

Church helps veteran in recovery

Second World War veteran faced many tribulations as a result of acts of war

By Justin Greaves

What the war took from him, his faith and the church helped rebuild.

Ray Henry, age 89, a Second World War veteran, one of the Canadian Army's "liberators" of Europe, suffered much in his service to his country. Private Henry served with the 93rd platoon of the 2nd Division of the Canadian Army. Henry's unit was reinforcement for the Maissoneuve Regiment three months after the Normandy "D-Day" Invasion in 1944. In six months' service overseas, Henry would be deaf and hospitalized for his nerves.

Henry first joined the army when he was 17.

"I lied about my age, and I wasn't the only one. There was one fellow that was only 14 and tried to pass for 18. He was sent home," said Henry.

As part of his first deployment in Europe, Henry fought for liberation through France, Belgium and Germany across the Rhine River.

Henry recalled the love the people of Holland showed to him and other Canadians. Whether it was food you needed or a place to stay, the people of Holland would graciously give it to you. He talked about the Catholic services in the fields that he loved so much. But the people there suffered a great deal before they were saved.

"The Holland people were dragged into the German army; either you went or you were killed." He paused and added, "I saw one prisoner of war camp near Nijmegen. You could see the blood on the wall smeared at places. It wasn't something you like to see. Those people really suffered."

But just as the people of Holland suffered, so did Henry. He lost his hearing during battle because of his position as number one for an anti-tank gun.

"I was right close to the firing pins, and the blast kept hitting my ears, which



Photo by Justin Greaves

Ray Henry, age 89, a Second World War veteran, one of the Canadian Army's "liberators" of Europe, sits at the back of St. John's Anglican Church Bowmanville where he attends on Sundays. Private Henry served with the Canadian Army's 2nd Division.

I didn't have no plugs in my ears." Henry demonstrates with his hand how hard the sound would blast against his ear each time the gunshot.

These acts of war, the killing, made Henry ashamed, he said, even though he knew he shouldn't be. He knew he was

just following the orders of his superiors.

After losing significant hearing in both ears, Henry began to have nervous breakdowns. He went to six different hospitals, three in England, Belgium and Holland. The war ended while Henry was in the hospital. His memory of the celebrations was

muted by his own challenges. "There was a point where I was very low. I drank a lot."

Henry has been dealing with these memories his entire life. But he said it was his faith that brought him back to light.

Through the church and different bible studies Henry began to rebuild his life.

"I learned that we are human beings, and we do make mistakes," said Henry.

"At the time of war, I respected the Catholic Church, but now I'm very fond of this (Anglican) church." I am on the side of God, and it makes me feel good. I am very proud to be a member of this church."

Sea cadets take part in sale of poppies

Cadet commanding officer helps young people understand the purpose of Remembrance Day

By Anica James

All cadet units, whether they are sea, land or air, are expected to sell poppies in support of veterans every year before Remembrance Day.

"What I like to do here is bring in veterans – particularly naval veterans – and have them share their stories and experiences from wars," said Lt. John Lilje, commanding officer at the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps Quinte. "You would think that teenagers would lose interest, but you'd be surprised."

A number of the sea cadets, like Lilje himself, come from a military background because of their parents' involvement in the military, but a lot of them get involved just because they want to.

Of the 64 sea cadets at the Belleville branch, 58 of them took part in the ceremony on Monday. The ones who didn't were already committed to doing something in school on Monday that was Remembrance Day related, wearing their cadet uniform.

"There is definitely a different feeling amongst the population today about Remembrance Day," Lilje said. "When I was a youth growing



Photo by Hannah Yoon

Lt. John Lilje, commanding officer at the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps Quinte.

up, we still had many relatives that had served in Korea and had served in Second World War. And even First World War. Now there are few and far between. I think that what has brought interest to our youth now is our connection with peacekeeping."

Every year, on the morning of Nov. 11, the sea cadet unit meets at the branch office located at 16 Front St. South in Belleville to prepare themselves for the Remembrance Day parade and ceremony. Then, as a group, they march to the Belleville Armoury, where they meet with members of the air cadets and army cadets, as well as veterans and members of the police force and fire department, before marching together down to the cenotaph located on Station Street.

"This particular unit has always donated money to the local legion, directly to the veterans through the poppy fund," explained Lilje. "Not only do the cadets spend several hours leading up to Remembrance Day collecting money for the fund, but their families also donate money to hit a particular goal."

In the few years that Lilje has been with the RCSCC Quinte, the cadet unit never had difficulty achieving the financial goal that they set.

"This year our goal is \$1,100," Lilje stated. "It is something that the cadets can see that goes into direct support for the veterans. They are interested in knowing where the money goes to because not everyone can see it."

A portion of the money collected goes towards the wreath that they received from the Legion, which two of the cadets, who were randomly selected, placed on the cenotaph at the ceremony. The other portion goes directly into the Poppy Fund, which includes the Veterans Food Bank, transportation costs and health-care costs for veterans as well.

This year also marks the 85th anniversary for the RCSCC Quinte, who were granted the Freedom of the City to celebrate their 85 years of service to the development of youth in the Belleville and Quinte area. The cadet unit will be hosting a celebration at their Front Street South location on Nov. 28.



(Top) Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chris Colton, the executive director of the National Air Museum of Canada, stands with the Halifax, Mark VII, an aircraft in service from 1940 to 1947. Photo by Hannah Yoon
Major Michelle "Micky" Colton is shown in the C-130 Hercules at the National Air Museum of Canada. Photo by Christopher King

Couple continues to play role in military after their retirement

By Hannah Yoon

Veterans are often thought of as soldiers on the front lines of battle, but both Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chris Colton and his wife Maj. Michelle "Micky" served on a different frontline: in the air.

Both are officially retired but the couple is still active with the Canadian Air Force in Trenton. Colton is the executive director at the National Air Force Museum of Canada while Micky is a reservist and works as a flight dispatcher for the 424 Transport and Rescue Squadron at the CFB Trenton.

Retiring at the military's requirement age of 55 was too early for Colton. After spending 36 years in the Air Force, Colton said he felt there was a lot more left in him to do. In 2002, a friend retired as executive director at the museum and Colton jumped at the opportunity to tackle that role.

"Realizing I couldn't stay home and do nothing and got very bored, this job opened up and it was a natural for me. It's something I enjoy doing," Colton said, reflecting on his time at the museum.

Having picked up a love for airplanes as a boy, Colton joined the Royal Canadian Air Cadets when he was 14, which paved the path for his future. At 16, he received his private pilot's licence through the Air Cadet program. Instead of going to university after high school, Colton decided the Air Force was best suited for him. Making the decision to be a military pilot turned out to be exactly what he wanted.

"At the time, I felt I was more inclined to want to do something a little different. By different I mean, not just fly airplanes, but fly them to locations and do things that were different than just flying between Toronto and Montreal every day. It seemed to me to be there would be more of a variety of things I could do in an aviation environment if I joined the military."

Colton worked in Qatar, Kuwait and Australia, holding various command positions, including commander for the Airlift Task Force for the C-131 Hercules. The Hercules allowed him to participate in a variety of operations such as UN operations, peacekeeping operations and coalition forces. After a year in retirement, Colton

sought out ways to stay involved with the Air Force.

"It keeps me very active and interested. It keeps me close to the Air Force, which I love. I still fly. I love taking people for rides. I like taking a person up who has never flown before. It's always wonderful to see their face and hear all the 'wows.' This is a job I enjoy doing."

His love and passion for airplanes and flying did not get in the way of his marriage. Lucky for Chris, Micky, 55, also had a strong passion for flying.

Originally from Kitchener, Ont., she first discovered her love of flying airplanes when she received a free flying lesson when she was 18 years old. After that first lesson, she hasn't stopped flying.

"I got hooked. It's kind of one of those things that get into your blood; it's like an insect bite. But then I ran out of money."

She decided the best thing for her to do if she wanted to keep flying would be to join the Air Force. Micky became one of the first women in 1980 to go through the aircrew selection in Toronto. She is the only Canadian woman to reach the 5,000-hour benchmark in the C-130 Hercules. The day after she retired in 2011, Micky went straight back to work as a reservist, dispatching flights for the Trenton Search and Rescue Region.

Although they are both retired veterans, they are still very involved with the Air Force and can't imagine their life any other way. Colton often reflects on Canada's war history because of the people he works with, the visitors he meets and the artifacts he sees every day.

"Being in this particular job, I'm reminded every day of that. All I have to do is go out and look at the aircraft that's displayed here and remind me that the Halifax bomber was part of the war. We're remembering Canada's aviation history and that to me every day is November the 11th," he said.

As Remembrance Day is a time to reflect on freedom and peace, the Coltons' commitment to flying is their symbolic way of advocating freedom in Canada.