



Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and
District Historical Society

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Trivia Night!

For a change of pace, as well as a change of venue, CDHS will have our Second Annual Trivia Night on Friday, January 24, at 7:30 pm at the Legion Village Pub, 111 Hibernia Street, Cobourg. The pub is wheelchair accessible and there is ample free parking. There will be a party atmosphere as members, guests and anyone else who loves history will gather for an evening of fun and competition. There will be prizes, a 50-50 draw, free nibbles and a cash bar. To cover expenses admission is \$2 per person.

Anyone who would like a ride to the meeting or is willing to drive others should contact Elaine Rosetter-Saunders at 905-372-5958.

Our Previous Meeting

Lest We Forget

On Tuesday November 26, Cobourg born Dave Kerr and his grandson Max Jenkins joined us at



the CDHS to share their story of how they observe Remembrance Day together every year. Dave's father, Fred Kerr, and several other Cobourg men, including the late Cy Winter, a long-time member of our historical society, served together in World War II. Their presentation covered the period from WW II until the present. Max, at nine years old, is perhaps the youngest speaker ever at a CDHS meeting.

Even more remarkable is the fact that he and his grandfather Dave have already observed seven Remembrance Days together!

At the conclusion of Dave and Max's presentation, members were asked if they had any war stories to tell. Judith Goulin told of her personal experiences with Cy Winter, one of the group of four Cobourg friends who went to war together. Judith vividly recalls the first time she met Cy. As he began telling her about the time he spent in Italy during WW II, tears ran down his face. She was astonished that a man could still feel such strong emotion 60 years after the war ended.

When Judith joined CDHS 12 years ago, she became fast friends with Cy and with his boyhood friend Bud Barr, both long time CDHS members. The corollary to her recollection of Cy tells of his last days: She had invited Cy and Bud to a Christmas party at her home. Cy's humorous response to the invitation was a quote attributed to Benjamin Hawkins: "If the Lord is willin' and the creek don't rise". I guess the Almighty had other plans because just a few days later Cy received news that he had a terminal illness. He died shortly thereafter. The phone call was Judith's last contact with this remarkable man.

Member Suzanne Shortland-Masil said she had a story to tell, but couldn't stand up and tell it to everyone without crying. She subsequently gave the Programme Committee a copy of her poignant life experience.

Suzanne's Story

My name is Suzanne Masil. I was born in Comines, a small town in Belgium. The town was divided by the river La Lys. Comines, France is on the other side. I was five years old when World War II started. As time passed, the Allied bombers disrupted the German supply lines and German soldiers plundered the local shops. Each household was given one coupon a week which allowed us to get a loaf of bread at our local bakery. I would go early on my bike to be first in line, ticket in hand, to get my loaf. German soldiers would be on the lookout, as they knew by the long queue in front of the bakery that it was "feeding time".

One day as I was riding home a German soldier stopped me, pointed his rifle at me and then stole both my bread and my bike. After that I would eat half of the loaf in the bakery. At least I didn't go home hungry.

One of our neighbours would catch cats, skin them and sell them as rabbit meat. Towards the end of the war people were eating grass in order to survive.

We were notified by the German army not to lock our doors as they wanted to feel free to enter anytime which they did. I recall a group of soldiers entering our kitchen, sitting down and eating an orange. My mother offered them money for me to have some of the orange, but a soldier peeled it and threw me the peels, which I ate.

There was a Jewish family with a teenage son living on our street. The Germans would search the houses and when they found young boys they would take them away in their truck. The Jewish father made a coffin and when the Germans were out on the prowl he would hide his son in the coffin and pray. Their son was never caught but others were not so lucky.

Our street was over a mile long, with German trucks parked all the way. At night there was one soldier patrolling up and down. I was able to hear his goose steps from my bedroom window. When the noise of his steps faded I would quickly run outside to search for food in the trucks. One night I struck gold. I found what I thought was a small can of sugar, but it turned out to be Epsom salts! My father would go hunting at night. He would sometimes be lucky to come home with a chicken which my mother would cook. At the end of the meal there was not a piece of meat left on the bones. The Canadian Red Cross somehow managed to supply students with a ration of biscuits.



One day in late 1944 the German soldiers left our town in a hurry. We were not sure what was going on until one of our neighbours who had an illegal radio came running down the street shouting at the top of his voice: "The Canadians are coming!" Flags were hanging from every window to welcome the Canadian soldiers, but to our dismay it was the Germans beginning to retreat. Flags were pulled in while we waited for the next message.

After D-Day the Germans started to retreat for real. The Belgian horses that had helped them relentlessly to move their equipment around were lined up in the middle of the road and with their bayonets the German soldiers slit open their stomachs. After the soldiers left all the men dragged the carcasses to the side of the road to clear a path for the Allies.

Suddenly a cyclist raced down the street shouting: "The Canadians are here!" and sure enough they were right behind him. With flags in hand, we welcomed the Canadian soldiers. The children, myself included, had a great time catching chocolate bars, biscuits, gum and cans of corned beef thrown to us by the Canadians as they drove their trucks through our town. So of course we accepted with pleasure.

When the Canadian army arrived, a sergeant knocked on our door to inquire if we could put up soldiers for a few days while they regrouped. The reward was an abundance of food, such as we had not seen for years. The soldier our family billeted was Johnny Wiebe from Saskatchewan. He pointed out on a map where he lived and encouraged us all to move to Canada as it was a wonderful country. It was not until I was 20 and married, that my first husband, John Masil, and I immigrated to Canada, supposedly for one year, but 60 years later I am still here.

I would like to fast forward to 2009. My oldest daughter, Jacqueline, who is a fantastic investigator, asked me out of the blue for the name of the soldier we billeted. It took her only a few days to find out that Johnny Wiebe had passed away at the young age of 65. She was also able to find out details of the Sergeant, Gordie Bannerman, who knocked on our door in Belgium. Now living in Vancouver, Sergeant Bannerman is 92 and still as active as ever. Peter, Jacqueline and I had the pleasure of meeting him and his lovely wife Edith twice: once in Vancouver and again in Toronto in 2013.

For history buffs, I strongly recommend visiting www.gordiebannerman.com and reading his diary for the detailed story of one soldier's experiences in WW II.

Council Makes Grants

Provided for in the 1946 estimates are the following amounts of grants:

General Hospital \$600; Library Board \$600; Cobourg Band \$1,300; Salvation Army \$50; Institute for the Blind \$50; Cobourg Softball League \$500; Chamber of Commerce \$1,500; Christmas Seal Fund \$25; Miscellaneous \$75.

We Stand on Guard for Thee

Canadian Kids at War by David R. Kerr

We're not sure where it all began
Or who devised the master plan
To make the True North, Strong and Free
Safe and secure for you and me

In Eighteen-twelve our first test came
But we held our ground, and through that pain
A Nation we began to forge
When we drove them back across the Gorge

It was our first real call to arms
Canadian kids left shops and farms
To march, and start to earn their spurs
Alongside British regulars

Remember Brock, Tecumseh too,
Both paid the price that soldiers do
To guard our country, keep us strong
And chart the path we'd march along

South Africa, Eighteen Ninety Eight
In the Transvaal and the Orange Free State
The Empire had to quell the Boers
And Canadian Troops hit African shores

The Mounted Rifles, Strathcona's Horse
And the Northwest Mounted were there in force
They excelled in that guerrilla war
And British Rule helped to restore

In nineteen fourteen, once again
Farm boys and clerks left home to train
And build an army that we'd send
Help bring the Kaiser to his end

At Ypres, the Somme and Passchendaele
Through poison gas and shrapnel hail
A baptism of fire our boys went through
And as their reputation grew

How they fought, each young Canuck
So many lost in blood and muck
Yet held their ground and played their role
Their courage we must all extol

Then Vimy Ridge became the goal
Allied Command must now control
The French and Brits would try and fail
Canadian Troops must now prevail

So plans were laid, the date was set
New tactics still untried as yet
Attacked at dawn and took the stage
And Canada.....became of age

The War to End All Wars now done
The Roaring Twenties had begun
How could we know in a few short years
Again we'd face our greatest fears

By thirty-nine the world would know
That once again we'd have to go
To help protect our King and Crown
And fight to bring the Tyrants down

And so kids came from far and wide
And signed up with enormous pride
It was the only thing to do
As now we entered World War Two

Two thousand left to guard Hong Kong
But our British bosses got it wrong.
When the enemy attack had once begun
They were outnumbered ten to one

They fought and died for eighteen days
Their bravery and courage beyond all praise
But overwhelmed and could fight no more
Were captured and then prisoners of war

The War in Europe, had not gone well
As one by one those countries fell
The Blitzkrieg overwhelmed the land
'Til Britain was left to make a stand

While out on the North Atlantic road
All the convoys sailed in panic mode
The U-Boat wolf packs ruled the seas
Trying to force Britain to her knees

As Canadian Corvettes came on side
Our Navy helped to turn the tide
Protecting ships that brought supplies
To feed and strengthen the Allies

The Battle of Britain raged in the air
And Canadian Squadrons did their share
To help defeat the German planes
Our boys in Spits and Hurricanes

As Allied strength began to grow
And the U.S. now had joined the show
To test the Hun's Atlantic Wall
Canadian Troops received the call

And so into Dieppe they went
But poorly planned and poorly spent
They were killed or captured on that beach
Any success was beyond all reach

As North Africa fell to Allied hands
Italy now was in the plans.
Up to Ortona they fought their way
Where the cream of the enemy forces lay

Two Canadian Regiments would spell their doom
Fighting house to house, and room to room
For seven days they fought and bled
On the eighth the enemy troops had fled

In Britain the Allies gathered a host
A huge army to invade the Normandy Coast
Now fully trained and sure we could win
The invasion of France was about to begin

So on June the sixth, nineteen forty four
An enormous fleet sailed for the Normandy shore
Resistance was fierce as they struggled ashore
Many died on the beaches, wounded, so many more

Canadian boys had to take Juno Beach
The defences and pillboxes they then had to breach
They fought their way through, at times hard to hand
Once a beachhead established they started inland

As they pushed slowly forward, they now had to find
And link up with the Airborne who'd been dropped in
behind

As the Germans pulled back there could be no delay
And Canadian troops pushed the farthest that day

Now firmly established, Allies pushed North and East
And slowly began to encircle the Beast
The enemy countered, came through the Ardennes
But out of fuel and supplies were pushed back again

So now the endgame was about to begin
And our armoured corps opened the road to Berlin
As the Germans retreated both sides suffered much
And Canadian troops liberated the Dutch

The people of Holland remember so well
Our boys who freed them and for those who fell
Their school children tend their graves where they lay
And honour their memory, even still to this day

With the Axis defeated and the world now at peace
As our prisoners of war slowly gained their release
Our kids started home, a new life to find
But we can never forget all those left behind

I still can remember when the troop train pulled in
The town band was playing, the crowd raised a great din
A strange soldier stepped down and walked up to my Mom
Took her in his arms then just held her some

He kissed her again then hugged her some more
My family seemed happy he was home from the war
Picked me up and held me with all the love that he had
I was five at the time, the strange man was my Dad

In the greatest conflict the world had yet known
For a small and young country to the world we had shown
How strong and how tough our forces could be
Do whatever was needed to keep Canada free

The major powers moved forward and formed the UN
To maintain world peace, avoid world war again
But a Communist threat was perceived by the West
And so Cold War began, peace was tenuous at best

North Koreans now in Communist hands
Decided they'd add the South to their lands
The invasion began, South Korea to seize
Armed and trained by the Russians, helped by the Chinese

The UN assembled and then declared war
Against North Korea, the peace to restore

They polled member nations to see who could send
Troops and equipment, bring this war to an end

Canadian forces entered the fray
With warships and aircraft and troops on the way
The Princess Patricias and the Vandoos of course
The RCRs followed with Strathcona's Horse

A new crop of kids had signed up and trained
Led by World War II veterans, our reputation maintained
The line moved back and forth and finally stalled
And hostilities ended when a cease-fire was called

From nineteen fifty on through fifty three
Our kids fought and died so the South could be free
Though the cease-fire has held, the war's not ended yet
And our boys left in Asia we must not forget

Nineteen fifty six Nasser tried to control
The Suez Canal, charge all ships a toll
But the British and French of course did not approve
And so fighting erupted, this threat to remove

Lester B. Pearson proposed a new scheme
By which the UN could now intervene
Canadian forces best suited this plan
Put on their blue helmets, peacekeeping began

For the next few decades they earned much respect
In the difficult role of the peace to protect
In Cyprus, Rwanda and Somalia too
Croatia and Haiti to name but a few

As time moved along, new world problems evolved
Threats of piracy, terrorism now must be solved
With our ships on the seas and our planes in the skies
Our troops hand in hand with our NATO allies

To bring people freedom, we're ready it seems
To oppose any terror and oppressive regimes
In areas of strife round the world we are found
In Afghanistan put many boots on the ground

To help the Afghans they have used every tool
To lift the oppression, let all kids go to school
This fight has been costly too many have died
We must let our kids know of the enormous pride

We Canadians feel for our young women and men
Who are called into battle again and again
Whatever we do it is never enough
To honour our kids who are of the right stuff

'Long the Highway of Heroes many gather to pay
Deep respect for the fallen day after day
Though it's never enough we all hope you see
While you kids stand on guard, we so honour thee

Our Next Meeting

The One Room School House

We have a fun evening planned for our meeting on Tuesday, February 25. It will begin as you listen for the school 'hand' bell to ring, asking you to take your seats as lessons are ready to start! Our teachers for the evening will be Phil Boyco from SS #10 Osaca, Doris Goheen from SS #7 Pine Grove South and Forrest Rowden from SS #14 Silent Valley. These are all one room schools in Hope Township. Doris and Phil are both retired school teachers and Forrest is on Cobourg Council.

Phil, Doris and Forrest will take us through the history of the small rural schools, where a single teacher taught the academic basics to several grade levels of students. The One Room School also served as a meeting place for community activities, the local church chapel and was always ready for events such as Christmas concerts.

Listen and learn as our speakers talk about books they have written and school houses that have been restored to ensure that these beloved one room schools and their stories will be remembered.

As the evening closes I am certain we will hear some tales of school days past.

Port Hope Archives' Oral History Project Update

Erin Walsh, Port Hope Archives

Our first interview in the Our Memories: Downtown Port Hope oral history project was officially conducted in April of 2013. Evelyn Conn, board member and volunteer, served as our first interviewee.

She discussed her memories of the various businesses that were located in downtown Port Hope while she was growing up (including an adorable anecdote about taking her younger sister to the movies at the Capitol Theatre), and reflected upon the changes the area has seen since that time. Evelyn's video was also the first to be edited and posted to our website and YouTube.

To-date we have interviewed a total of 25 participants, from all walks of life. Some are current or former business owners, employees, long-time residents, former government staff members; we have even interviewed a municipal councillor!

Several of our participants have been uncomfortable with being filmed. In those cases a written submission is welcomed. The point is to document your memories of downtown Port Hope for the future, however you see fit. Even with these varied backgrounds, all of our interviewees have at least one thing in common: a love for Port Hope, and a desire to document its history for future generations.

It is our hope that the project will continue into the new year, so if you're interested in contributing your memories to the project please contact us. Keep watching our YouTube channel for more memories: <http://www.youtube.com/user/PHArchives>

Contact archives@porthope.ca or 905-885-1673 if you have any questions about this project.

Announcements

Small Town Radio

Small Town Radio is looking for programs created by local community personalities and groups, and the CDHS is very interested in participating. This a great opportunity we have to present Northumberland's history in a fun way. Contact Carla Jones at (289)252-1684 or email cgrucelajones@gmail.com if you would like to participate in bringing our history to the air.



Membership Matters

Membership Renewal

A membership renewal form is included with this newsletter. Please mail your dues to Alma Draper, 10 Madison Street, Cobourg or pay at our next meeting.

Newsletter Delivery

Carla Jones would appreciate hearing from anyone who is willing to assist with delivering our newsletters. If you might be willing to help please contact Carla at cgrucelajones@gmail.com or (289) 252-1684 for details of what is required.

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