to join the French outfit, I couldn't understand the forms.

The soldiers I was with were from Quebec. I got along with some of them fairly well. They're not all bad, like they say. Some are nice. And I met one young fellow there, about my age, a real young French Canadian who didn't speak a word of English. We were together a long time. He depended on me; I was an interpreter for him. We used to go uptown to the pub and meet girls there.

We were shipped to England after our training. While I was there I met one of my cousins, Louis A. Ouellette, from North Battleford, a fellow I'd never seen before. We were lining up for a meal; he started talking to me and we found out we were related. After that, we contacted each other quite a bit. He had been there a whole year, so he knew more about the place. We started going to town. There were four of us Native boys who used to travel together, because they recommended that soldiers didn't go alone. You had to be with others for protection, because sometimes there'd be scraps with American or British soldiers. In the bars they'd be bragging and they'd call each other down, and finally they'd get drinking and then scrapping. It wasn't that serious.

As Indians and half-breeds we were really respected over there. I was surprised, because we could go into any place there, but back home not all of us could go in the bars. And we were treated so much differently there by the women. I remember walking down a street, four of us, we were sort of embarrassed, because we didn't have that much money. A bunch of girls stopped us. "Where are you boys going?" They called us "Canada." "Where is Canada going?" "Oh," we said, "We're not sure. We're just looking around." "Can we treat you to a drink?" they said. In Canada, the women weren't allowed in the bar. Quite a difference. So we went into a bar and they bought us those big mugs of beer. We were standing there and we were talking to these girls, not serious, but they wanted to treat us. They asked us where we were from and introduced us to some of the people they knew, the older people. Then they wanted to walk us home; it was the opposite direction, but they said they had time, they'd walk us to the barracks first and then they'd go back to their own place. I thought that was a lot different than where we came from.

The next Saturday the girls took us to a picture show. They said, "We're paying your way in." I ended up with a little blonde girl; she was 16, but she was already working and could go into a bar. Afterwards we went for a drink and then to a dance. They never drank a lot, just slowly, like it was coffee. I remember, later on, one lady who was married to an air force guy. She said she was married for one week before he was shipped to Africa. Now she was alone, and she said, "I could get a divorce." She was getting kind of serious; but I was only 18 years old, I wasn't even thinking about getting

married. We used to go to the park, things like that. I used to visit her folks, and they'd be full of questions about Canada. They wanted to know what it was like up north. They weren't rich people, but they lived pretty good.

Finally we were drafted. "Well," the father said, "We knew you were going to the front lines; that's what you're here for." The girl said, "When you come back, you'll come and see me." I said, "If I come back." She said, "You never say 'if.' Just think positive. You'll come back. Never say 'if' in your life. Always remember that."

Just before D-Day we were taken out on a long march. I didn't know where I was, just somewhere out in the English countryside. Our commanding officers didn't tell us anything; figured we might try to get out, so they moved us. Finally, we were moved to the ships. When we were sailing, a sergeant pulled us to the side and asked us to pray with him. I remember sitting below deck and praying. When we got closer to France, we could see the action, the smoke, the ships firing rockets into the German lines. The Allies hadn't gone far in, a few miles only, and that's barely enough ground to move in more troops. We got off directly from the ship, down a kind of stairway and then waded into the water, loaded with rifle and equipment, holding onto a rope the first soldier had stretched to shore. We crawled onto shore all soaking wet. Then we lined up and headed out, marching all through the rest of that day. I don't remember eating any place, just our emergency rations, bully beef and water.

I do remember some of us going into a Roman Catholic Church. It was Sunday, and we went in with our rifles and steel helmets. When we went outside afterwards, two girls asked us to have some drink, so we went with them and had wine and bread.

A big attack by the British started that day, and our unit started moving again. The Royal Winnipeg Rifles got a beating. They lost over 200 men, so they called us out as reinforcements. I remember talking with my cousin, Louis Ouellette, and some other guys, and then being called back to my trench, "Get back and get ready to move." Trucks pulled up and there were probably a couple of hundred men who moved. I sat on an end gate. Everybody was quiet, just really taking the battle seriously. We could hear all the fighting and the shelling. We could see dead cattle laying all over, and all the damage the shelling had done. We couldn't even see a leaf on a tree; everything was dead, the fields blown up. Earlier, right after the landing, as we'd marched from the ship, we had passed graves everywhere, a marker and a helmet on top, right where the guy dropped. Now, as we drove to the battle, I wondered, "What's it going to be like, the slaughter?" We were in an area where the battle was real bad, so many casualties. After we talked to guys just coming out of the area where we were supposed to go in, I thought, "How long are we going to last?"

The town we arrived at was just a pile of concrete, and we were still getting shelled. A group of seven of us was going to reinforce 7 Section, 18 Platoon, D Company, that had only two men left

in it. As we walked we'd have to keep dropping ourselves to the ground. Sometimes we'd crawl a little bit ahead and get up and move again. There was a lot of hollering when we got there, because there was no slit trenches to get in; it was all pavement. The shells were coming down and the officers were cussing, "How come they sent the men there with no trenches to get in? What's going on?" We just laid there and shells were dropping. Finally the shelling slowed and we found a place to dig. The sergeant said, "You guys dig and dig fast. You're no good to us dead." My trench mate was an Indian named Fred Badger from Alberta. We dug for our dear lives. After we got down about two feet, a soldier named Lafleur came over to borrow my pick. He sat down on the pile of dirt. Then all of a sudden the shells came in again; we got down in our trench and Lafleur threw himself down on the ground. When it was over, I peeked out and saw him still laying flat down. The shrapnel had gone right through his steel helmet.

During the battle for Caen, I met some of my old friends lined up at a kitchen truck one day. I talked with Willy Daniels, the Indian from Sturgeon Lake, the orphan, and he said, "Come on; my trench is over here. You might as well come and visit me." When we were sitting on the dirt on opposite sides of his trench, he said, "I probably won't make it through this war." I was surprised to be talking so plainly about death; it's always around you, but it's hard to say that you're going to get killed. He said, "I wonder if I could make my will to you?" "Well," I said, "What if I don't survive?" He asked his commanding officer, and the officer said no soldier can make a will for another soldier, it's not allowed. So that was out, and he never had a will.

I remember one day lining up and moving across a wheat field. We were being shelled, and by keeping spread out the shells couldn't get too many of us at once. There was a motorbike going back and forth, carrying messages. The Germans could hear him, because he was pretty loud, and they were trying to get him. Finally a shell hit close to him and I saw him fly up in the air and then land. Then quiet. No noise, nothing; the motorbike was gone.

One evening, near dark, we were near a village that was burning. We were moving up to reinforce The Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's). I remember in the light of the fires I counted eight Germans laying there, in a row, wounded; they were moaning and crying, in heavy pain. We had to just walk past. When we got to our place I said, "Can we get water?" An officer said, "The water tank is over there, but it's under snipers. Snipers are shooting at whoever moves for water. If you go you have to stay down." So three of us had to crawl over to the water tank and get water by laying on the ground and opening the tap. Then we went back, found a trench and set up our machine gun, a Bren gun, in the dark. Then I sat down to eat. There were a few dead bodies in that trench, a fairly wide trench. A young guy joined us as reinforcement; he was maybe 17 years old. I had no place to sit, so I sat down on one of the bodies and opened my bully of beef and hard tack. The new guy

came and sat beside me, and we started eating. Then he said, "What are we sitting on?" "Oh," I said, "That's a German body." He jumped up and said, "You should have told me!" And he started throwing up. But it didn't bother me; all I knew was that it was there and I had to sit down some place. I remember seeing a whole section of The Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's) who had been wiped out in a trap as they moved through a town, the corporal and men behind him in a row. When we moved by, I didn't look at their names; the tags were already taken off and registered.

On the 9th of July, we were moving up again, the whole works: tanks, anti-tanks, infantry. We were paired off and my partner was the new guy, the young kid. All of a sudden we got pinned down by heavy mortar fire, so we hit the ground. I was on my hands and knees digging, because it wasn't safe to stand up. I was listening for any shells coming close, and when they did I threw myself into the trench. But this young fellow threw himself right on top of me. He was crying. He was taking it pretty hard and he was no help to me at all. They must have sent him back that day, because I never saw him again.

We didn't sleep much that night, and the next day we started moving at three o'clock in the morning. There was heavy artillery shelling, and we'd move a bit and drop to make a smaller target every time we heard something. I was down on one knee, shells landing around us, when I was hit in the back. It was small, just a quick burn. I jumped, like someone had poked me with a hot iron. "Oh," the corporal said, "That landed a long ways away from us." But I knew I was hit; still, with all that excitement, it didn't bother me and I kept moving. We got into the city and went through it like that, just barely moving. Vehicles couldn't make it through the streets, everything was smashed up so badly. Because of that, most of the Germans got away.

Edward King came from Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from May 10th, 1943 to November 5th, 1945. He was a private, rifleman and acting corporal and served in The Royal Winnipeg Rifles, The Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's) and The Regina Rifle Regiment. He served in England and Europe, and was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal (1939-45).

At one point, there was a blockhouse at a bridge near where we were stopped to hold a machine gun position. We were told that the blockhouse was captured. Then some of our carriers made a wrong turn onto the bridge. There were jeeps and a dispatch rider on a motorbike, and a German machine gun opened up on them. Shells and bullets were hitting, and the dispatch rider went down. He was hit badly in the arm and we could see the blood coming out. They took cover there behind their vehicles and treated the rider there and drove out. After that they marked that bridge pretty well so nobody would try to cross it again. Every night the German bombers would come at midnight. We'd have to take turns ahead in an observation post, the O-PIP they called it, and sitting there during the bombing, some of our guys just about broke down. We'd hear that whistling sound coming down and we'd think it was coming right on top of us. When it dropped it might be a few hundred yards off, but that sound was terrible.

I remember some American reporters coming to take pictures. We took turns behind the machine gun, firing a few rounds to make it look like we were in battle. They gave us a few chocolate bars and cigarettes, and then they left in their little jeep. I never knew who they were, or if the pictures were ever published. On July 16th they told us we were going for a bath at night. The whole company crawled into trucks and drove back to a place where there was just a shower. We took off all our clothes, walked through the shower, picked up towels and clean underwear when we came out, then put our uniforms back on. We spent the night in some trenches nearby, and were kept awake by long-range artillery that was so close it shook the ground. The next morning we had a little breakfast and headed back to the front.

When we returned, the Germans had pulled out, so we walked right across that bridge, the first ones to cross, 7th Section, 18th Platoon, D Company. There were a few guys ahead of me, single file, and it felt funny walking across that bridge after seeing all that firing before. I thought. "Any minute now we're going to get mowed down," but it was fairly quiet; some firing, but not much. The battle was fully on as we got to the other side. There were prisoners running back on the double, hands behind their heads, followed by one of our soldiers. One soldier would bring as many as 10 or 15 prisoners by himself, but the Germans were glad to get out of there too, so they probably wanted to keep running. One time we were walking back into the city of Caen, all ragged and dirty. We were a rough looking bunch. Because I'd been doing so much crawling, the knees and elbows of my uniform were worn right through. We met a regiment just arrived from England, and naturally they're all clean; flashes, everything, just shining. We'd be looking each way as we went along, because we never knew when we would be attacked. But they were just walking as if they were on parade, swinging along.

I remember being at a church service on July 20th in Caen, sitting on the floor of an old building. The sermon didn't

help us very much. The army chaplain said, "Now you guys fill this room, but back in England, you had to be ordered to be in church. You didn't go on your own. Now you're sitting out there like little badgers, digging holes, and pretty soon you'll all be dead." There were soldiers there from The Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's) and The Regina Rifle Regiment, and as we went out from the service they said, "That minister must be working for Hitler, trying to keep our morale down like that."

After that we moved up to hold another position, where there was a lot of firing, including phosphorus bombs. It was rough going and we had a lot of casualties. Some of the boys were just about ready to break down; it was hard on them, sitting there with shells landing close all the time. At night you could see the burning from the phosphorus bombs, and it's pretty wicked when you get hit with their shrapnel, everything burning. When we pulled out about a week later the first company to move was badly shelled; we heard all the commotion and the hollering for stretchers and ambulances. When it was our turn to go they said, "Move as fast as you can. You have to be out of here before daylight. Get out on your own. Go as fast as you want to go." We ran, then walked fast and then ran again, but we didn't get shelled. We passed through our own artillery lines, and they had big buckets of tea. They dipped that tea and handed it out to us. We just swallowed it down and kept running. Finally we reached our destination, a field where there was a stack of kitbags of guys who had been killed. We threw ourselves down and I went out like a light. As I was sleeping a sergeant from another outfit came along, and I could hear him asking, "Who are these guys? What are these guys doing?" But somebody hollered, "Them boys just come out of the front lines. Don't bother them!" So he left us alone. We were just laying there the way we arrived, rifles in our hands, just laid right out, played right out. We'd gone so many nights without sleeping. We stayed there a few days. We were able to wash up a little bit and line-up for meals. But even there they gave us some training: night training, working with flares.

On the 6th of August we moved to the front by truck, going through Caen, towards the Falaise Gap. We were in an area where the fighting had been very hard, and where whole units had been wiped out. Once, while we were stopped, waiting for the orders to go further, we found some great, big underground tanks of beer. There was a tap, so we were all drinking there. We filled up some jerry cans we used for water. We sat in a circle that night and when planes came nobody moved for cover. That beer kept us talking, and we didn't even get scared. Finally, when daylight came and we were still sitting there smoking and drinking, somebody said, "It's your turn to go for beer." So I took two jerry cans and walked up to where the tap was. I was standing in the line-up and the Provost (The Canadian Provost Corps), the military police, pulled up. They were great big guys, and they said to everyone in the line-up, "Show me your pay book." They shut the tap off and took down all our names.

When we were moving again, mostly at night, towards the main battle, we rode on whatever vehicle we could: trucks, carriers. I remember the heat and the white dust so bad we couldn't see anything. There were tanks and different divisions moving. There were Germans all over; some of them had been run over at night, just flattened right out. I remember one night being bombed by a German plane, and the plane was shot down. The pilot bailed out and one of our platoon's men picked him up where his parachute landed. I heard afterwards that he was only 18 years old. We stopped once for a break at a 2nd Division casualty station, a great big tent. There was a line-up of jeeps bringing in casualties. To one side they unloaded those who had already died, wrapped in blankets. The survivors were operated on to try to save them, and they were laying there, too, before being moved further back. We pulled out what we had to eat. I remember it started to rain while we were there and we covered ourselves with whatever we had. I noticed my friend, Willy Daniels, there. He was a batman for an officer, and the two of them were trying to cover up out of the rain. They were both laughing. I don't know how, but still people managed to smile in a situation like that; it was quite something. I was very worried myself, and they were laughing. And dead people were laying just over there.

On the 14th of August the whole Canadian army was in action; we were in a place where the shells were landing so close and so heavy our trenches were caving in. The shelling was the worst I ever saw. And that's the day we got bombed from our own plane. Somebody made a mistake and they bombed our own men. We were a little bit ahead of where it happened. The artillery and the service corps had casualties. We had laid out yellow smoke, the signal to let them know we're allies. But I guess that was the air force's signal for a target that day. That's how big a mistake it was. They probably killed a hundred men.

Later we marched through an area where there had been a tank battle. There were about 50 tanks knocked out of the 4th Division, and the tanks and casualties were lying there, most of them burned up. Some of the dead had fallen out of their tanks, just laying there, a burned body. Some had gone a little further away, but they hadn't made it. I found my cousin, Willy Falcon, there; he was wounded. He told me he was in an armoured car, the kind that's very high and you enter from underneath. He said he was inside and had dropped his sten gun out the entrance. As he reached down to pick it up, he was shot in the hand. I walked by the armoured car later and saw his gun still laying there. Then we walked through the area on the other side of the battle, where the German tanks had been hit. They were well camouflaged, but still they had been hit. They were still on fire and there were bodies all along the way.

At one point we didn't know how much farther we should go, so they asked for volunteers to go and patrol ahead. An officer said, "Who wants to go on this patrol?" and he was talking to me and looking at me, so I said, "I guess I'll go." Three of us went; I was the getaway man in case something went wrong. We

moved apart, just keeping each other in sight, and we discovered the spot where about 50 tanks were waiting. We got this information back, and it was important, but still we lost more men there before the fighting in that area was over. About 25 men were killed on the 15th of August, and about 70 were wounded.

I remember being pinned down all one afternoon, being shelled and not being able to pull back, even though two companies near us had been nearly wiped out. One shell landed so close it broke the handle of my shovel. A soldier named Laboucan, laying beside me, asked if I had a cigarette, and when I pulled the pack out it was soaked with sweat. Another soldier, someone I didn't know, came walking by. He had a cigarette and wanted a light, so I gave him one. He was bleeding; he had blood on the front and the back of his shirt. I asked, "Do you need any help?" "Oh," he said, "I'll make it back." He was walking back, wounded. Later, we came to the area where the other two companies had been. There were probably about 25 or 30 men laying there, and I recognized some of my friends, like Joe Passette, the Indian lad. When I started looking around, a corporal said, "Keep to your front. Keep moving and look to your front." They didn't want us to find somebody we might recognize; some of the boys had relatives there. When we finally joined the rest of our company, some of them said, "What took you guys so long? Don't you know there's a war on?"

Heavy shelling continued. We went into a basement; the building was gone and just the open basement was left. Planes came to bomb us, and I could look up and see them in the sky. I could see the trap door open and the bombs come out, and I could hear that whistling sound. When we finally left that area it was sad to see so many dead people. As we moved along to where the Germans were we saw their dead, killed as they tried to escape, a whole convoy, even with the red cross on them. They were using horses to pull some of the vehicles; that's all they had for transportation. It was that way for miles along that road, so bad we couldn't get through. We had a bulldozer making a road so we could travel. This was in August. You can imagine, it doesn't take very long to smell. I could smell that human death. It was awful. We kept going and got to our objective.

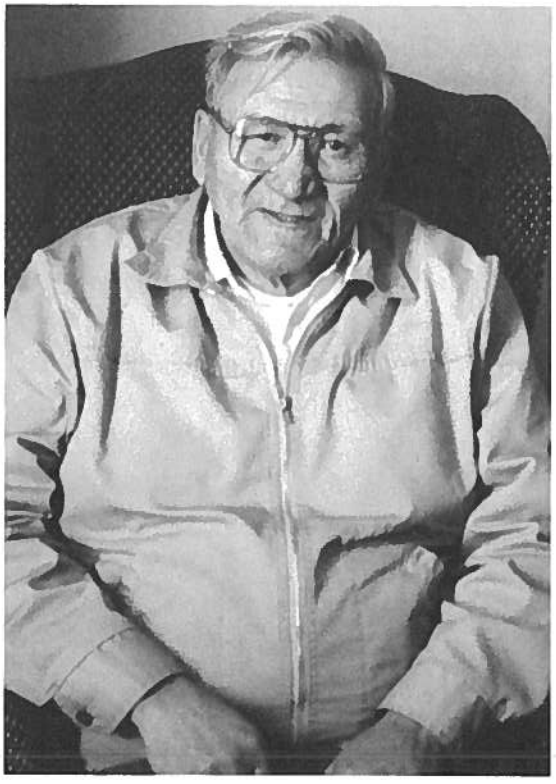
One time the whole regiment was moving by truck in a convoy. All of a sudden we got hit by artillery shells. We bailed out and hit the ground on either side. There was only one man killed, the driver. He was hit in the forehead; it was just a mess. He was part of the service corps, not even an infantryman, just a driver. He didn't die right away. We carried him to a little orchard nearby and laid him out in the shade of the trees. Then they sent 10 or 15 men after the sniper who'd hit the driver, and the crew of the artillery gun. The Germans were retreating, and they'd leave men back to slow us down. It was kind of a suicide mission. In no time our men came back with prisoners. When the driver finally died, they said, "He's gone; he's dead," and we crawled back on the trucks again. I remember another guy was hit in the stomach by machine gun bullets. I saw the place where he'd rolled around

in pain before he died. Blood was everywhere. He's listed as having died of a wound; that's what they call it. But he didn't die instantly. By then we were under strength most of the time. Most of our reinforcements had been trained for something else, like driving, so there were a lot of casualties.

At the Falaise Gap, we blew up a bridge, then dug our trenches and held it on each side. The Germans there were surrounded by Americans, British and Canadians. Civilians would be coming out of there, mostly women, trying to come through our lines. There was about four feet of water, and we'd piggyback them across the river and carry their bicycles across. The German soldiers were still trying to break out. We hit a couple of German trucks, loaded with brand new motorbikes; and it looked like someone was trying to escape, because one of the people in the trucks had a whole bag of money. One day a German patrol tried to come through there. We opened the machine gun on them, wounded a couple of Germans and the rest surrendered. Another time they came through at night, on foot. We held our fire, and when they were close somebody hollered "Halt!" Right away you could hear their guns dropping on the ground; they said "Comrade!" and we could see their hands on the skyline.

It rained heavily while we were there, and there were dead cattle laying around, animals killed during the fighting. They started to bloat up and maggots were coming out of them. I was in a trench with another guy, and one cow was laying just above us. We were stuck down there in the trench, because of the firing. There was a lull once, and I thought it was safe to get out to shave, but as soon I started, we were sprayed with machine gun fire. That was it; I stayed in my slit trench, never shaved and never washed. Then the rains came and washed the maggots from the dead cow into my trench, and we were sitting there in that water. A few days later, when conditions were better, some of us went out and got the motorbikes from the trucks we'd hit earlier, and we drove them around, back and forth, taking turns. But our officers stopped us. They said, "Get off that main road. You can drive out in the field, but not on the road."

I remember entering a captured city. We were on vehicles, and the streets were just packed with people welcoming



Edward King

us. They surrounded the jeeps and climbed on top of us, hugging and kissing us, throwing flowers, everyone hollering. Our officer said, "Try to keep moving. We got to keep moving." There was shelling outside the town, and some of the men in an advance platoon were wounded when they went out, so we stopped in an old building. The next morning Corporal Joe Prayzner said to me, "Let's go look for a drink." So we went, walking down the street. The town kind of reminded me of a Western town you'd see in the movies. Prayzner was carrying a sten gun. He hadn't shaved for a couple of weeks and he was covered with dust. I was the same way; I don't know who looked worse, because I couldn't see myself, but I could see him. We walked into a place where people were drinking, and Corporal Prayzner went up to the counter and asked for drinks. We didn't know what the word was for drinks, but we knew we wanted one. The glasses weren't that big, so it must have been a fairly strong drink. Prayzner just tipped his glass up; he was used to drinking, I guess. When I tasted mine, I realized what powerful stuff it was; it took me a little while to drink it. On the second drink, we decided to go and sit down. By the third drink, that stuff was really hitting me. I wasn't used to drinking that much; I was used to going out and having a beer, not drinking that heavily. We were sitting there and everything seemed to be pretty good, looked like everything was okay, like the war was a good thing to have. We were talking, not feeling any pain, worries all gone for awhile. Then, all of a sudden another corporal comes in and he says, "We're moving out! Get ready to move!" So we got up and moved out.

We rode on tanks for a way, moving close for an attack. When we caught up to the Germans, the tanks were ordered to fire and we bailed out and laid down. The tank commander said, "Nobody stays in the back of the tank; everybody to the side!" When they fire, the recoil is incredible, so we laid about 10 feet away, to the side, and when the tank blasted off I could see it shoot back about three or four feet. After a few shots they said "Okay, charge!" We ran forward, and there was some fighting and we took some casualties, but soon white flags began going up; most of the Germans were surrendering. We got to our objective, went through the German trenches, up to the other side and dug in there.

While we were there, our section got permission to go for a drink in a building. We were met by a fellow who was a Spaniard, living in France. I talked to him in French. There was Corporal Prayzner, Corporal White, Corporal West, Corporal Selman, Euerby, Crawford, Brown and myself. We walked in there, with our rifles and steel helmets and we sat around a table. The Spaniard brought a bottle, put the bottle on the table with glasses and Harry Euerby got up and said, "May I pour the drinks for you?" "Sure," Prayzner said, "Go ahead." He poured the drinks and we took them, still holding onto our rifles with one hand. While he was standing, he said "Here's a toast that we have a reunion back in Canada when we all get back." We clinked our glasses and we drank. Later, Euerby was the first one to

get killed, then Crawford, Brown and Prayzner, then West, and so on. Out of the 10 or so men there, only three of us survived.

Euerby died when his section was hit by mortar as we were moving along each side of a highway. Two men were killed and the rest of the section wounded. The rest of us took cover from the shells and the pavement flying up. Then we were ordered to start moving again, even with one platoon wiped out. It was pretty shaky; shells landing all around us. A piece of shrapnel hit the guy ahead of me right in the heel. I guess the speed of it had run out, and the shrapnel just stopped there in the heel, burning, smoking in his boot. He jumped up and said, "I'm hit! I'm hit! Help!" The corporal came up and looked at him and said, "The shrapnel just hit your heel there. Just the thick part of the heel." It must have hurt him; he was just about breaking down. He said, "I'd feel better if I was inside a building." "Well," the corporal said, "There are no safe buildings. A shell would hit a building just as easy as something out in the open."

We went to attack the great big guns that were firing across the English Channel into England. These weren't rockets, but big artillery guns on an underground track. A train would pull them out into the opening; they'd fire and the recall would gradually roll them back under the ground, and they'd have to wait four hours before firing again because they'd be too hot. We helped our tanks dig in there. I remember later, in a city, our platoon was sheltered in a big shell hole. The town seemed empty, but then one German soldier ran into view. An officer said, "Take a shot at him," so we fired. Well, we got return fire immediately; the German was just trying to draw our fire. We ducked right down and the bullets hit right above us. The Regina Rifles were right beside us and they tried to negotiate with the enemy. A driver and an officer got in a jeep with a white flag, and with a German prisoner to act as interpreter. They went up to where the enemy was, but the Germans said there was no way they were going to surrender; they said, "Never to the Canadians." They didn't like Canadians.

Another time, in September, our corporal came back from headquarters and said, "I got news for you. There's three of us going on a fighting patrol. Information fighting patrol. We're going to attack and try to draw fire. See how strong they are; where they are. So you guys have the day. You can rest, collect your running shoes and grenades and weapon." So we got ready, but you couldn't rest. You're thinking about this patrol you're going on. They told us that we'd be moving at 12 midnight, sharp. Around 11:30 we walked to the headquarters, in a basement. There was a map on a table, and Major Dave Campbell had his little stick and pointed to where we were and where we were going to be attacking. He said, "If you're captured, just give your name and number, no more. And if you're separated from the group, find your way back and report to this company." He gave us the password and asked, "Are there any questions?" Nobody had questions. We went by jeep up to the line. I was in the back, standing

on the bumper, holding onto a bar overhead, my sten gun in the other hand. They let us through the line, and we kept going until suddenly we ran into a mine. It blew up the jeep. I felt the jeep going up in the air and I was knocked away. The blast deafened me and the light blinded me, but the guys in the front got the worst of it. My knuckles and hands were all skinned from hitting the pavement with the sten gun in my hand. And it was awfully dangerous with all these guns loaded; any of them could have gone off. I was awake, but I didn't know where I was or which way to go or nothing. We were on the bank next to the road, and we could see somebody on top, running. The major said, "Get a hold of that man!" So we caught this guy, and he was one of our men. Part of his foot was blown off, and he tried to talk German to us. He thought he was a prisoner. We headed back to the line, gave the password and got through. They took us into a building, gave us some drinks, and looked after the wounded soldier. He was laying on the floor. We sat down beside him and they brought the drinks, but he only had one drink. He kept passing the rest to us, and they kept bringing him more drinks. Finally, a truck pulled up and we headed back to the place we'd come from.

One day we had reached our objective and were starting to dig in. There was a building there and our corporal said, "You might as well check that out before you start digging." I walked over and when I got to the door I could hear some voices inside, so I push-kicked the door open. That's how we were trained to do it; kick the door open and jump to the side and then have your gun pointing in there. Inside, there was one guy facing me and six or seven more sitting around a table. They stood right away and put their hands up. They didn't try to fight; they just came out. I hollered back, "I got some prisoners in here!" "Good!" the corporal said. "They're all yours. Take them back to headquarters." So away I went. I was going to go through one area, but one of the Germans pointed out a land mine, so we went around. On the way, we met one of our men coming back. He must have taken prisoners back, too. He said, "Did you search those prisoners?" I said, "No, I took their weapons." "Well," he said, "We might as well. They'll be stripped over there; those guys will take everything away. I'll search them." Naturally, when the Germans knew what we wanted, they just threw their money into the helmet, and pretty soon there was a pile of bills. We divided the money, and my big pocket was bulging with it. I carried it along for awhile, but I kept passing it around to my friends. I got to headquarters and left the prisoners, and just when I was leaving the Colonel had his aide call me back. I thought, "What did I do this time? Am I going to be on charge again?" I walked in, the Colonel asked my name and number, and he marked it down. "Well," he said, "Good luck," and he shook hands with me. "Carry on." I saluted and made an about-turn and went back to my company.

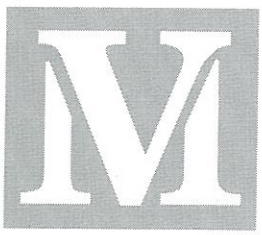
When we arrived at our next objective, around the 26th of September, the corporal said, "We can probably stay here for awhile. Might as well get settled." So we found a basement of a

building that had been blown away. We crawled in there, got our equipment put away and lay on the cement floor. Somebody had lit a candle. Then the corporal said, "You might as well get something to drink," so the boys put in a few dollars, and he said, "King, you talk French. Go and buy them something to drink, whatever you can find." He told me to try a building across the street. I walked over there and when they let me in I made them understand that I came to buy drink. I waved the money in my hand. The man there said "Oui, oui. I have some," and he went down into the basement. The lady there offered me a chair at the table there and asked, "Would you like to have hot milk?" She brought it, but I wasn't used to sitting at the table. Mostly we were outside, on the ground, in a trench, wherever. Now I was sitting by a table, sitting on a chair, in a civilized way, and I could still hear the battle and the shells. The man came up with six bottles of whatever it was. It could have been wine, but I think it was stronger. I was just starting on my milk when there was another knock on the door there and they opened it. Another soldier comes in; a Métis also. He said his name was Fiddler and he asked, "Where are you from?" "I'm from Saskatchewan," I said. "Me, too," he said, and he asked me, "From what part?" "Meadow Lake." "Oh," he said, "I'm not far from you. I'm from Prince Albert." He spoke French to the couple, too. Just then the corporal came in and said, "Get ready to move. I don't know if we'll need that stuff now. Take it back anyways; take it to the boys." We went back and I think only two of us used that stuff; the rest left it. I just took a few drinks, put some of it in my water bottle and kept going.

We were going on the attack, and it was pitch dark. At the start I kept running into the guy ahead of me, and bouncing back, his helmet in my face. And the guy behind me ran into me, too. Finally, we each put our hand on top of the guy ahead, until we got into an area of more light, the area where the attack was. There was a highway, with water filling the ditches. They'd opened a dam, I guess, to flood the area. The road was sticking out above everything else. We went across planks that were placed over the mines. They were mines for tanks, so the infantry didn't set them off easily. Suddenly, flares lit up and a machine gun opened up on us. They killed four or five of our boys there. We finally found our way back from the fight, the best we could, I went back down into the basement dugout. We lit the candle and I put my feet up against the wall to let the water drain out of my boots. I was soaking wet. Then the corporal came back and said he'd had some close calls with bullets. He showed us how the pack on his back had been shot up, and he asked, "Where's that strong drink? You got anymore left of that strong drink?" I just about gave him the whole works. He said he had helped a wounded major out of there, but he said "I don't think he's going to make it." He'd also gone back on his own to bring out more wounded, including Corporal Prayzner. That corporal did a lot of things like that, and I don't think he ever was recognized for it. Wherever help was needed, he would be there.

The kitchen truck had been hit, so we were eating our rations there, bully beef, until finally a new kitchen could be set up. When we went to eat, they were cooking steak. Good steak, cooked real well, with potatoes. We didn't get that very often; it was very special. Finally I was going to have a good meal. As they were putting stuff on my plate, I was told, "We're ready to move in five minutes. We're attacking in five minutes." "Oh, jeez," I thought. You know, it's hard to eat when you could be dead in 10 minutes. Your hunger isn't even there anymore. I had a hard time to swallow the tea, and there was no way I could eat steak. I offered mine to the boys sitting beside me, but nobody wanted that steak. We grabbed our equipment, put everything on and we were on the way again. It was daylight now, about six in the morning, as we moved into the attack. Our section went through the place where the others had just been shot, and they were still laying there as we went by. They were on the right side of the road, so we went on the left, just at the top of the ditch. Then, I don't know what made us cross over, probably our corporal told us to get over to the right side of the road again, but just after we crossed a shell came in, we dropped to the ground, and the shell landed right where we had been on the other side. When we looked back, there was just a big hole there. Finally, we got to a building, kicked the door open and walked in. It was dark and we couldn't see well. All of a sudden, from the basement door, a hand came out with a revolver in it, but the guy had the gun pointed backwards, towards himself. Then they started coming out, about 10 or 15 Germans. It seemed like there was no end to them. Some of the boys took them away.

We thought we'd reached our objective there, but up ahead of us they'd had too many casualties, so at night they called us in for reinforcement. There weren't very many of us left either, because some were taking prisoners back. There were only four of us to move up. On our way, shells were still dropping and one of them hit fairly close. It knocked us down, and I was hit in my arm, my elbow and my leg, but I didn't feel too much pain right then. I managed to crawl into a slit trench, and the corporal said, "How bad are you hit?" and that was when I realized I was hit. I felt my arm; it was all wet, but it was dark and I couldn't tell if it was water or sweat. Then I put it to my lips to taste, and I could taste blood. "I guess I'm hit in my elbow and leg," I said. He said, "You better try to get back and get first aid. There's a building there where they're patching up the wounded." My leg was already numb, my arm was getting numb, and my fingers and my leg were getting stiff. A jeep came along and they loaded us up. I was wondering how in the world is this driver going to find his way back in the pitch dark. He said, "See them white lines on each side? As long as we're inside them two white tapes, we're okay." Soon, my corporal came up to the first aid station. He said my wounds would probably never be serious enough to get out. He told me that when I did get it, it would be for good. This was the last I saw of my corporal. He was killed a week later. M



Ora Madden

When I was young I lived on a farm in the MacDowell area. There wasn't much money around and a lot of young fellows were joining the army. There were 93 soldiers who came from the MacDowell area, all volunteers. Chester Flanders, Roddy Hudson, Leonard Smith and I went to Saskatoon to sign up. We were going to join the Canadian Armoured Corps, but there was a mistake and instead we were signed up for The Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. I became a truck driver, so it was a real good mistake.

I did some basic training in Regina, advanced training in Red Deer, Alberta, and went overseas in March of 1942. We landed in England and we were in the Sussex area for just about two years before we went into battle.

We left England in a convoy of reinforcements heading to North Africa. We were shelled in the Mediterranean, three of our ships were sunk and we ended up in Salerno, Italy. Sicily had already been conquered and the main fighting then was on the mainland of Italy. We crossed to the mainland and I spent 16 months in Italy, attached to the 1st and 5th Canadian Divisions.

We were general transport, which meant we hauled everything, even carrying fresh meat up to the front lines. Sometimes we'd drive till we saw the tracer bullets fly, then we'd figure we were up a little too far and we'd turn back. There were bulldozed roads. No windshields in the trucks. I remember that at the same time as the Normandy invasion, we were hauling ammunition for artillery guns on the Hitler Line at

Cassino. The Americans had been in there for five months, and we went in for 72 hours and flattened the Hitler Line.

We had one really bad winter in Italy. We were hauling gas nearly every day. I'd sleep in the back of the canvas-covered truck, or in a tent. It was damp weather, rainy and cold. We slept with all our clothes on and it was like crawling into a wet bed. We'd lie there and our body heat would kind of warm us up, and that's the way we spent every night. I hardly had a day to dry my blankets. Of course, we were young and we didn't seem to mind at the time, and I think now that was where I got the arthritis in my knees, shoulders and neck. It's extremely bad and I take pills all the time for it.

We hauled lots of German prisoners. The German SS troops were terrible. They were mean and they wouldn't give up. But towards the end they didn't even have boots left on their feet and they were finally ready to quit. A lot of them were just kids. We'd haul them to prison camps.

I remember the German flying ace, the Mad Major. About 200 of us were watching an open air movie one night in a valley in Italy. Just beyond us there were three guys welding. Suddenly, a lone German plane coasted in and opened up his machine guns over top of us and killed the guys who were welding. The pilot flew out of there; even though the search lights were on, he wasn't hit. He was known as the Mad Major, because he'd pull things like that on his own. It put an end to our open air shows.

I was discharged on the 19th of January, 1946, in Regina. When I came home I found the land had been bought up and new people, Ukrainians, had moved in. When I had gone overseas in 1942, my dad was quite old and badly crippled. In the army I got $1.30 a day in pay and I sent half of it home. That's why it bothered me to come home and find the land was all gone and nobody cared. If you had land, you could get a loan. I had a quarter section of land from my parents, but the Department of Veterans Affairs said it wasn't enough,

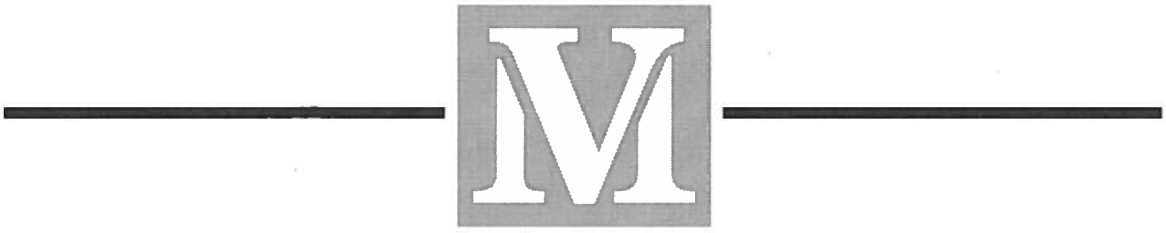
Ora C. Madden was in military service from June 30th, 1941 to January 19th, 1946. He was a private in The Royal Canadian Army Service Corps, served in the United Kingdom and Europe, and was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Italy Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal (1939-45).

Ora Madden

that I couldn't make a living on it, and that if I had more land they'd probably help me. But I couldn't get any land; it had been all bought up while I was in the army.

With my friend, Andy Johnstone, another veteran, I got an old truck and we worked in the bush, hauling wood. Finally I got a job in forestry and I worked for them for 31 years, working summers and doing a little trapping. Sometimes I'd be short of stamps and I'd have to work somewhere else: house construction, painting, lots of different things. They'd always lay me off one week short of stamps, so I'd have to go out and get still another job. My kids were small and it was rough.

After a long time I was able get a veterans loan for a house. It was a good arrangement, the best deal I've had from the DVA, but I received it way too late; my kids were just about leaving home by then. They wouldn't give it to me when I first needed it. Anytime I applied for it, they said I wasn't making enough money. I'm still paying for it, but the payments aren't that high. Still, it was the best deal I had in my life. M



Alfred Malbeuf

We had no jobs, so I decided to join the army. We were paid $1.25 a day or some thing like that, and I thought I was making money. Later, when I volunteered to go overseas, I was given four days leave, and then we shipped out, straight to Hong Kong. There were about 4,000 men on the boat, including 2,000 from Winnipeg and about 50 from Dundurn. Our arms were mainly machine guns and combat rifles. It took us 21 days to get there and we arrived November 27th, 1941. The fighting broke out there on December 2nd and lasted until the 25th.

I try to forget everything that happened in the prisoner of war camp, but it's hard to forget. I remember being so hungry I ate a snake. One day the Japanese guards had left to get some wood, and we were resting by a creek. We saw a little snake going into the water, and the question was: who was going to catch it first? There was more than one prisoner trying, but I caught the darned thing, killed it and put it in my pocket. When I got into camp, I skinned it from the head right through. I showed the Japanese and asked if it was all right for me to cook it. They said yes. When it was cooked, I gave my friend a taste. The boys asked me how it tasted and I told them it tasted like chicken. Simple.

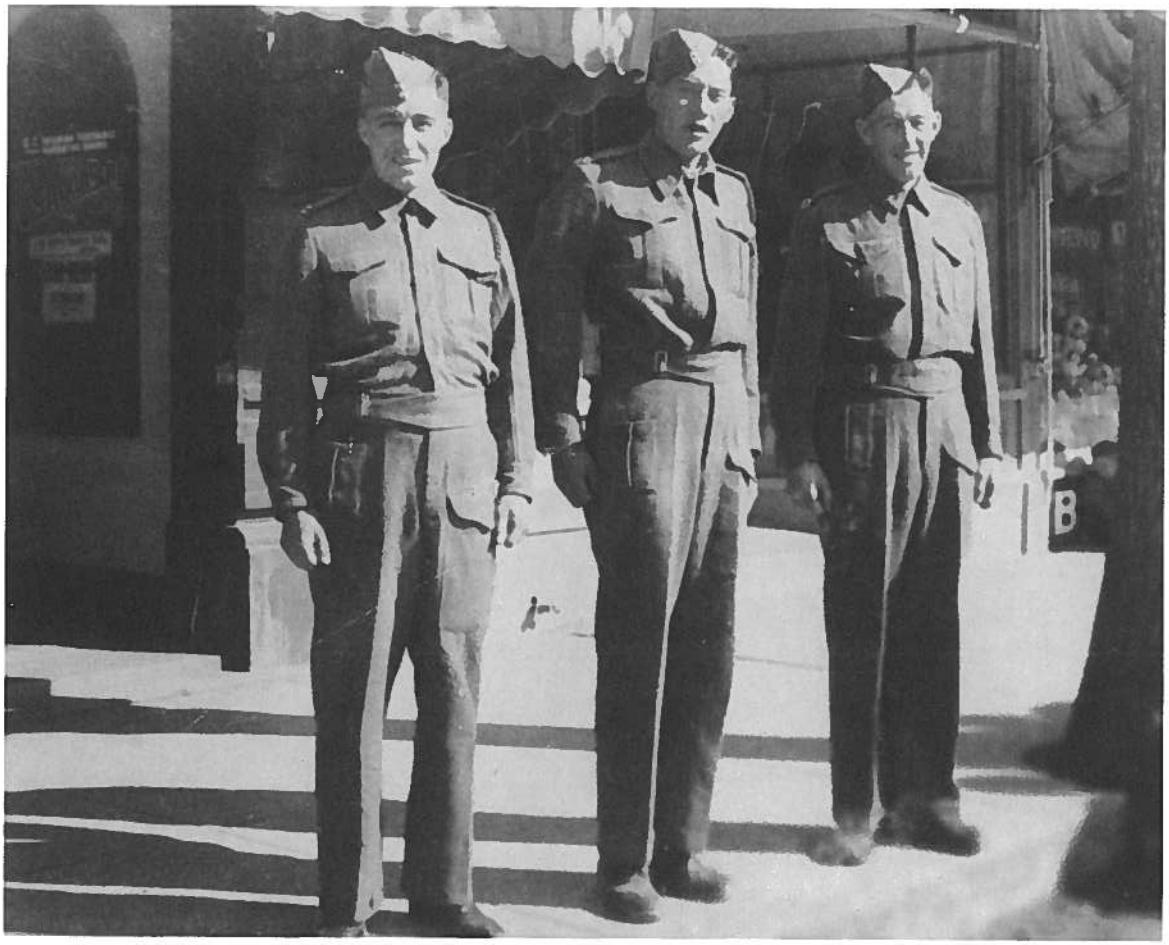
I know how I suffered in the camp. I got sick and was in sick bay, so weak I couldn't stand. I thought I was dead. There was no medicine. There were Japanese doctors, but they didn't want

to let the medicine go; they kept it for themselves. There were a lot of others who were sick, too.

When the war was over, I came home from Tokyo on a stretcher. We landed in San Francisco; from there we were driven to Vancouver, where I was put into a hospital for a check-up. Then I took a hospital train to Saskatoon and was placed in a sanatorium. I couldn't go very far; I'd dropped from 200 pounds when I went overseas to only 129 pounds at the end of the war. I had tuberculosis in the spine and the chest, and eventually had operations in both areas. Five of my ribs were removed.

I arrived in Saskatoon so weak I didn't know where I was, but after only two days I got a phone call from the Regina armoury saying I had to report there. When I arrived in Regina I had to wait there so long that I fell asleep on the bench. Finally someone said, "Mr. Malbeuf, the officer wants to see you upstairs." I didn't know if I could make it upstairs, and I had to be helped. After I was finished there, I went to a

Alfred Malbeuf came from Ituna, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from 1941 to 1945. He was a private in The Regina Rifle Regiment and The Winnipeg Grenadiers. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Pacific Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal (1939-45).

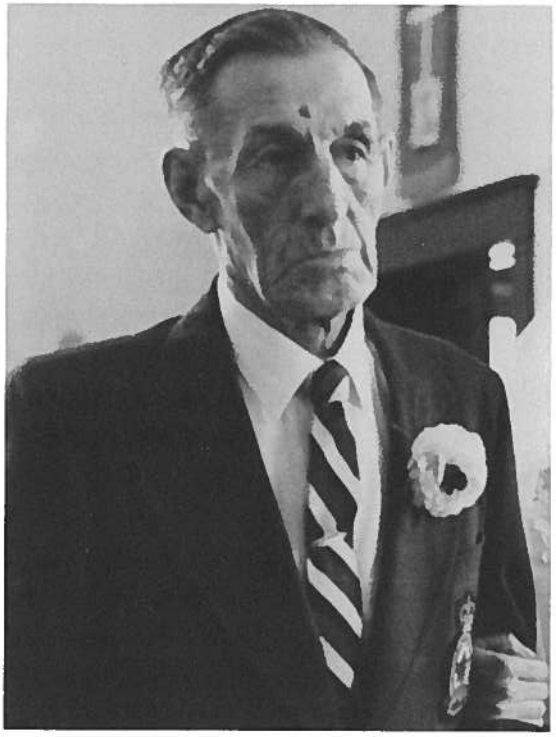


Winnipeg, July, 1941: Alfred Malbeuf at right and his brother Ernest at centre.

military hospital for a week, and from there to the General Hospital about a month. Finally I got some of my strength back. They were going to send me to a sanatorium, but I told them: no, I wanted a pass so I could go home. They gave me a pass for a week. I was able to walk by then.

My brother Ernest got married and took a job on the railroad in Sintaluta as soon as he got home. I did my best. I tried. I used to get jobs, but I couldn't keep them. I couldn't handle it and I would quit. I'm not complaining. I'm satisfied with the pension I'm getting right now. I think I deserve it; all of us deserve it.

I went through a lot. If you talk to people today about the war, especially the young people, it goes in one ear and out the other. They don't believe you. But I know what happened to us over there. I know about the guys who were beaten up and hanged and starved. These things happened. I saw it with my own eyes. M



Alfred Malbeuf, 1988.

Joe McGillivary

I **enlisted on November 21st, 1941,** when I was 18 years old, and went overseas on April 1st, 1942. I took my basic training at Fort Osborne Barracks in Winnipeg. In England we were near Aldershot, in Surrey, where I finished my advance training. That's where they made me a sniper.

We studied map reading, shooting and all about the rifle. We had night marches. Map reading was the most important. They would take us someplace in Scotland, take us in blindfolded, leave us there until night and then we'd have to find out where we were. You had to be good on a map to pinpoint yourself in Scotland, where it's hilly. The contours of the land make a big difference. You have to go by the stars, the sun and the moon. Luckily, I was pretty good on the map; I never got lost. In the war, that came in handy.

We did other training, too, by ship, sea, landing craft, in preparation for D-Day at Normandy. They called it combined operations training, because it involved the British, the Americans and others. We trained all the time; never stopped training. Even when we went back to our unit after the operations, we still trained, especially with the rifle to be a good shot, and I was pretty good.

When we finished our training, we knew that the invasion was coming, but they didn't tell us when until we got on the ship on June 4th, 1944. The invasion was set for June 6th. We learned that we were in the first wave, an assault wave. There were lots of soldiers killed, some from the shelling directed on the landing craft, some of them drowned. A lot were wounded.

I wasn't the only one from my home town fighting on D-Day. I remember two

from Cumberland House, George Budd and Napoleon Morin. The last time I saw Napoleon was June 9th, 1944. He was wounded that night. The Germans took him and he died on the road to the hospital. They buried him in a field somewhere and a farmer found the grave later. George Budd was killed in battle.

My work as a sniper started as soon as we landed. I was never in just one company; I was moved wherever they needed me. There were eight of us 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 14th, 1944, at a place in France called Falaise, where we circled the Germans. They tried to fight out, but we wouldn't let them through. 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. I said, "No, I don't want to go to England; I want to go to the front, back to my unit." That's where they put me and I stayed with them as a sniper until the end of the war.

They always thought of Natives as good shots, and most of us were very good on the rifle, as a matter of fact. That's how they picked me. And I was good on maps. Because I was on the front lines most of the time, I had to learn to soldier well. I could even pin-point where the artillery was coming from and that was a help, too. One time a British officer put down his papers and asked me what my position was on some gun fire we just heard. I told him mine. He told me that I must have seen his papers. I said: no, that was my own calculation. He placed his calculations beside mine, and they were the same. He thought it was remarkable that a sniper would know this.

You were expected to shoot whatever enemy movement you had on the front lines; just pick off whatever is coming at you. A sniper wasn't in a particular company. You belonged to the support company, the headquarters company. When I was finished at any time, I'd go to our headquarters for a rest before being called to the front line again. Sometimes we would go on patrols of three to five men to find out what the Germans were doing. I would be with a company as long as they needed me, until we got the order to pull back. Sometimes we were on the line for a month without a break. They were getting short of regular soldiers and the young recruits who had come were not too good on the lines. We had to keep an eye on them. That's what happened towards the end; on the front line I was going 24 hours a day with no sleeping. If we had a chance during the day, when nothing was moving, we would try to catch a little sleep then, right there, on the front line.

I didn't feel anything when I shot someone. I would just shoot them as they came. That's what they were paying me for. If I didn't get them, they would get me; that's the way I looked at it. You can't back out; you have to get whoever is coming at you. And I wouldn't help anybody who was wounded. You can't help; you've got other jobs to do.

When we were fighting at the Falaise

the German general slipped away on us at night. His name was Kurt Meyer. The war moved into Holland and Germany, but before we reached Germany, I was the one who captured that general. I found him in a house I was searching. I knew who he was, because we had his picture and we were always hunting for him. He didn't want to come with me and he started to move, so I said, "You don't come, I'll shoot you." I'd already slammed a shell home in the gun and I was going to shoot him right there in the living room. Just then a Canadian officer came into the house and told me not to do that. He was a major who had just come from Canada, and he said, "You don't do that. You'll be up for murder." I told him to look at what the general had done to our people. He had shot lots of them. I knew he had shot quite a few Canadian prisoners on June 9th and 10th, just after D-Day, when he was a colonel and we were facing his outfit, the 12th SS Division. So I would have shot him in that house. There were only two of us Canadians there; it couldn't have made any difference. It was a hazard of war. The general was refusing to give up to me. Besides that, the Canadian major had just come in there by accident. I couldn't have been charged; I shot a lot of those Germans. I was doing my work, what I was trained for. But the major took him away. I just about shot him and the major both, right there; that's how mad I was with him. There would have been no witnesses, but I didn't do it. I would have been carrying guilt today, if I had. Instead, I let the major take him out. I understood the general was held in Kingston after a trial on charges of war crimes. I also heard that after he'd served a few years he'd been put in the Canadian army as a captain to finish his sentence. I'd captured him, and I wasn't made captain for that.

The SS we fought were mostly young boys, 12 to 15 years old. The oldest I saw was about 19 years. We shot them first, before they got us. It was tough out there. They were the ones that were shooting the prisoners of war; those were their orders.

The war ended for me on May 5th, 1945, in a place called Aachen, Germany. We were on guard duty in the morning and we were listening to the news that the war was ending, although the signing didn't happen for three more days. I didn't feel jubilant. We were immune to anything that would make us happy. We just took it as it came; we didn't jump up and down just because the war ended. After you've been so long in 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 fight the Japanese and help the Americans. We were going to form a new division. We did some American parades and weapons, then I came back to Cumberland for a short leave, and while I was here our advance party went to Fort Benning, Georgia. By the time I reported back after my leave, the war in the Pacific had just ended. They still kept me for six or eight months, but we didn't do any training. I was discharged in Winnipeg on November 21st, 1945.

Why did we enlist? There was no work in those days, mostly just farm work, so a whole bunch of us decided to

join the army. The pay was 90 cents a day, and you got medical, as well as room and board. The farm pay was 80 cents a day where we worked at Nipawin. We tried to enlist there, but they knew we were too young. We had to go into The Pas to enlist, and we got accepted there.

We wanted to go fight for our country. That's the main thing. And we expected the country to look after us when we came back, too. But that never happened.

I got nothing. I'm still in the hole today. The government helped us with $2,300; that's about all we got, nothing else. None of us got land.

In August, 1950, I received a letter from the Department of National Defence, asking me if I was interested in joining the army a second time. After some talk, my wife said I could go. I told her I would look after her while I was in the Far East and, if I didn't come back, she would still be looked after.

I took a flight from The Pas to Winnipeg, where I put on my uniform and joined my old regiment, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. We went to Fort Lewis in the States for regrouping, then sailed to Hawaii and then to Guam where we picked up more American soldiers. Our last stop was Pusan, Korea. As we were getting off the ship we saw the bodies of dead soldiers piled like cord wood on the wharf. We went over there on police duty, but it didn't turn out that way.

We were sent to the front line as soon as we got organized and there were many battles. I was one of 12 men awarded the Presidential Unit Citation after the battle of Hill 355 that began on April 23rd, 1951. I was number one on a Vickers machine gun crew with five other soldiers. The battle raged until April 25th; I lost all my gun crew and had to get help from a line company.

Korea is a hilly country. In the north it's very cold. A lot of soldiers got frozen feet, because of the footwear we had. I was okay, because I had sneaked a pair of moccasins into my bag. M

Joe McGillivary came from the Pine Bluff Reserve, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from November 21st, 1941 to November 21st, 1945, and from August 28th, 1950 to April 8th, 1952. He was a private in the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. He served in the United Kingdom, Europe and Korea, and was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, the War Medal (1939-45), the Korea Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal for Korea, the UN Service Medal (Korea) (1950-54), a US Presidential Citation, and the Normandy Medal.

Edith Merrifield

We listened to the news and we got the *Leader-Post*; that's how I heard of the war and I was interested in joining up. At that time the Indian people were fighting against sending their boys or girls into the army. They felt if the Germans had come into Canada to start a war, then we would defend the country, but they didn't feel that it was a good idea for the young people to join for overseas. They thought it would break treaty rights. I didn't pay any attention to that. The army wanted girls to replace the men so that they could go overseas, and I wanted to travel and take different courses, so I joined up.

Also, there was a sad thing that had happened earlier in my family when my younger sister and I were in the Lebret School. She had caught pneumonia and the nuns didn't believe she was sick, so they didn't take her to the hospital soon enough. By the time they got her into the infirmary at the school she was almost dead. In the hospital they tapped her lung to get the fluid out, but at that time such a procedure was new; it wasn't successful in my sister's case and she died. She was 11 years old. They'd never been able to convert my dad to the Catholic belief. He was a head spokesman for chiefs and counsellors, and he had his own religion. Our religion had been outlawed, but we still used to go to a secluded place for the sun dance. I remember my mother telling me at a sun dance, when I was just nine or 10 years old, not to leave the buggy; I was supposed to watch for the Mounties, and if I saw one coming to let her know. So

when my sister died, my dad wrote to the Minister of Indian Affairs and reported everything. The only thing they did was to replace all the staff; different nuns and priests, but otherwise it was the same thing. Because I was a Catholic, they wouldn't accept me in the Protestant residential schools, and we weren't supposed to go to a school out on the reserve. You had to go to the school of the denomination that you were. So I just stayed at home. It was at that time my dad started fighting for day schools on reserves, but it didn't pay off until 1970. That's why, when the war broke out, I thought that I should get out and educate myself. In the army we were able to take different courses, like math and English. They didn't give you an official grade, but you were better equipped.

I went to Regina with my girlfriend, but she was rejected, because she was a pound under weight. They were taking anyone at all as long as you fit the requirements. You had to have grade eight, but when I left Lebret School I was only at grade four, so I had phoned my Indian agent and told him the situation I was in. He said, "I'll fix that," and he came out with a grade eight certificate. He knew that if I had stayed on the farm, I would have remained at a grade four level. My dad didn't know I had enlisted; he only knew that I went to Regina to do some shopping. After I enlisted a friend told me I was on the front page as the second Indian girl to join the army. My dad got the paper every day.

After I was sworn into the Canadian Women's Army Corps they sent us to Vermillion, Alberta, for training. Then I was posted back to Regina. I applied for BC, but they sent me down east instead. We had training for tear gas. We went out in the fields for map reading and rifle training. We did a lot of parade square. The whole battalion used to march together at a certain time, men and women. We were separate, but in the same camp. The men respected us and I met a lot of nice people.

In the army we were all just one big family, but the civilian girls didn't like us. They felt that we were in there just to please the men, I guess. When I was

Edith Hilda Merrifield came from the Pasqua Reserve, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from June 21st, 1942 to May 14th, 1946. She was a private in the Canadian Women's Army Corps and served in Canada. She was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and the War Medal (1939-45).

down east, I was in the military police and we used to patrol uptown. The army girls and civilian girls would always be scrapping, and I would have to run some of my friends in. In Kingston we had a little guard house in our quarters, and we had to check the girls in and out. Some of the girls had it in for us, but I didn't allow them to do anything.

I was stationed in Ottawa, too. That's where I met my husband. He was a pilot in the air force, and he was home for a few months. It used to bother him when he dropped bombs over cities in Germany. He'd think about the innocent people they were killing. He used to talk about it. He would feel bad that he was killing women and children.

During the war I was back and forth: Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa and Kingston. I was transferred back to Regina as a clerk in the supply depot. I didn't care too much for it, and that's when I applied for the military police. But while I was here I took a course in supplies: receiving supplies, keeping inventory and handing supplies out. It wasn't hard, and I was here only about five months when I put in a transfer for the military police down east. Actually, I applied to go to British Columbia and they sent me the other way. That was in 1943.

I took my discharge in Ottawa and I lived there for more than 20 years. I took a hairdressing course and worked at that for many years, plus several years with my own hairdressing business. We came back to Saskatchewan in 1969. There was an upgrading program, so I upgraded myself from grade five to grade 10 and then applied for university; at that time you could get in with grade 10. I took a four-year program at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College to become a language teacher in Cree and Saulteaux.

Looking back on my years in the military, I think I was more mature than some my age. I always felt that there was no such thing as "can't;" that anyone can do what they want to do, if they just keep thinking positively. I came off the reserve, straight into the army. Discrimination was bad at that time; when I wasn't in the army, I experienced a bit of it. What made up for it was the girls I was with in the army. They used to stand up for us. A lot of the women took different courses and brought up their education, so they could go overseas like the men. But when I was discharged from the army, women weren't able to get certain jobs. For example, I'd been in the military police and I wanted to join the civilian police force, but a woman couldn't. They said that the best thing I could do was to work as a guard in some institution, like a women's penitentiary, but I didn't want to take that.

When I got my status back in 1983, people thought that Indians like us were all going back to the reserve. It took a year and a half to get my status back and it cost me a lot of money. The Indian department wouldn't provide any information. Everything was kept under wraps, because the people on the reserve didn't want us back. That's what it was like, my people against each other, and it was very bad. They wouldn't let any news out. Myself, I wouldn't go back. There isn't anything if you're not farming. M

Vital Morin

I was born and raised in Isle-a-la-Crosse, and spent seven years in the Beauval Residential School, an Indian school owned and run by the Roman Catholic Mission. The Bishop decided to take us there in 1930, because we were orphans. I didn't go home once in the seven years I was there, not even during vacation. During the summer I used to help with farm work, raising cattle, haying, spending most of my time as a chore boy.

I left school when I was 16 and lived for a couple of years with an uncle in Buffalo Narrows, where I did some commercial fishing and worked for a mink rancher. For a time I didn't even know that war had broken out; we had no communication in those days and knew very little of what was going on down south.

I came back to Beauval to live with my brother in the summer of 1941 and I took what they called relief work, building a road from Meadow Lake to Isle-a-la-Crosse so supplies could be brought in by truck. It was all hand built, and the work paid 50 cents a day. I did a couple of weeks' work in an area near Meadow Lake and one weekend, after I collected my six dollars pay for two week's work, I went into Meadow Lake with a bunch of the boys. I had never been that far south before.

In Meadow Lake I saw a couple of boys from Green Lake. They were dressed in uniform, and I asked them where they had gone to get a uniform and what did they have to do. They told me they had joined the army and they showed me a recruiting office across the street. I was with a young fellow from

Beauval. He and I, not knowing any better, decided to join the army. The sergeant behind the desk started pulling out papers and forms. He told us to go see the doctor three or four doors down the street. I passed the medical, but my friend failed. I was given a room in a hotel that night, and at eight o'clock the next morning they gave me meal tickets and a bus ticket to Saskatoon. So I left home by myself, at just 17 years of age.

Saskatoon, it was the first time I had ever seen a city. All I had was the clothes I was wearing. When I got off at the bus depot I didn't know where to go. I had to ask directions and it took about an hour to walk there, but once I arrived it wasn't too bad. There was a bunch of young recruits and we were quick to meet each other. We stayed there for a week, taking more medicals to make sure we were fit to be in the army, then we were shipped to Regina. There I got my uniform and spent three months in basic training.

I was transferred to Borden, Ontario, for advanced training with the Canadian Armoured Corps. Most of my training was in driving tanks, infantry carriers and armoured vehicles of all types. That was where I learned to drive. After a year of advanced training we were shipped overseas and I was stationed at Aldershot, England. All we did was take more training and I was transferred into the infantry, with The Regina Rifle Regiment.

I was part of the Normandy invasion landing force in 1944. Fortunately, I wasn't one of the first ones there; I was about a half day behind, in the afternoon. Our troops were already on shore by then and had penetrated inland, so we were fairly well protected coming off the barges. We proceeded to Caen, which was the first city, and it took quite a while before we were able to capture it. From there we fought on all the way through France, Belgium and Holland. We were stationed in Holland for most of the winter before the second front opened up in February and we advanced into Germany.

My regiment captured the German city of Kleve, and from there we proceeded to Hochwald Forest. German paratroopers landed near us, but we weren't aware of it. We moved into the forest, thinking everything was fine, and we never even knew that we had been surrounded. That's when I was captured. From our group of 33 men, only seven were taken prisoner. I still don't know what happened to the others; they were probably all killed. I still remember my two partners. I was lying there, between them, and didn't get hit, but both of them did. The Germans walked the prisoners two or three miles back into their lines. Then they put us on a truck and took us to an old building where we were locked up for the night. Following

that we were transported further and further until we ended up in prison camp, Stalag 11B, which was about 90 miles out of Berlin.

I almost starved to death there, because there was hardly any grub, just one meal a day and it was only soup and a piece of rye bread. I lost about 30 pounds, I guess, in the three months before we were liberated. Otherwise, the prisoner of war experience wasn't awfully hard. The Germans themselves were not too rough, but there was almost nothing to eat, only water to drink, a few blankets and just a small bunk with a bit of straw to sleep on. Then one day we heard guns. At first it was big artillery, maybe 10 or 20 miles away, but soon we started hearing the rifle shots and we knew that the Allies were getting close. All of a sudden I heard the roaring of the tanks and other equipment as the troops came right into our prison camp. We were liberated. Everybody just about went crazy. We ran into all the buildings, looking for grub. The invading soldiers tried to hold us back so we wouldn't eat ourselves to death. We were all hungry, but it was hardest for the Russian prisoners. Of all the nationalities being held in that camp, the Russians had been treated worst. I don't think they were fed at all. We could see them in the next compound there, using rocks to smash up bones to get something to eat. They were starving to death and about 15 or 20 bodies were taken out of there every day.

Vital A. Morin came from Isle-a-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from July, 1942 to October, 1945. He was a trooper in the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps and a rifleman in The Regina Rifle Regiment, and served in England and Europe. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal (1939-45).

After we were freed we were driven to a bomber airport outside Germany and flown to England, where I spent three weeks in hospital. Then we went back to the army barracks at Aldershot. They gave us a month's leave and some money, so I travelled all over the place, including Ireland and Scotland. The people treated us as heroes, especially if we'd served at the front or been a prisoner of war. I was in the hospital on VE Day, so I didn't see too much. There were people in the streets by the thousands, hollering and holding beers and having a good time, but I couldn't join them. As a former prisoner of war I was on the first ship of returning soldiers. We landed in Halifax on July 1st, 1945. Then they put us on a troop train all the way to Regina. I was discharged in October.

After the war I settled back home as a commercial fisherman. I bought a fishing outfit and did well. I also worked with the RCMP in 1946, and for the Hudson Bay Company as a fish buyer in the winter. The next summer I decided to get married, and we've raised 11 children here.

Looking back, I think I went into the army because I didn't know any better. I was green. But the experience was very useful, because afterwards I was looked at as a community leader and so I was able to help the community grow. I was elected for 16 years to the town council and 10 years to the school board. We established our own school board and ran our own school. M

Archie Nicholas

I **went to the Royal 22e Régiment,** the Vingt-deuse. I think there were nine of us. I felt quite at home. I knew a lot of guys I had met before at Three Rivers, Quebec. As a matter of fact I met a lot of the officers there. We had an awful lot in common. They thought I came from New Brunswick, because I spoke the Duck Lake French. Once they knew my name and that I could speak French, I was very welcome. All nine of us stayed with the Vingt-deuse for three weeks. We went into action with them. They were a rough bunch, but they were a good bunch to be with. You knew that if the Vingt-deuse couldn't get through, nobody would get through.

I went into Italy as a cook's helper, until we moved out. Then we hit the Hitler Line. We attacked at four o'clock in the morning, near Cassino. My company commander was Armstrong and my platoon commander was J. Harper Prouse; I was his runner, so I was very close to the command post. Before the battle, just around twelve o'clock at night, we heard one shot over here and one over there. Harper said, "This is it, Army," (because his name was Armstrong we called him Army). He said, "Let's go!" and twelve hundred guns opened up. We put in the attack behind that creeping barrage from twelve hundred guns.

We crossed a river on foot. One of our old colonels, his name was Jim Stone and we called him Bald Face Stone, got those little bailey bridges across the river and we crossed without getting wet. We didn't have too much trouble there till we hit the mountains.

When we were climbing up there, they were waiting for us on top the mountain. The enemy seemed to know exactly the distance from where they were to us. I went back to the city that day or the next day after the battle of Cassino. The only thing that was standing up was one door frame. Then they pulled us out we were on our way to Rome.

At that time they were getting ready to open the second front. There was talk that we were going back and some generals wanted all the Canadians to be in one group. While they were discussing this they pulled us out and we were three weeks right out on holiday, more or less. We used to listen to the news whenever we had a chance. We heard they'd opened up the second front. We knew there was something up when we started to move, because the going was easy. We could walk almost all day long and only meet the odd German soldier.

In August that same year I was wounded for the first time. My company, B company, was in reserve and C company went into the line during one afternoon, towards the evening. They went in quite a way and they got cut up; some were taken prisoner. So the next day they ordered B company in. They ordered us to the same place, but we went a little too far and had to retreat, taking back some wounded. We had some guys who hadn't been in action too long. They didn't have enough training or maybe they didn't have experience with the violence. When you're taking somebody out, you fire on the spot where the jerries are, while other guys come back. Then you go back so far yourself and you turn around and fire again. When I passed one group on the way back they stopped hard, without firing, and the jerries opened up and hit me.

When I got back we couldn't find the officer. Someone found some prisoners in a cellar there, and another guy and I were ordered to go in. So we shot the door open with a tommy gun and when we burst through the door we could hear, "Don't shoot Canada! Don't shoot Canada!" They were British hostages that had been taken prisoner by the Germans. I was wounded and when I went to pick up one of those nice Lugers the German officers had, that's when I found out that my wound was just a little bit worse than I had thought. I wanted one of those Lugers, but when I went to pick it up, ooh, it hurt. I was ordered out.

German officers weren't the worst ones, but the paratroopers, well, I've seen one of them get wounded and you'd go to help them out and they'd spit at you. They didn't last long spitting on Canadian soldiers; not in battle. You had to touch them a little bit with your firearm to let them know that you were boss and you meant business.

I've seen some of them who had died with their fingers on the machine gun while their guts were hanging on branches or parts of their bodies weren't even there. And most of them were big and young and blonde. They were the ones that were probably promised the cream of everything if they pulled through.

You had to respect what they did for you, too. When I was wounded we were shorthanded, so I had to march six German prisoners back. One of them

was going to make a break and attack my gun. They were walking in front of me, and one of the others turned back to me and bowed his head a little, to warn me. It was probably their duty to try to get away. I marched them back to the line and that's how I got to the hospital.

I was in the hospital for 30 days. It was just a flesh wound; I had one bullet in me. When I woke up in the hospital they had this bullet all bent up in a saucer. I kept it until I was wounded the second time. That was in the northern part, during what was supposed to be our last battle in Italy. After that we were going over to join the Canadians in Holland. Going into the attack, I was on the extreme left. Suddenly, all these guys popped out of a hole and opened a machine gun on us and killed the guys in front of me, one behind me, and knocked me down. They were probably about 50 yards away. They nailed the whole section, but they didn't kill us all. There were some left that got the Germans, but it was too late. I called in a half track, because I couldn't walk; they shot my hip out. I was crawling and I could hear the boys calling, "Come on! Come on! You can make it!" The last thing I remember in the middle of the shelling and fighting was Major Armstrong hooking a pole in my harness and dragging me into a building. Then I lost consciousness.

The next thing I remember is going through fire. You know those jeeps with the A-frame? I was tied up on top there and they were shelling and all I could see was fire. Then I lost consciousness again and finally woke up in a hospital. This happened on the 13th of December,

Archie Nicholas

1944, and I woke up the evening before New Years. I didn't know where I was. Everything was dark. My leg was sore; I kept trying to scratch at it, but I was tied up. I knew I wasn't taken prisoner, because I remembered that when they first tried to give me first aid, in the field, they put something that smelled bad on my face and I grabbed that and I threw it away. That's when they had tied up my arms. But when I woke up in hospital I was so sore I tore the whole thing out. I suppose my wound was infected. I broke the cast and junk came out and in about two minutes I had the whole staff around me. They operated on me that night. They were Canadian. One of the nurses spoke French.

I didn't have adequate clothes or a damn thing. They told me we were in a hospital just out of Naples. I stayed in there till April. They were going to fly me

out, because I wasn't in very good shape. I had a cast up to here and it stunk. I had an infection; I couldn't eat. Eating was so hard they'd give me a drink of brandy and a couple bottles of stout a day. They got me ready one night. They said, "You'll be flying out in the morning. We're going to fly you out to England." But next morning, just before we left, somebody approached me and asked if I would mind giving my place to somebody else. They brought in a guy who was more or less in the basket, and put him in a bed next to me. He had both legs off, one arm off, and the other arm was broken. He was an American named Mack. His spirits were good and he asked if I would give him my place and I said, "Give it to him," and waited. Well, I wasn't very fussy about flying anyway. I'd never been in the air before, so I had no experience with airplanes. One time I used to be a pretty good swimmer, so I chose to go to England by boat.

We landed in Birmingham and I stayed there for three weeks. All the lights were on, and we had apples and ice cream, something we hadn't seen for years. They treated me pretty good there. They put me on a stretcher a couple of times and took me to picture shows. The nurses were Canadian. I didn't walk for a long time after that; about two and a half years. Operation after operation and nothing would work.

I returned to Canada on a hospital ship, the *Lady Nelson*, and I came to Regina by hospital train. I was there a week and then my folks got me. I still wasn't in very good shape, sick with infection. A splint was on my leg and it had a spring to keep the tension. One day a doctor in Regina looked at the papers, without looking at me, and said, "He's been in this cast from December to April. This thing must be healed." He took the cast off, lifted my leg and punctured the flesh. This reactivated the infection. There was nothing they could do for me. They wrapped me up one night, put me onto a train through a window and shipped me to Deer Lodge Hospital in Winnipeg. I was there for over two years.

First of all, they had to clear the infection with penicillin and operations. I became pretty well fed up there. I was in bed, couldn't move; my leg was sore. The infection was so bad they put me in a private room. I was in there a year by myself. Finally, I started getting better after half a dozen operations, and in May of '47 I came back to Duck Lake. I was on crutches.

You could earn $7.50 a month more while you were still in uniform, so when they wanted to discharge me while I was in Winnipeg I said, "No. I won't sign my discharge; the war with Japan is still going on." They transferred me back to Saskatoon to 121, but in the meantime 121 had been transferred to somewhere in Quebec. By the time the papers came back they had to transfer me from one command to another, from my regiment to my depot where I enlisted, and from my depot to the Winnipeg depot, Fort Oxford Barracks. Then one morning they had an officer come up and he signed my discharge for me. That's the part I didn't like. I'd been in hospital a year already, and they took me off the payroll and I lost $7.50 a month. M

Dan Pelletier

My twin brother, Alexander, and I were born in 1892 at Waywayseecappo, near Rossburn, Manitoba. Our mother died three years later and we grew up at residential schools, first nearby in Marieval and later in Muscowekwan, near Lestock, close to where my grandparents were. I didn't like school and went to work for farmers.

Alexander joined the army at the beginning of the First World War. At the time I was working for a farmer near Balcarres. It was 1916. Alexander sent me a letter from overseas. I had to have the farmer read the letter to me, and when I heard what my brother was doing, I quit my job right there. I said I was going to join my brother and that's what I did. I enlisted in Melville and joined the 217th Infantry Battalion (Qu'Appelle Battalion).

We were shipped to England, where I was trained on the Lewis machine gun. We fought with the Lewis gun, and it was a good one. It did a lot of damage; took a lot of casualties. It only took a couple of seconds to load up. If you were good on that machine gun, you didn't miss. I remember how the dirt flew up when bullets hit the ground.

Then we went to France. I fought at Vimy. It was trench warfare and we were attacked on foot and horseback. Against that was artillery and the machine guns. Then the Germans started using gas and at first we didn't know what gas was. It hit you hard, once you were in contact with it; it took effect just like that. Some boys couldn't talk. Some went crazy over the pain. What a terrible thing. Of

Daniel Pelletier came from Rossburn, Manitoba, and was in military service from October 24th, 1916 to April 10th, 1919; from July 4th, 1940 to March 22nd, 1941; and from July 12th, 1943 to November 6th, 1945. He was a private/gunner and sergeant, and served with the 217th Infantry Battalion, the Canadian Expeditionary Force, the 16th/22nd Saskatchewan Horse, and the Veterans Guard of Canada. He was awarded the British War Medal, the Victory Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal (1939-45).

course, they'd strike when you didn't expect it. You'd never know the gas was coming and suddenly it would be all around; in the dark you could feel it. It would shut out the sun. That gas business was pretty tough. It was the worst part of the war for me. I remember one guy's hair turned from dark to white, he was suffering so much. I got seriously burned on my back and I still have the scars.

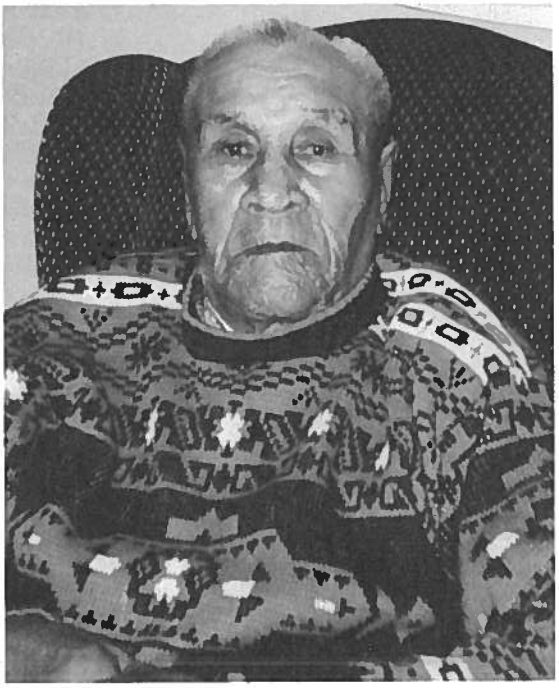
The bombs were bad, too, especially when they landed in camp. You had to get spread out right away. That's what my outfit did; we marked off a camp and the men moved away by themselves. They didn't stay all in one bunch. Those bombs made big holes; they'd just sink in when they exploded. They were dangerous if they burst in the air, too; they killed a lot of guys that way.

Before the final battle at Vimy Ridge a military band played, and I remember we prayed for the guys going to the front. It was night, and there were a lot of soldiers preparing to go. The Canadians weren't scared of anything. The Germans were machine gunning our battalions, but our infantry took Vimy; the troops charged fast and shut down the German guns. Then the Canadians had their turn to kill. There were some brave guys and I didn't feel scared. My chums and I were always acting up; we thought this fighting business was a lot of fun. It's funny how guys would act going into danger, not knowing whether they'd be killed or not. Some of the guys were as scared as hell. Some would run away, but they got shot just the same, only they were shot by their own officers. You'd get shot either way; you could choose either to fight or get shot, that's all.

It's funny, but I used to think nothing of getting shot at and I never got hit. It was nothing to me. Yet, I'd see my partners getting hit, and going down here and there. You know, the Canadians never stopped for anything. Right along the front line they would be laughing and

joking; they didn't care. I'd never seen people like that. Life in the trenches was hard. It was very muddy, because there would be times of steady rain. We were better off in the open, on the hard ground, but that was dangerous; I saw a lot of people get wounded or killed doing that.

We'd get transfers to different towns, and then we'd march at night. I remember arriving at a certain place at three or four o'clock in the morning and digging in. I found a spot in one of the trenches and dug about two feet down. It was raining and I made a little tent over the top and went to sleep. I woke up dreaming that I was swimming in a nice warm pool, but I found that I was laying in water. The bullets were flying, so we couldn't move out of there all day, and we had to wait to the next night before I could get out of there, take off my clothes, wring them out, put them back on, dig another hole and do it all again.



Dan Pelletier, circa 1990.

Once I found a shell hole to sleep in. I was exhausted, but when I knelt down to rest I felt something cold. It was a face. I looked around and saw there were three or four dead Germans in that hole. I couldn't move out, so I had to stay there. When daylight came we could see there were maggots in the dead bodies. Still, we had to stay there until it was dark again before we could move out.

I was in a trench once with my partner, and he had a chocolate bar in his chest pocket. He was hit by a bullet. It grazed his pocket and blew up the bar. He was left with a bullet burn across his chest. My brother once saw a troop of horse carts, and there was a rider on each horse, but one horse had a rider with no head. It was funny, all the strange things that would happen, yet you'd keep going. You'd lose your partner, but just keep going.

During World War II, I served with the 16th/22nd Saskatchewan Horse. I was promoted to the rank of sergeant, and I stayed in Canada as a basic training instructor. I was a language instructor because I could speak English, French and German. Towards the end of the war I was transferred to the Veterans Guard of Canada.

At the end of World War II, I was discharged and given a disability pension. It was barely enough. My son and I would get jobs scrubbing bush. Later, in the 1970s, I became an elder with the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College and worked there for 12 or 13 years. M

Paul Pelletier

We joined up in Dysart. World War I had started and a recruiter there was picking up guys he liked. I joined because I was a young man and I liked the uniform; that's about all. My father had died in 1913 and my brother's family was looking after my mother.

We went to Camp Hughs for two weeks to train for the infantry. Then we had two weeks leave before being shipped overseas. We went to London for further training, and then we sailed from Essex to France, where we saw action right away. Real action; I was wounded twice. I was hit in the left arm and in the chest, and I still have shrapnel in my left hand. From France we moved into Germany. I was a corporal with the 46th Infantry Battalion (South Saskatchewan Battalion).

After the war I got a job with the rail road in Edgely. My boss was kind of a smart bugger, and I told him I wasn't going to be under a boss all my life. He asked if I was educated and I told him I was. He sent me to Regina to be medically tested for a foreman's position, but the doctor told me I was too old to be a foreman. In those days they used hand cars, and the doctor said I'd upset the hand cars and kill two or three guys. I told him I didn't care; I wasn't going to work under a boss all my life, and I quit the railroad on the spot.

I was staying in Regina at my sister's house on Pasqua Street, waiting around a few days until my last railroad pay cheque came. One day I was walking through the railway underpass on Albert Street. A guy from a nearby lumber yard yelled at me and asked if I wanted a job stacking lumber. Since I was just waiting

around, I said, "Okay." I was only supposed to work two or three days and I was there for 11 years. I put money in the bank and that's how I bought the house I live in now; it cost $300 and I paid cash. And I got married.

In the First World War I had just been in the infantry. In the Second World War I was a sniper, mostly in Italy. When World War II came around, I was earning a dollar a day. I told my wife I didn't want to work for that anymore, so I joined the army. My kids got five dollars and I assigned half of my wages to my wife. They lived all right; they had a big garden at the house. After the war I came home, worked hauling coal and then worked in elevators. I didn't get a veteran's pension at first. I didn't know that I was entitled to one, but later a friend told me I did qualify, so I applied and received one.

The war leaves lots of odd memories. For example, it was funny how I got a medal for bravery. I saw some Germans coming over the trenches carrying a jug. I told my partner to keep an eye on them, and I crawled down into their trenches and stole the jug. My officer asked where I got the jug. I told him that I had got it off the Germans in the front line. He said that I had risked my life, and they gave me a medal. What I stole was a jug of whisky. And I wasn't even much of a drinker.

I remember one time we ran into two German snipers who were just children, one about 10, the other about 11. Those little kids were sniping on the top of the trenches. I spotted them. They were picked up and eventually taken to the States.

One time, in World War I, we captured some Germans who were in a dugout. I threw a couple of hand grenades in to force them out. A big officer came up first with his hand on his revolver, so I shot him. My own officer was upset; he said that we could have got information out of him. I told him he was too late, the guy's dead. We captured the whole outfit, about 30 of them.

I remember the girls would see you across the road and yell, "Hi Canada! Hi Canada!" I remember one of my chums, a card and a half. He was a big, tall guy and I was short. He told me he had a couple of girlfriends in London, one for him and one for me. When we were there they teased me, because I was small, asking me if my mother knew I was out. I told them to go to hell. M

Soldiers await combat after completion of basic training.

Peter Pelletier

I was 17 years old when I joined up on October 9th, 1941. I was living in Katepwa, at the end of the lakes, and I think I joined more for the adventure. It was a spur of the moment decision. There was just farm work available at that time and it was pretty hard to get a job. My father was dead then and I lived with my mom. Two older brothers had joined up about a year earlier and I knew my mother didn't want my brothers to join. My father had served in World War I and he had lied to mom when he had enlisted; he told her he was going on a harvest expedition.

My oldest brother joined the 14th Field Squadron, RCE; most of them were from Lumsden. My second brother joined 60th/76th Field Battery, RCA from Indian Head, a field regiment with 25-pounder guns. He was killed later in the battle for Cassino, Italy.

There were five of us who joined at the same time. We took our basic training in Regina. I'd only been in the city once before that; it was different, but it didn't bother me much, because I was more interested in the training. We were stationed at the Exhibition Grounds and I hardly ever went downtown. I got into a little trouble with the discipline when I joined up; it took awhile to get used to.

After I joined, we stayed with three different batteries. Then we went to Winnipeg for advanced training and after we finished that, in the first part of March, we were put on draft to go overseas. We had to take another medical and when I got to the last doctor in the line he told me to cough, and when I did he told me I wasn't going anywhere; I had a hernia on my left side. That

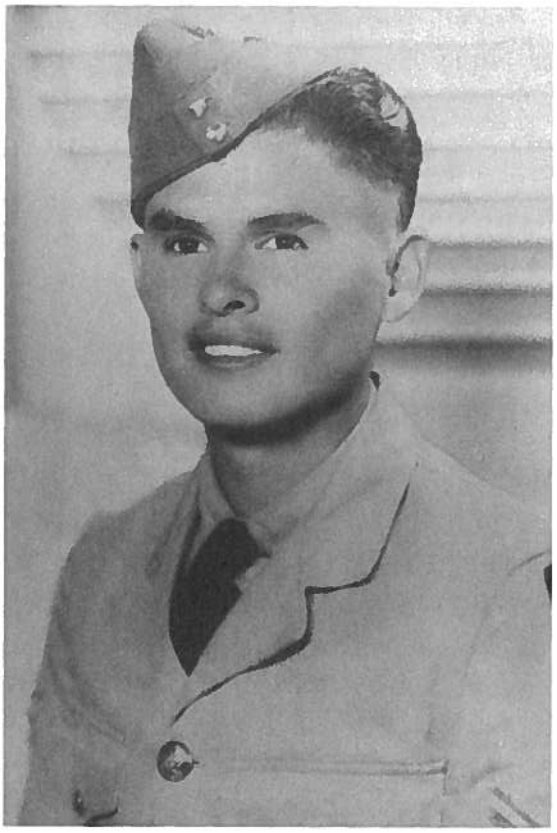
put me back for awhile.

I had an operation and spent 34 days in a Brandon hospital. Then I was home for 30 days sick leave, and after that back to Brandon, where I met two other chums from Kamsack and Yorkton. They had been sent back for being too young. They shipped the three of us back to Shilo to our regiment. When we finished there, we went to Nanaimo for about 11 months, using Vancouver Island to learn how to patrol. We'd be out on patrol for six weeks at a time.

Then we were broken up to go overseas as reinforcements, and a lot of Métis and Indians were part of that group. A good friend of mine was transferred into the infantry and was killed later in Holland. I was lucky; I ended up in the artillery with the 4th Armoured, a gun layer on the crew of a 25-pounder field gun.

We arrived in Scotland in September of 1943, then travelled by train to England and stayed there until July 12th, 1944, when we went into France. D-Day was past, France was already heavily bombed and the Allies had just taken Caen a few days before we got there. That breakthrough was the hole for the armour to get in.

I don't remember fear. We were far back of the front lines most of the time; 1,500 or 2,000 yards. We weren't very often up close. We got shelled and bombed quite a few times, but I don't think it was anything like what was faced by the infantry or by the anti-tank, the tank corps or the engineers. We did get shelled by heavy artillery when we first arrived, during the two weeks we were in one place before the drive started on



Peter C. Pelletier was in military service from October 9th, 1941 to January 26th, 1946. He was a private/gunner in the 64th Field Battery, 21st Field Regiment, 31st Field Battery and the 23rd SP Regiment. He served in England and Europe, and was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp and the War Medal (1939-45).

August 7th. When we headed for the Falaise Gap the captain made a bit of a mistake and we moved too far, pretty well right up to the lines, and we had a few casualties from mortars the first morning at Falaise. By March of 1945 we were at the Rhine, sitting behind smoke screens, getting ready to cross. I went on leave before we crossed the river, and when I came back, my unit had already moved forward.

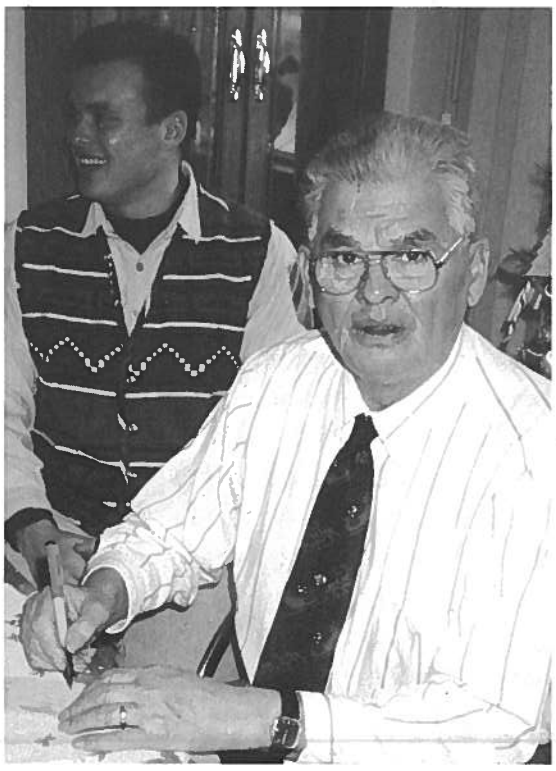
I remember the Hollanders best. We didn't get much time to see anything or

get to know anybody in France, because we were moving all the time, but we were stationed in Holland for quite a while, nearly all fall. I couldn't tell you about a meal there. The people didn't have much and we used to give our food to them if we could.

For us, the war ended suddenly one evening. We were supporting the 2nd Division as they advanced to Oldenburg. We were still fighting, our guns loaded. Then about six or seven o'clock we got an order to cease firing and that was it. We had to wait three or four days to get everyone unloaded, because you couldn't get the shell back out. While we were waiting, a chum said, "Let's go back and have coffee." So we walked back to the kitchen, set up in a half-track sitting near a barn. Suddenly we heard the putt-putt-putt sound of German 37-mm shells popping off around us. My friend got a piece of shrapnel in his instep and I got a piece in my arm. Of course, we all started raising hell about the shelling and we were heading for our guns to start again. Instead, we were ordered, "Stay where you are. They're just clearing their guns." But they cleared them right amongst us, right where we were having coffee. The war wasn't officially over yet, not for four more days. My buddy who had been wounded had to be taken out, but I stayed; the doctor just put some disinfectant on the wound. The shrapnel is still there today. It's a souvenir, about the size of a match head; I can hardly feel it anymore.

We were asked for volunteers for the Pacific war. I volunteered, but as soon as I did I wished I would have volunteered for the occupation forces instead. I was flown back to Aldershot in England and then sent home on the *Ile de France.* I had a 30-day leave. Then I was sent back for a month's training at Camp Shilo, where they were forming a new Canadian infantry regiment modelled after the Americans. I stayed in the army until January of '46. I was going to stay longer, but things were going slowly in the Pacific war, and we were disbanded while we were still at Shilo. I ended up in the infantry at dear old Dundurn. I would probably have stayed if they would have sent me back to the artillery.

When I was out, I found work as a farm labourer, thrashing, combining, binding, pitching sheaves. I went to the Ontario bush with a chum of mine in the fall of '47. That's where I started working on heavy equipment, and that's what I've been doing ever since. M



Peter Pelletier with his son Jeff behind him, Christmas, 1993.

Claude Petit

I was kind of young when I joined the army, 15 years old. My friends were joining, and all my cousins and relations were going in. In fact, my uncle was in the regiment that I eventually served in. My parents were in Ontario and I was staying at my grandmother's at Duck Lake, so I took off for Regina. I enlisted and passed, joined the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and then went to Ipperwash, Ontario, in December, 1951.

We're a military family, all the way back to the Rebellion on my dad's side. A Framboise was one of the first killed in the Rebellion; he was my dad's great, great uncle. My grandfather, my dad, my uncles, my aunts, all served in the Second World War. My youngest uncle served in Korea with the 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia's. My dad was in the Saskatoon Light Infantry (MG). For seven years he was in Europe with a machine gun battalion. They only had the Vickers, a water-cooled machine gun.

When I arrived in Ontario I got lost in the train station in Toronto. That was a good start. They gave me tickets to Ipperwash, actually to Thedford, by military truck. The first charge I had there was for not shaving. I got 14 days CB. That wasn't too healthy for me. Ipperwash was kind of rough, because of the conditions in the barracks, the heating and the meals. We were right by Lake Superior and it was really cold. Then we went on to Wainwright, Alberta. Our battalion was ready to go overseas. All we were doing at Wainwright was to get our needles and prepare our kit and everything else. They were shipping us out for Korea.

There were about 50 of us in the draft, but on the boat there were about 6,000 Yanks. We landed in Yokohama. I was working downstairs in the kitchen and we had docked by the time I came up to see the lights. It was dirty and smelly. I guess it's like that in the harbour. We went from the dock to our holding wing. Then we moved to another city, occupied a Japanese military barracks and stayed there while we got prepared. Then we took a British ship to Pusan, Korea, where we boarded a train. When we were on the train there was some firing at us, so we were given a hundred rounds of ammunition and two bandoliers. When we got off the train we were loaded on trucks to B Echelon, where we got posted to our different companies. I went to Charlie Company.

It was late '51 and we were on the 38th parallel, a static trench right across the country. The trenches were over your head and in spots they also had big bunkers behind them. There were crawl trenches, too. I remember no-man's-land between two big hills across a valley. We moved up for one month, then came back down and then later we were on a counter attack roll about six miles behind The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment). We saw them get hit all one night. They lost something like 72 men. On our counter attack up that hill we were in real deadly positions. We lost 16 men up there, but we took the hill back. We had to re-do the trenches, because The Black Watch itself had brought down artillery on its own position at the end.

There were mines everywhere, even in the streams. The enemy would put bamboo blankets going over the wire. That's what we did for the three months, wiring at night. And we were drawing a lot of fire, too. They knew what we were doing. I did quite a few regimental patrols in front of our position. You changed around different platoons, who was going to do the patrols and who was going to do the wiring. There were a lot of mines that weren't recorded. When you go into a mine field it should be recorded. The Americans had been in there, too, but we didn't have any records. Two of our guys were killed by Bouncing Betty mines. They just had that hill loaded with them. They'd come up about four feet and then blow. We had the engineers, of course, as support; they'd come up and do the wiring for us.

Then the 3rd Battalion came in and I went back with my company, the company that I was with in Canada. One day I read in the enemy newspaper, "Welcome to Korea, 3rd Battalion PPCLI." They wanted us to know that they knew what we were doing. They had a lot of spies; we called them pack rats. We didn't trust them. You had to watch. When we were up in the front, Korean workers would bring up the ammo and then we'd make sure that they were gone out of there.

One time they had our positions down and I got hit by a mortar shell. There were about five of us who got hit. They dropped them boom, boom, boom, boom and that was it. They hit the company's first aid bunker, too. I was hit in the shoulder. I had a bullet proof vest on, but some guys didn't and one got it in the back. One lost his leg. His arms and hands, which he'd put up to cover

his face when he'd heard it coming, were all full of shrapnel. He was a friend of mine, an old corporal who had tried out once for the Ottawa Rough Riders. He's one I can remember, because he was an all around good guy.

There were plenty of fighting patrols for advance contact. You contact the enemy and then you have a briefing afterwards to figure out what their position is and what they are doing. The patrol has to go until they contact the enemy. You've got all kinds of men, usually about 20: get-away men, radio men, an officer, a sergeant, two corporals, two lance corporals. You've got a lot of knowledge. You go until you contact the enemy, you shoot it up a little bit, then you come back. You try to bring your casualties back, because you are going to get some casualties; you can expect that.

There are all kinds of tricks to look out for. Sometimes the enemy lets you inside the wire and then they ambush you, and you can't get back. Later, in Vietnam, the enemy would hide in the ground and couldn't be hit even with bombs. I was on 50-calibre machine guns, and at the end we had a 50 in a valley next to Hill 355 and the Royal 22e Régiment. We spotted a Chinese or a Korean who had taken up a position at a blown-up bridge. We'd fire at him and he'd duck down and then he'd come back out. We were watching him, but we couldn't get him, because he was in too far.

I don't think Korea was worth it. I don't think we accomplished anything. We lost a lot of people. The Americans would threaten that they could wipe the Chinese off the map if they wanted to. Even our Canadian artillery, I heard from our crew that came up with us, were firing more ammunition than they did in the Second World War.

You have all kinds of thoughts going into a war. People were trying to help me get out of there, because I was too young. I met my uncle Murray coming home as I was going out, and he said, "What the hell are you doing here?" He'd been in the first battalion since right after the Second World War. Then my brother came, too. A Smith from the Duck Lake area got wounded up there. And Reo Pilon, from Duck Lake, got shot up when he was on a fighting patrol. I think my uncle was on that same patrol.

I was in Korea only eight months, because my mother wired Ottawa that I was underage, and they got me out of there. The army didn't say too much, because I wasn't the guy who squealed and, besides, I was wounded. I came back to Calgary and got out of the Army for a while, but then I went back in. Everybody was going to Europe, so I got into the jump course, a paratrooper course. I went with the 2nd Battalion in a mobile strike force in the north. We did some exercises in Alaska, starting with a couple of weeks exercise at Rocky Mountain House before we went to Alaska to jump. In Alaska it was 72 below with a wind chill. We put up our tents and then we had exercises with the Americans. They had it worse; some of them came from Tennessee. They couldn't even hang onto their rifles, because they were not used to that cold. We were prepared, and it was no problem for us. After that I served in

Germany twice and was in the army about 15 years altogether. I was a corporal off and on.

There wasn't too much discrimination in the army. It's the same as anything else when you're all together, doing one thing. It's just like a football team. It doesn't matter if you're blue, black or green; you've got to do your job and that's it. You depend on each other. For example, when you'd go out on R&R leave, you might think you'd drift away on your own, but you'd always seem to be together. You'd get into Tokyo and you'd all be back together again.

I think our young people should spend about 18 months in the army. I only had grade eight, but I got upgraded. They had classes there so I could go to grade 10. It was the commanding officer's doing; you had to go to school while you were doing nothing in the winter. We had about four or five teachers who were officers, so he used them. It was a good deal and it wasn't hard. Later, I also took some night school in Edmonton, but I lasted there only about a year, because it's a bugger when you're working.

Today I'm getting a little pension, five per cent. My dad is getting a good pension; he was shot up in the Second World War. I've got three uncles in Duck Lake who seem to be getting along pretty good, but I don't know if the Department of Veterans Affairs is the same with everybody. You go in front of a board for a pension and if you can't talk you won't get one. It's just like writing a proposal up; how good can you write it? My mother talks about how she worked hard to get the pension for dad, even though he had it coming and they owed it to him. He worked on the railroad when he joined the army, and he got his job back afterward, but he couldn't handle it. Then they applied for a pension and they finally got it. He got a DVA house and now they're doing well.

My hobby today is wood work. I had a house that I renovated. I've taken courses in boxing. The Boxing Association credits me for a level four recreation course; that means basic playground recreation and also boxing. For officiating in boxing I'm a level three. I became president of the Boxing Association of Saskatchewan. About 60 to 75 per cent of boxers in this province are Native, so it does help. M

Claude Petit came from Duck Lake, Saskatchewan and was in military service from December 20th, 1951 to May 6th, 1966. He was a corporal with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. He served in Europe, Korea and Alaska, and was awarded medals for his Korean Service.

Pictured at right: Claude Petit and Norris Petit; Remembrance Day, Ottawa, 1992.

Norris Petit

I was sworn in at Regina on the 10th of January, 1952. I was underage, but all you had to do was write down an age and they never checked your birth certificate. The year before, I had tried to enlist in Edmonton. I didn't make it, although a friend did and he was the same age. I had come back home from Edmonton, then gone to Prince George, and one day I phoned home and my mom told me that my brother Claude had joined, even though he was younger than I was. I couldn't believe it. I came back to Saskatchewan and signed up, and this time I was accepted. There was a whole gang of us from Duck Lake, seven or eight, I think, who joined at the same time. At that time they'd begun recruiting soldiers for Korea.

I don't know if my mother realized what we were getting into. Dad had gone through the Second World War, five years and only got some shrapnel wounds, but not really bad wounds, so she never thought too much of it, I guess. Of course, it was different later when my brother, Claude, was wounded.

I enlisted with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and took basic training at Ipperwash, Ontario from January till June. Then they moved us to advanced training at Wainwright, Alberta. That fall we were told that we were going to Korea to take over from the 1st Battalion. We were given a leave, and then we departed in September. We boarded a ship in Washington, and landed in Yokohama, Japan, 13 days later. The voyage wasn't too bad until all the boys started getting seasick. I remember, too, that we had to do turns

working in the mess, and we had to stand up to eat. We were bunked in about eight high, and not even with bunks, just hammocks with all our gear tied up to them. In Yokohama we boarded a train and travelled another day and a half, but the train was really comfortable, with proper bunks, and it was nice to get into a bed after that ride on the ship.

In Japan we trained in mountain climbing for a week or ten days. The mountains were unbelievable, the country was beautiful and the weather was still warm. Then we boarded a ship to Pusan, Korea. It was only a two or three-day trip, but it seemed longer than the other crossing, because it was an English ship and all we ate was smoked fish.

Through all this we were still not thinking about what we were getting into. Even though I was underage, I was with my brother and other boys from back home. But things changed when we arrived in Korea. When we got close to Pusan, we could smell the place; they were using human waste to fertilize their fields and it really stank. We got discouraged thinking of what we were getting into, especially when we got to the troop train waiting for us. We were each given a bandolier and a hundred rounds of ammunition and a quart of beer. First of all, when we got the beer we thought, "This is heaven." Then we saw that the train had bullet holes all over. The train had just carried the advance party for the 3rd Battalion toward the front, and some of the boys had been hit on the train. I think one of the boys in that group was Leon Ferguson, from Saskatchewan. I thought, "Where the hell am I and what am I doing here?" It was really scary and some of the boys were in tears. I think they wanted to turn around and come home, but it was too late; we were there. Those days, in the army, they treated you like a bunch of cattle. "Get in there!" and that's it.

We travelled all night and when we stopped, God knows where, they told us that this was B Echelon. We stayed in tents. By then a lot of the boys had already been left behind; a lot were underage and got caught, or had told on themselves, because they didn't really

Norris Petit

like what they had seen. Little things started happening; guys started getting shot in the foot from cleaning rifles, and other small, stupid things. I think it was nerves. Then we had a change of the guards; the first battalions were leaving and we were taking over. There was a parade, and there, standing right across from me, was my uncle. I hadn't seen him for five or six years. He had gone from the Second World War right into the Princess Pats and to the Korean War. After the parade we had a little party, and when I was talking with him in the canteen he started crying. He couldn't believe we were big enough to be there, because he knew we were underage.

We were moved to A Echelon, living in pup tents, and we received our first bombing. That really scared us. The bombs weren't landing too far away, and some of the guys started jumping up. The guy I was with was really hyper, and he ran right out of the tent in the middle of the night. It was scary, and if you're not scared, then you're not human. It was the Americans who actually got hit that time. The North Koreans were dropping pamphlets, telling us to go back home. They knew we were there; we couldn't believe it.

The days after that were made up of the same old thing, being in the trenches and doing guard duty in shifts. Then Claude got wounded in the back with shrapnel and everything started hitting the fan. Mom contacted Ottawa and told them about both of us being underage. They drove me back from the lines and I remember waiting in another camp; it was March and it was raining and cold. An officer came and showed me a birth certificate. I always used the name Norris Leo Petit, but on the birth certificate it said Noah Leonard Petit; that's actually what the priest had written down, I guess. I said, "That's not mine," but I knew it was. They sent me to Seoul and I flew to Japan on one of those big transports called a flying boxcar. I couldn't hear for three or four days afterwards. I remember getting off at an air force base and being the only Canadian there. It was a place still bombed out from the Second World War, and it was all kind of scary. Then I took a small boat across to Japan, where I moved into a tent and went through all kinds of rigamarole about my age. At first I thought they'd keep me there, because in April I would have been old enough, but no, they shipped me right to Tokyo and then home. Claude had been sent home right after he got out of the hospital.

I was given a leave when I returned. I went to Ontario, where my folks were at that time, and then to Calgary. I felt lost for a long time. The guys I had known had gone separate ways. After a while I decided I wanted to go back into the army, but by then it was already too late; they had signed the peace treaty in Korea. I was discharged on July 30th, 1954, in Calgary. I enjoyed being in the military. It's a good learning experience, something that made a man out of me. But I had gone into the army mainly because there had been no work in Duck Lake, and the army was something a lot of us did.

I worked in a sawmill in the Ontario bush, and after my parents moved to Prince George, British Columbia, I went

there and worked in construction with my dad. Then it was back to the sawmill in Ontario, and, later, more work in the bush in Manitoba. There was a brief job with the Department of National Defence in Dundurn. I liked working there, but it was nothing I could retire on, and I really liked to roam around in those days; I didn't feel at home anywhere. I did odd jobs, went back to Duck Lake and then finally to Saskatoon, where I started doing roofing work. The money was good and I stayed in that work for 20 years in Saskatoon, Calgary and Edmonton.

I hurt my back in 1982 and I was off work for two years, and when I tried to go back to roofing work I just couldn't do it anymore, because of the condition of my back. There was an opening for an assistant program director in the Friendship Centre where I had been a volunteer, and I got the job. I've been training and coaching boxers now for 25 years. Claude started first with the boxing club, then I got involved with it and have stayed with it ever since.

I have two boys in the club who have been Canadian champions. One boy was the first Native to win a gold at the Canada Games. He also won the Golden Gloves. I have a girl boxing who was the first girl to enter a big tournament. The boy who won the Golden Boy two years ago won the gold medal again, and this year he says he's going to win the nationals. Let's hope so; he needs to get on the national team. He had a chance to go to the Olympics last time, but he lost out and he had no international experience. He came home from that kind of discouraged. He's a good boy to train, and he'll succeed if he sets his goal on making something of himself. M

Norris Petit and his son.

Joseph Martial Poitras

We're a military family. My dad was in World War I with the 128th Infantry Battalion, called "Moose Jaw's Own," the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles. Two brothers were in the infantry with The South Saskatchewan Regiment during World War II; Edward was killed in the Dieppe Raid and George was badly wounded, but I came back without a scratch.

When I enlisted there was no work of any kind for young people. Being patriotic and looking for a little bit of adventure, too, the best bet was to join the army. All my basic training was done in England. I joined the army January 3rd, 1940 and by February 9th I was getting off the *Empress of Britain* at Greenock, Scotland. From there we took a troop train to Aldershot, England and started training: foot drill and small arms drill. I was with The Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. We were a transport outfit, but for the first six or seven months we didn't have any trucks or vehicles of any kind. We had to improvise with benches and tables until our vehicles arrived and we began training how to drive right-hand-drive vehicles on convoys. We didn't use any of that training later, but it was good discipline.

In 1943, we boarded a boat in Liverpool and headed for the central Mediterranean forces, which were in Sicily and Italy. We disembarked in Palermo, Sicily, and marched several miles through the rain to our bivouac area. We arrived wet and hungry, and found nothing was ready at our transit camp. The tents were all rolled up, still in bags. There wasn't even a kitchen for

us to eat in. We had to depend on our rations, which amounted to a tin of bully beef and a bit of hardtack. That continued until we finally ended at the place we were finally to be stationed, across the water in Italy, at Catania, and we stayed there for a couple of months of training, then moved to Messina in the boot of Italy, in Reggio. From there we followed the troops as they fought their way up the boot. Our basic job was movement of troops and all supplies from safety pins to personnel.

We spent the first Christmas in Bari, and then we went across the leg into Naples and spent several months in that area at places like Ortona, Campobasso, Cassino, Foggia, Varserio, and Ravenna. In 1945, on my birthday, the 20th of February, I boarded a boat in Naples and sailed to Marseilles, France. Our job remained the same: transporting troops, food and supplies from bivouac areas to the front lines. The supplies would be taken off ships, broken up into truck loads and then delivered to different infantry and artillery outfits. The closest we came to the battle area was approximately half a mile, and we never faced hand-to-hand combat. We were service personnel, but a couple of times our convoys were attacked by strafing planes. When this happened, we'd get out of the trucks and into the ditches and under cover.

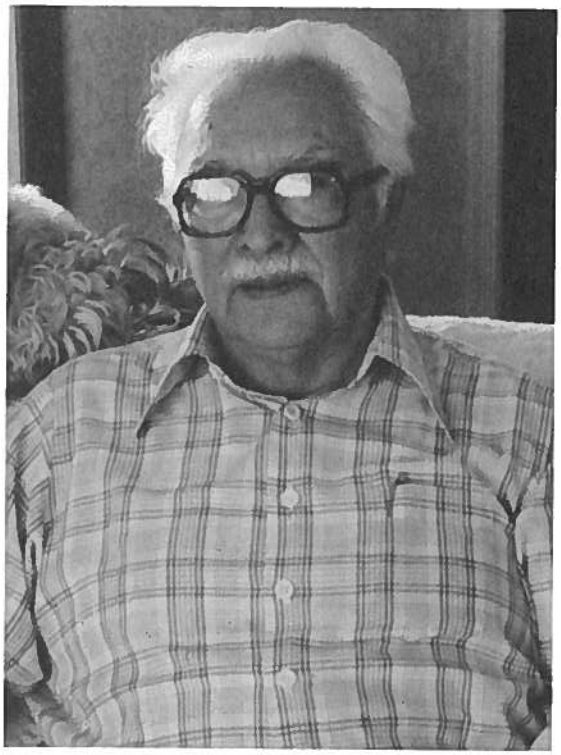
Most of the time we were attached to the 3rd Brigade Infantry, the Royal 22e Régiment (Vingt-deuse), but we also supported the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and the Loyal Edmonton Regiment. The Vingt-deuse were nice people to work with. They sure looked after their transport personnel. I remember a major with a French accent. One day he saw us picking up our rations and he didn't like the poor quality of meat their supply sergeant was cutting up for us. He told the sergeant to change that; his men were supposed to have the very best of the meats. From then on, it was the best for the transport.

I was discharged in August, 1945, in Regina, and then I re-enlisted in May of '47. During the time in between I went to barber school. The wages at that time were $25 a week. I was married in 1946 and you couldn't live on that kind of money, so when I got a letter from Ottawa wanting me to re-engage, I reported back to Regina again. I was sent to Camp Borden, Ontario as the barber for a few months, then returned to Saskatchewan, where I spend most of my career from then on. The last four years, from 1964 to 1968, I was the sergeant in charge of transport at

Dundurn Military Camp, with 15 men and 32 vehicles.

I had bought a house in Lestock. We lived there for a year, but my older children moved to Calgary; they were all hairdressers. So we sold the house, packed the car and my two-year-old son and headed for Calgary, too. I was still drawing army wages, but towards the end of the year, I finally made up my mind that I had to go to work. I wasn't trained for anything except weapons and truck driving. I'd had enough of driving trucks, so I applied for work at two different hospitals. The director of the housekeeping department at one hospital, an ex-navy man, said they'd give me a call when there was an opening. This was a Monday morning. Tuesday afternoon, my wife got a call telling me to report to the Holy Cross Hospital Wednesday morning. I worked there for 13 years, first as a cleaning serviceman and eventually as the manager of the housekeeping department. I was involved with the public school system in Calgary, providing job training for students who were a little slow in learning. I like working with people.

Today I'm an old-time fiddler. I play with The Grammas and The Gramps of Fort Qu'Appelle. We're senior citizens who go around playing for different old people and sometimes for dances. None of that heavy metal music; the youngest in our outfit would be about 67 years old. M



Joseph Martial Poitras came from Lebret, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from January 3rd, 1940 to August 31st, 1945, and from May 7th, 1947 to September 2nd, 1968. He served as private, corporal and sergeant in The Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. He served in the United Kingdom, the Mediterranean, Sicily, Italy, and Europe, and was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Italy Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, the War Medal (1939-45), and the Canadian Forces Decoration and Clasp.

Leo Pruden

I joined on June 14th, 1941, in Wynyard. We mobilized at Broadview, where I remember living in tents, and then we were sent to Sussex, New Brunswick, for basic training.

I earned $1.30 a day and sent half of that home for my mother to live on. I didn't save any; they'd get me playing poker sometimes, and maybe after half an hour I'd have 300 bucks or maybe I'd have nothing, but I kept playing.

I didn't wait for a call; I went myself and volunteered. But I'm no further ahead than a guy who got called. I thought that because I joined I would get land, because lots of the soldiers did, but we never got anything.

I wasn't accepted for overseas service, but I was in the army five years and five days; five years of my life at $1.30 a day.

There were guys who were able to buy their way out of the services. I remember being in a doctor's office once, and a fellow there told me his son was going to be discharged, because he was awfully sick. I had just seen his son the night before, when he got the news he wouldn't have to go. He was jumping up and down, laughing. He wasn't sick at all. Maybe he had a thousand dollars to buy his way out, but I didn't like that kind of thing. I had a brother-in-law, a German fellow. He said he had met a German soldier; they'd had a smoke together, and asked each other, "What are you fighting over?" and the answer was, "Nothing." They were right.

When I went into the army, times

were tough all around. You could walk your horses all the way to a farmer's place looking for work, and not only find out he couldn't hire you, but that he couldn't even afford to ask you for dinner. I remember working when the Russian thistles and dirt would pile up on the fences. One day the dust was blowing so bad the farmer I was working for came out to get me from the field at three o'clock in the afternoon. He had his lights on and I could barely see him. When we got back to his place, his wife said, "It's bad, eh?" I said, "Yes, it is."

Leo Pruden

She said, "I haven't washed clothes for the last three weeks, because the dust just comes into the house, too."

My parents moved here from Manitoba to farm in 1911. Dad died when I was young, and my brother was sick all his life with pleurisy. In those days we had to pay for the doctors and hospitals, but you couldn't sell anything to get money. Once we sold a bull that was so big we had to walk him to market instead of driving him in a truck. We got $13.60 for him. You couldn't buy a steak for that much today.

In the '30s I rode the freight trains from Manitoba to Wetaskiwin, Alberta, for a threshing job. We only got two or three dollars a day for that kind of work, so we saved money by riding the freight. We'd hear on the radio that Canada didn't have anything but a bunch of bums. They weren't bums; they just had to do something to get home. After the war broke out, Canada had the best soldiers, and they were the same guys.

The big shots stayed back and smoked cigars. The guys without money served. My brother served five years and never got anything. He told me that sometimes he'd be transporting big shots, and they'd expect him to go ahead of them to make sure everything was safe. M

Harold Ross

I **enlisted at Regina in the spring** of 1943. Quite a few members of the Ross family went in at that time, cousins of mine, all from the north. My dad tried, but he had broken his legs before, so they rejected him.

We took basic training at Dundurn, then advanced training first at Calgary and later at different places down East. I was moved around from one unit to another, and ended up with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry when I got to Europe. We went overseas on the *Queen Mary*. It was a seven or eight day trip; I was seasick at first, but after that it was all right. We had an escort ahead of us and we didn't have to zigzag or watch too much for German submarines.

At Aldershot in England we had our basic training over again and the school of battle training. I was in the straight infantry. I had been with artillery for a while in Canada and I wasn't fussy about that. In 1944 they shipped us to France and eventually we were in Holland. There were a few battles there, but I don't want to bring that up.

I came back in the spring of 1946 and was discharged in August. I worked for a few years, then joined up again in Vancouver in 1951. They were going to ship me to The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, who were stationed in Germany. I told them I wanted to go back with the Pats, so they shipped me to Calgary, where I stayed a while before going to Korea with the 3rd Battalion.

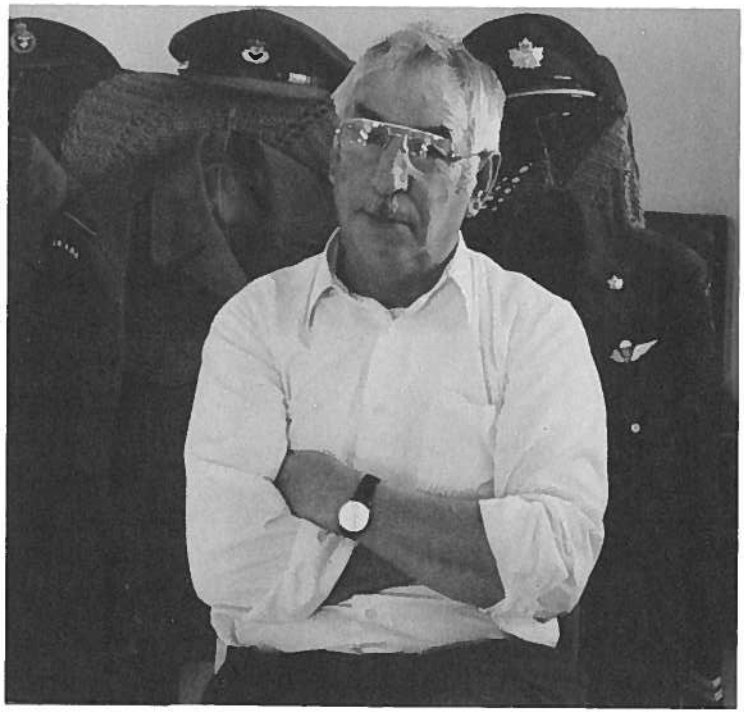
It took us 29 days getting there. We

Harold Ross at left.

left by sea from Seattle. Conditions were worse in Korea than in Europe. We were in the front for one solid year and never in a building during that time. When I came back in 1953 it was a very rough 31-day trip. The ship was small and a lot of guys were seasick. While I'd been in Korea, the army decided it was time for me to take an NCO course, so I ended up as a corporal. I was a parachuter, a jumper. I caught malaria in Korea, so I was pulled back to B Echelon, where they have stores and a hospital, just a few beds for when the guys got sick, before they were taken to Seoul for treatment. I didn't like it there. I told them to take me back to my company, so I went back into the front again.

After my stint in the airborne, and after I was back in Canada, I had chest problems. I was on a refresher course, and I'd been a good athlete, so at first I just kept on going with the guys. But something was wrong, and finally I went for a checkup and found out I had pleurisy in my lungs. I was shipped to the sanatorium at Fort San, where I spent approximately a year.

When I got out of the army, I started working. I had joined the Legion in 1946 when I came back from Europe and I've been with them for 46 years. I was a president of the veteran's tuberculosis society in 1956, after I got out of the San. From 1961 to 1963 I was the president of Branch 35 in Fort Qu'Appelle



and I've been a strong member ever since. In the last ten years I've been president of the tuberculosis group again. The majority of our members are from Fort Qu'Appelle and Regina. We do a lot of work in the Legion down here. We have a membership of 350 and I'm one of the oldest sergeant majors or sergeant of arms. I'm part of a colour party that participates in a lot of ceremonies, like Remembrance Day and funerals.

I coached minor and senior ball for the Legion for about 14 years. I coached hockey, too. They call me the "Old Legion" around the rink. I've been there from 1965 to now and I'm still involved. I've been a minor hockey and senior hockey president. I volunteered for the air cadets, 586 Squadron, and spent about 12 years with them as the commanding officer of the squadron. In 1973, the Governor General of Canada presented me with a Citizen of the Year Award in Fort Qu'Appelle for the work that I had done for the community. M

Owen Sanderson

I enlisted in late 1914. I was about 19 then, and I joined because I'd seen a lot of others join up. They all said the same: they saw somebody else enlist so they joined, too. We trained in England, then they sent us over to France in 1915. I was in the 1st Division, 2nd Brigade, 5th Battalion.

We all wanted to be there; I was afraid the war might be over before we arrived there. Well, we got more than we needed, but we were young and full of adventure. When you're young you go anywhere. I guess it was worth it. We saw all the things we wanted to see, and it was a good adventure.

I was wounded twice. The first time was in 1916 at the Somme. I still carry the shrapnel scar on my arm. The second time was in 1918; I was hit in the back of the neck. Well, I saw a few battles, and I didn't want to go back after I was wounded. I was in the hospital with a British soldier, and he said, "If I get back to England, I shan't come back again." I told him I wouldn't come back either, but I came back. I was sent back.

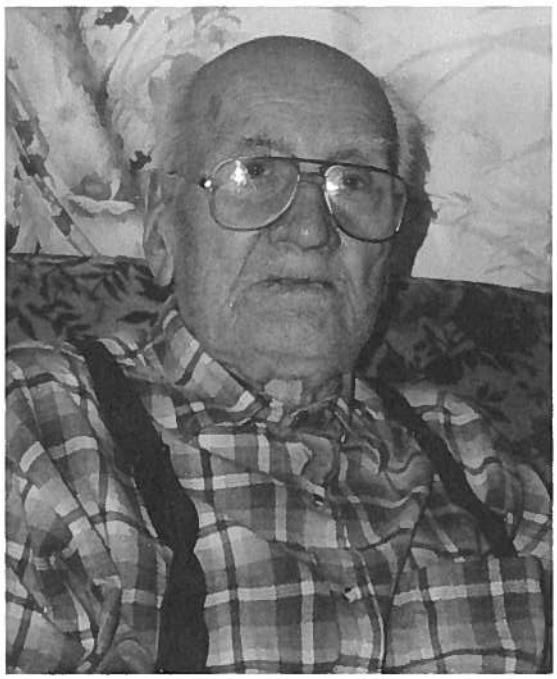
Trench life was vulgar. We slept in the wet and cold, and we were only a few hundred yards from the German lines. We would hear them holler and fire, and then the bullets whistle. I smelt the powder and heard the bullets whistling, and that was all I wanted to see. I was there several times when we were gassed. In the early parts of the war they had no gas masks, so the first time the gas came, the major told us, "When you see that gas come over, you take your handkerchief out and you piss on it and you put that over your mouth and nose."

I remember taking a lot of German soldiers when I was sent over the top. The heavy artillery kept them down and they gave up right away. That artillery was a bugger. Bombs and shells; big bombs. We used to call that sausage; German sausage. It had quite a kick to it.

Canada lost a lot of men in that first war. We lost a lot of men in both wars, and there's quarrelling and fighting among us yet. The country is not getting any better as long as they're quarrelling and starving. Conditions are not getting any better. No matter what politicians tell you, conditions are not getting any better as long as it's like this.

I was discharged June 11th, 1919, in Winnipeg. Because of my wounds, I couldn't lift my arm straight up. I remember that if I had to drive a nail, my wife would have to start it, then I'd finish it off. At first I received $12.50 a month for a pension. When I complained, they raised it to about $24. The pension I get today is much better, but it came too late. We made it, though. We lived on the farm; that's how we could make it. We didn't have much money, but I got a new wheelbarrow. I liked the farm and I'm still on it. M

Owen Sanderson



Lawrence Sayese

When I was young, in the Dirty Thirties, we worked hard for a dollar a day, stooking and haying. In the army we got $1.10 a day, and when we got to Labrador there was a bonus of two dollars a month. There was another bonus after we got overseas. Besides that, we had board, room and clothes, too, even though there were only two sizes, small and large. There were bad times and there were good times; I look back and have a chuckle to myself. I guess I enlisted mainly to fight for my country. I figured Hitler was running over everything, and the times were hard anyways, so why not enlist? When a guy is that young he doesn't realize that he's being trained to kill.

I was born in the Glen Mary district just north of Kinistino. There were a lot of Métis there. A couple of other Métis boys and I were in the militia in 1939 and did exercises with The Prince Albert and Battleford Volunteers. Then, in 1940, while we were doing summer training at Dundurn, I joined the active service, The South Saskatchewan Regiment. I went from there to postings in Weyburn, in Vancouver and Nanaimo, British Columbia, in Ottawa and Niagara Falls, Ontario, and in Sherbrooke, Quebec. Then at Borden, Ontario, I volunteered for The New Brunswick Rangers and was shipped to Labrador and spent 13 months doing guard duty at the big airport that was the stopping off place for planes going over to England.

After that, I received some home leave and then was sent overseas. We

went over on the *Queen Elizabeth*. Most of the 2nd Division went over at that time. We landed at Greenock, and from there I was shipped to Fleet. I requested to go to a western regiment and, while I was waiting in a western holding unit at Camp Whitley, they asked for volunteers. I stepped forward, along with William Robinson from Prince Albert, a fellow who went right through the war with me. We were sent out on a ship, not knowing where we were going. It was 12 days at sea and our convoy was torpedoed on the way. We landed in Italy, at Naples. There was more training, and then I was called up and asked what regiment I'd like to join. I chose the Edmontons from Alberta, and it wasn't long before I was at the front, at Ortona.

It was mad up there, very rough. The town was flattened. When we left there we came back to a rest camp. Then we headed into a big push forward along the Liri Valley. We broke through the Gustav Line, and then we went up against the Hitler Line. I was wounded at a little town. A bunch of us were waiting around a corner, watching. All at once, bang, I got hit in the right ankle. It didn't really hurt, but just like something hot touching me. They tore the boots off me and got me into a building, some kind of a barn, with quite of few other wounded. An ambulance took us back, along with a German prisoner wounded in the neck.

I spent two months in the 14th Canadian General Hospital. They put me in a cast and I couldn't walk. Then I was put on a hospital ship back to England. That was in May, 1944 and a heck of a bunch of us went back at the same time. I was another four months in the hospital and in a rest camp, and then they kicked me out of there and said, "You're going over to France now." I was given a leave before going back into action, and while I was on leave the war ended. I came back to camp and they said, "There's nothing for you to do around here; go back on another leave." I think it was three or four times that they gave me another leave. Finally I ran short of money, so I think the last time they let me stay out, I remained in camp.

We were put on draft for Canada and finally one day we shipped out from Liverpool. There were 5,000 of us on that boat. The first day out everybody

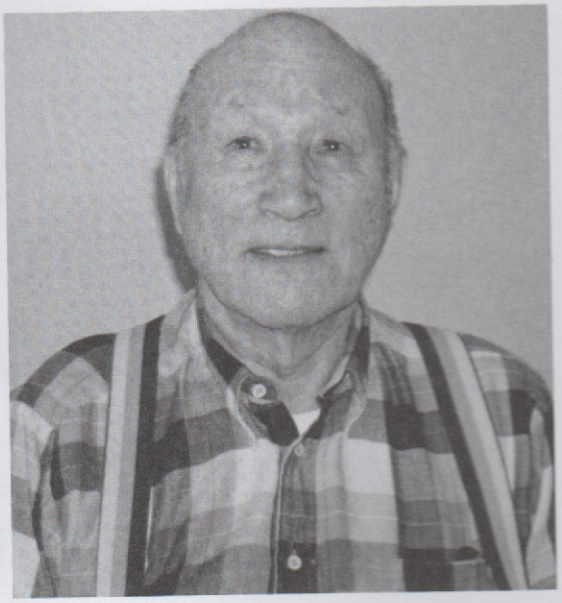
Lawrence Stanley Sayese came from Glen Mary, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from August 17th, 1940 to January 21st, 1946. He was a private in the 16th/22nd Saskatchewan Horse and the Loyal Edmonton Regiment. He served in Europe, and was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp and the War Medal (1939-45).

was sick; we were laying all over the place. Eleven days later we landed in Halifax and suddenly everything was good. God had gave us everything we wanted, so to speak. White sheets, lots to eat, and when our train home would stop people would give us oranges and bananas and other gifts.

I arrived at Prince Albert on the 16th of December. When I got off the train, I met a woman that I knew and she told me my brother was in the hospital; he'd lost an eye, so that was the first place I went. Then I went home for 30 days before going back to Regina for my walking ticket. At Regina they wanted all of my army clothes, but I kept one uniform. Then I came home. I had to get used to civilian life again, but it didn't take me long. I farmed for six or seven years, then sold the farm and went way up to Hay River in the Peace River country, looking for work. When I returned, they wanted men for the Department of Natural Resources, so I got on there. I was with them for about 20 years, and during that time I got married. Later, I got a job as a jail guard.

Army life wasn't good, not in wartime. Too much risk. But when you're young, you're able and you don't give a damn. Service in peace time was pretty good; if I was there now I would make it my career. At the time I was made a corporal, but I didn't want it, because it was too much hassle, you took too much blame if things went wrong. You couldn't say anything.

I only had one black mark on my record. Back in Weyburn, two of us requested a weekend leave, but it was refused. So we went AWOL; we caught a

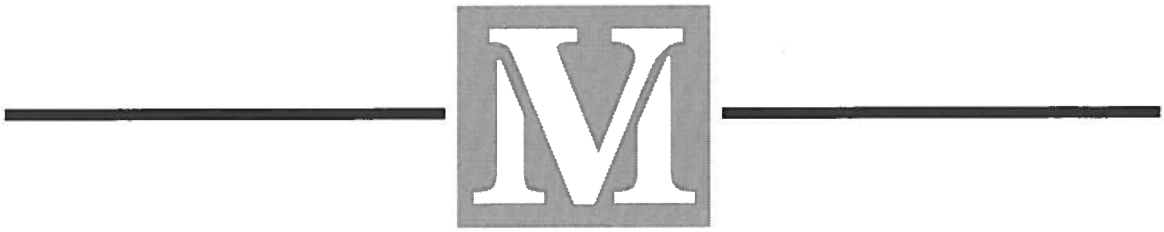


Lawrence Sayese

bus and came to Melfort, then phoned my aunt in Kinistino to pick us up. I was home for 17 days and got back to Weyburn just in time to go on parade on Remembrance Day. Well, we went to court right after, up in front of the colonel. He said, "Seventeen days in the brig. Seventeen days hard labour without pay."

The only regret I have from my years in the army is for my comrades who are gone. I had a lot of friends and I served with guys I'd gone to school with, was raised with, worked with. Today many of them are gone and that strikes me once and a while. Many times I sit in my chair there and think: I'd like to know where some of the boys are; I'd like to get in touch with them.

You know, this is a wonderful country. We don't know how lucky we are. In other countries people are starving. In Canada, you're free to go wherever you wish. There's lots to eat; half the world is starving and half the world has lots to eat. That's the way I look at it. I don't think I'm too far out. M



Charlie Umpherville

I **enlisted on September 5th, 1941,** in Prince Albert. I was 17. My cousin and I rode our bikes to Kinistino and left them there with my aunt. Then we caught the freight train to Prince Albert and went straight to the recruiting office. My cousin failed and I passed. They asked me why I was joining and I said, "I don't know." It was partly because times were hard and I had quit school early to work, making only two dollars a day stooking. I also went to serve my country, I guess. My dad was a veteran, and had got a bit of land after World War I. But, really, I was green in those days. I didn't know exactly what I was going to do. I just came from the sticks.

I came from a log house and they shipped me directly to Saskatoon that night. I got to Saskatoon about 11 p.m., and I wasn't used to the city at all, but later I met a lot of guys from up north, so I got along pretty good. I was in Saskatoon about a month and a half. I was always afraid they'd find out about my age, but I was sent to Regina for basic training, and from there to Dundurn, to Three Rivers, Quebec, and then overseas in April, 1942. I was with the Saskatoon Light Infantry (MG) and my number was L2952. I'll never forget that number; never. There was lots of training overseas, and lots of moving around, too, mainly in southern England and later in Scotland, from where we left for Europe. I went into action on July 10th, 1943, three days after the Sicily invasion.

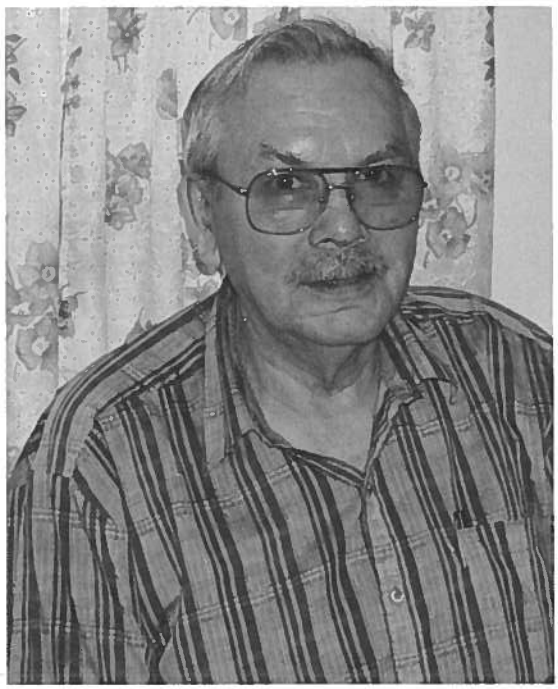
I wish I hadn't joined the army; it was pretty rough. At first it wasn't battle, really, because we were pushing

Charlie Peter Umpherville came from Glen Mary, Saskatchewan, and was in military service from September 5th, 1941 to November 13th, 1945. He was a private in the Saskatoon Light Infantry (MG). He served in England and Europe, and was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Italy Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal (1939-45).

forward, though German planes were bombing us. We moved as far as the Po River, where the Germans held the line. It was winter and we stayed there till the spring of '44, when we pulled out and moved to Holland.

I drove Bren gun carriers. One day we stopped for dinner and while I was sitting in the back, leaning against the tracks, and I heard 88s firing. You could hear the tank gun being fired, then the shell coming. One landed 50 or 100 feet away and the shrapnel went right by me. My commanding officer was standing by the lead carrier, eating his dinner. The shrapnel bounced through and hit my officer in his side. He died later that night. I was sitting in the right place. I never got scratched at all during the war. I was one of the lucky ones.

We fought in France, Italy and Germany. In France I remember being shipped on flat deck rail cars, sleeping right in our machines, going by Paris and seeing the Eiffel Tower in the distance. In Italy I met a friend from Glen Mary, Mac Horn. He was a dispatcher, riding a bike. He'd seen my cousin, Jerry Umpherville, marching up to the front. But Mac was in a different outfit and didn't know where Jerry was. Later, when we had a rest period, the first thing I did was to go to Jerry's outfit. I came up to a guard and said, "Do you know Jerry Umpherville?". "Yes," he said. I

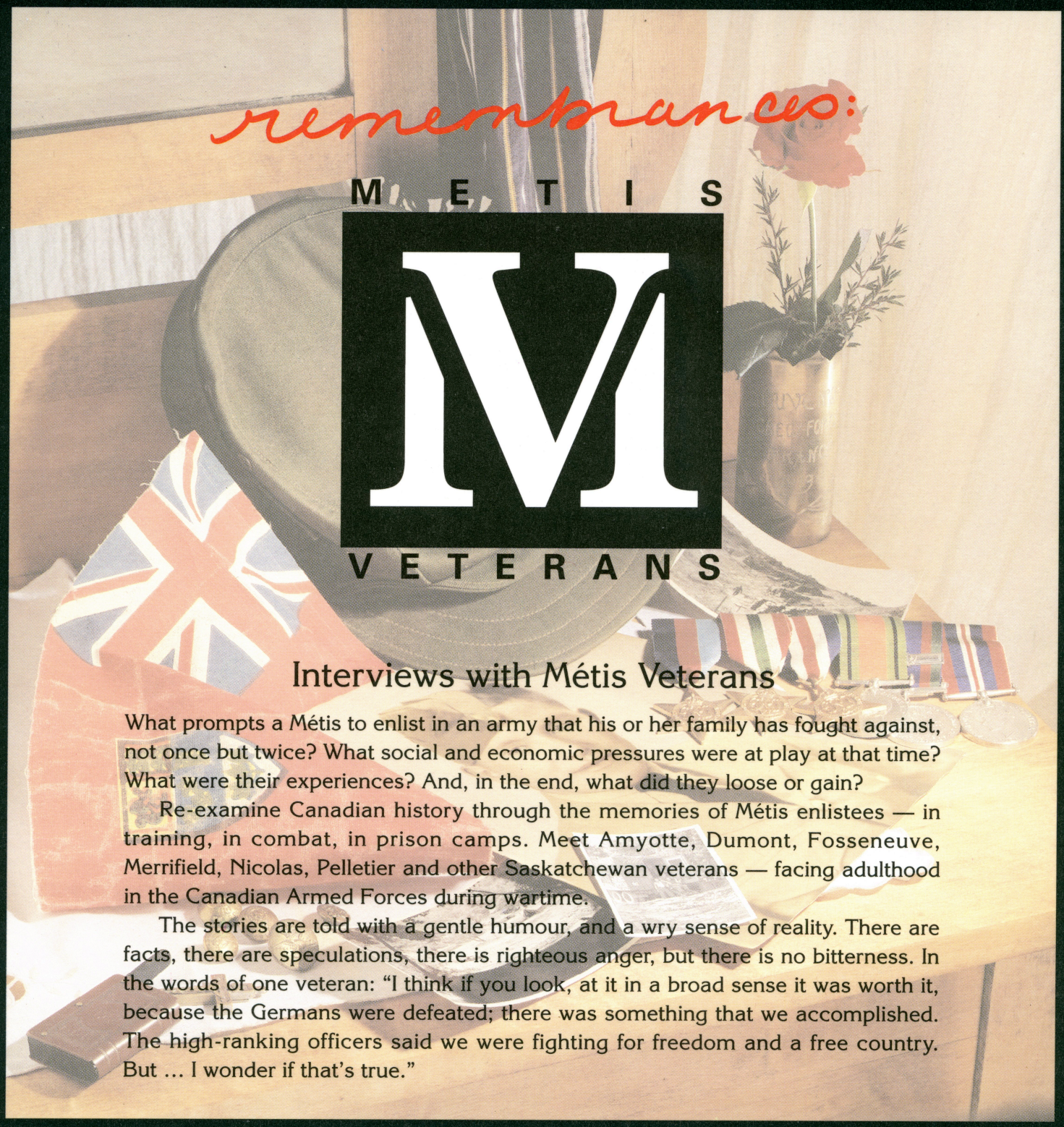


said, "I've come to see him." "Well Charlie," the guard said, "He died." Jerry never even got to the front lines; he was just marching to the front when a mortar bomb got him. There were three Umphervilles who died over there. I'd seen Robert just once. One day we happened to be in the same bath line; he'd had his bath and was coming out, and I was going in. We talked, but we didn't have much time. He was killed two weeks later.

When the war was over, I was happy to get back; that's for sure. Happy to come through it. Not really happy about the war, but I was happy that I had done a little part, and that we got rid of that old Heil Hitler.

I was discharged November 13th, 1945, and I went logging for a year in B.C. I came back, but I couldn't stay home; I was restless. I went from one job to another. I went to Edmonton to get work on the oil rigs, and after that I went to Flin Flon, where I was in mining exploration for 12 years. I quit three or four times, because I'd had enough of the bush. Then I got a job at the pulp mill in Prince Albert in 1970, and after that I built roads for the Department of Natural Resources for 10 years. In 1982 I got on at Key Lake, first during construction and then I stayed when the mine started up in '83. I worked there till I retired in 1989. M

Back row: far left, Sergeant R.E. Doerkson; second from left, Private Peter Banks; fifth from left, Private William Regan; sixth from left, Private Charlie Umpherville; far right, Sergeant J.A. Storey. Centre row: third from left, Private Peter Morin; fourth from left, Private R.K. Ducharme. Front row: far left, Private W.P. Casey; third from left, Lieutenant J.O. Kealy; far right, Private Fred Hall.



Interviews with Métis Veterans

What prompts a Métis to enlist in an army that his or her family has fought against, not once but twice? What social and economic pressures were at play at that time? What were their experiences? And, in the end, what did they loose or gain?

Re-examine Canadian history through the memories of Métis enlistees — in training, in combat, in prison camps. Meet Amyotte, Dumont, Fosseneuve, Merrifield, Nicolas, Pelletier and other Saskatchewan veterans — facing adulthood in the Canadian Armed Forces during wartime.

The stories are told with a gentle humour, and a wry sense of reality. There are facts, there are speculations, there is righteous anger, but there is no bitterness. In the words of one veteran: "I think if you look, at it in a broad sense it was worth it, because the Germans were defeated; there was something that we accomplished. The high-ranking officers said we were fighting for freedom and a free country. But ... I wonder if that's true."

ISBN 0-920915-36-1

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