James and Marjorie Paisley

Courtesy of: **The First Hussars**

Written by: Nick Corrie

Assisted by: The Paisley Family

Hodie Non Cras

Name: James W. Paisley

Rank: Trooper

Service Number: A 589

Born: March, 14, 1923, Sarnia, Ontario

Discharged: January 1946

Served In: WWII

Service: Canadian Army

Battle Group: 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade

Regiment: First Hussars – 6th Canadian Armoured Regiment

Service Details: Trooper Paisley was the driver in "A" Squadron's Sherman tank named *Anaemic.* This tank commanded by 5th Troop's Commander, Lieutenant Bill Little, was a DD Tank, (Duplex Drive) the surprise floating tank weapon intended to land independently ahead of the infantry. After a successful launch from their LCT, (Landing Craft Tank) the tank was swamped by a wave created by a rocket firing LCT which rendered them to be the first of "A" Squadron's three DD tanks sunk on D-Day. While Trooper Paisley and three of the crew were rescued and returned to England, the Loader/Operator, Trooper George Hawken, was machine-gunned and killed. The surviving crew returned to France on June 12 and fought with distinction through to Germany.

Service Notes: The First Hussars landed on Juno Beach along with two other Canadian armoured regiments, the Fort Garry Horse and the Fusilier Regiment, (the 10th and 27th Canadian Armoured Regiments respectfully). The regiments went ashore in both floating, self propelled DD tanks (Duplex Drive) or landed directly onto the beach from LCTs. The First Hussars proudly cherishes the distinction of advancing further inland on June 6th than any Allied army unit engaged that day. Despite the Regiment's obvious success in securing a beach-head on D-Day, the cost was 21 fatal and 17 non-fatal casualties.

HODIE NON CRAS

CANADIAN MEDALS: NW EUROPE

James Ward Paisley, Personal History: Before, during and after the war.

Jim Paisley was born March 14, 1923 in Sarnia, Ontario. This industrialised city is fortunate to have the tranquil, bedroom community of Point Edward as its lake side neighbour. Both towns share a view of the St. Clair River and Lake Huron which, combined, become the crossroads to the Lower and Upper Great Lakes. With sleek yachts slipping along, followed by powerful lake freighters steaming by on the fast-flowing water, one understands why the area is called “Bluewater Country.”

In past times most people in the Sarnia border region, Jim and his friends we rightly assume included, along with throngs of other Canadians travelling many miles, were in the habit of making a bee-line across the river to Port Huron, Michigan. This trend continues today as new generations of Canadians too often just see Sarnia as a ramp off Highway 402, the old Highway 22, leading to the Bluewater Bridge with its eastern end sprouting up from the joined-at-the-hip town of Point Edward. The whole exercise through the years can best be described as “Reciprocity in Action.”

It starts with our girls taking Canadian money over “to shop till they drop” while passing Americans going the opposite way into Canada to gamble away their coveted “Yankee Greenbacks.” In the old days when Ontario was dry on Sunday, the boys were attracted to Port Huron’s bars and entertainment, cheap smokes, weak beer and strong girls. If US and Canadian politicians would just step aside, the common man and woman on both sides of the border would make NAFTA work each and every day in a functioning, grassroots gesture of “Hands Across the Border.”

Jim’s parents were Frederick Paisley (b. ca. 1896 - d. 1975, in Westminster Hospital) and Catherine Ann Ward (b. October 5, 1898 - d. July 30, 2000, in Sarnia). Both were of Canadian birth. They raised a family of three, two boys and one girl: Jim was the oldest, brother Ted the next, followed by Louise their younger sister.

There were two factors which came together to play a big influence on the young Jim’s life: location and family. Sarnia’s involvement in the oil and chemical industry eventually leads him into a post-war life gainfully employed by *Shell Oil.* As for family, Jim’s father was a WWI Canadian army, Vimy veteran who was awarded the Military Medal (MM) for action on November 10, 1917 at Passchendaele. Boys growing up respond and imitate older males, watching and listening to their elders at work and play with a special keenness whenever a war exploit is recounted.

With thousands of returned service men making up the citizenry, conducting parades and erecting cenotaphs around which each November prayers to the Fallen were offered, a stirring of military pride and accomplishment pervaded society. This post-war era fueled a deep impression on all young men. So, when it came time for Jim and his younger brother Ted to step forward and shoulder the load in a newer war - their war - both boys joined the First Hussars on April 23, 1941.

Jim and Ted made a very mature decision given their young ages. Perhaps they knew of how families had been decimated in WWI with the total loss of their menfolk who had joined one regiment only to see them all killed as a result. It was decided that Ted should transfer to a different regiment. He went on to a motorcycle unit satisfying his pre-existing fondness for the two wheeled contraptions, speeding about the war zone as a dispatch rider.

Another close family friend to both Jim and Ted, was their cousin Grenville Stowe Ward. He was an early recruit to the Canadian Army, an eagerness which put him in line for the Dieppe raid in 1942. Despite being involved at all, Grenville could attribute his survival as a factor of “more good luck than good management.” The overall toll was 907 killed, 2460 wounded and 1946 became prisoners of war: Grenville was one of these, a POW until 1945.

The First Hussars was one of the first two regiments called to active duty in WWII, the other being the Fort Garry Horse. The Hussars today is fortunate to have coloured film of their initial tank training at the newly built Canadian Armoured Fighting Vehicles Training Centre (CAFVTC) at Camp Borden. It was there the basic intricacies of a tank were first learned as they plowed about the snowy hills during the 1940-41 winter in their much-prized Renault tanks. They were WWI relics purchased from the USA as scrap, a descriptive indication as to their true worth. As for military value, before condemning them as worthless weapons poised against the mobile Hun conquering Europe, consider that, in the early war years, this scrap iron, along with some obsolete British death traps, were all that Canada could offer the unsuspecting, raw armoured recruit.

By the Fall of 1941, either the army determined the Hussars were finally sufficiently trained to fight the Germans, or – the crappy old tanks were worn out – time to leave.

After an embarkation leave in late September, the troops returned to Borden by October 21, 1941, just in time to pose for an official photograph of the entire Regiment. The North Atlantic was a dangerous body of water by this time as Hitler’s submarines scoured the ocean for victims. From old tanks to old ships, the Hussars boarded the 1925 Mediterranean liner *Oronsay* as part of a huge convoy destined for Britain. Never mind the North Atlantic’s violent storms at that time of year and you staggering about seasick in a warm water ship. No point in grumbling at this advanced stage of the war when the only reply you were likely to hear back was: “There’s a war on mate.”

When the First Hussars left Canada in late 1941, leaving behind useless old WWI tank relics, they may have had a reasonable expectation that once they reached the war zone of Great Britain, they would be issued with modern equipment capable of fighting, and winning, against any German tanks – fat chance! At that point, British forces had been at war for the best part of two years. After being overrun in France and the Dunkirk rescue, the army was heavily engaged in North Africa and soon, to their dismay, a new war against Japan. There was an active fighting war raging but the Canadian army wasn't part of it. This fact meant that issuing modern tanks to Canadians was well down the priority list.

What occurred next to address the shortage, must have seemed a bit more than a little ironical. The tanks issued, piecemeal as it was, were mostly made either back home in Canada or in the United States. Canadian designed Rams, Marks I and II, manufactured at the *Montreal Locomotive Works*, eventually followed our Armoured Corps troops overseas, the first really modern tank variant issued to the Hussars.

From the USA came the M3 Lee, rebadge in Britain as the Grant depending on the turret configuration. Mixed in, whenever available, were British produced Churchills and Valentines (some Valentines were made in Canada). Every effort was made to equip, train and generally occupy in some way the Canadian troops who were no longer needed to fend off a German invasion. By this time in 1942, Hitler's army was heavily engaged in North Africa and Russia - there was "0" chance of an invasion. Rather, the emphasis from this point on, with the Yanks into it after December 7, 1941, all invasion talk was in the opposite direction, to invade Europe, somewhere, anywhere. Italy and North Western Europe became the prime continental targets.

Historical analysis offers a unique 20/20 perspective. Looking back on the years 1939 – 44, one might conclude that the First Hussars would have received better training and equipment if their departure had been delayed to late 1943 or early 1944. By that time, the American Sherman tanks they would use throughout the campaign were just arriving in Britain in preparation for action on D-Day. Canada had an abundance of food, fuel and space. With a large and easily- obtained issue of Shermans from the US, the tankers before that date could have been trained to a higher degree, then sent overseas. *C'est la guerre.*

However, there were a couple of advantages for the Canadian troops, points offered by historians which is hard to counter when they review their early presence in Britain. The Canadian homeland was largely still suffering under the influence of prohibition and the teetotalling lobby. The Canadian beer parlour was a gloomy room, devoid of natural light, where the only activities allowed were – drink your beer, smoke your cigarette and keep quiet. No loud talking and certainly no singing.

No such nonsense was encountered in Britain. Men and women mixed together in social gatherings unheard of back home. Communal singing, ever popular darts – they were fun places! Pubs, pubs and more pubs, everywhere with gallons of delicious British beer always on tap to quench a service man's thirst after a hard day on the ranges. The green troops from

the Dominion were introduced to a whole new lexicon of terms: arf ‘n arf; pint of bitter; pint of your best landlord. And what about those buxom bar maids? Nothing like them at home! There might have been rationing in war-time Britain but not on the popular tipple. To ration beer would start another war right at home. Enough is enough!

Apparently, the abundance of pubs with good beer and fun created a few problems in the over enthusiastic ranks right up to officer class. The pub novelty and excessive drinking had to be addressed and curtailed. Fortunately, for the well-being of the Brits and their beloved pubs, Canadians are reasonable people, we are easily impressed by good behaviour. The troops soon learned to drink responsibly – most of the time anyway.

The other point made by historians is supported by firm statistics. With the war over and the troops back home in Canada, 48,000 veterans awaited the arrival of their war brides, women they had married while overseas. They also expectantly watched 22,000 of these brides step down from trains carrying their children born back home in Britain or from parts of Europe where the veteran had served.

The reader must understand that before the fighting commenced, it wasn’t always training and drinking beer which occupied our troops. Romance played its part too!

Note: Unless unknown documents are forthcoming to shed some light, we are left to ponder Jim Paisley’s approach to the newly discovered British way of life and love? There is one artifact, however, which offers a clue to his off-hour’s habits. In a pub somewhere in England, while perhaps a little over refreshed and in a mischievous mood, Jim and some of the lads liberated this nineteenth century tapestry. We can regard its rescue as a fine example of military precision - all enacted in the interests of preservation you understand. At the time of writing, it is prominently displayed in the Paisley home.

Although encountering an exciting new social life not found at home in Canada, our troops were never slack or inattentive, not with the Germans waiting just across the Channel. They also bore up under the boredom of long weeks of repetitive training; no one needed reminding why they were in Britain. By 1943-44, everyone was well aware that a cross-Channel invasion was inevitable and they would be part of it.

This date - June 6, 1944 - is well known as D-Day, the long-awaited day when the armies of Canada, Great Britain and the United States of America stormed the shores of Normandy to drive the Germans back into Germany and win the war. For Trooper James Paisley, the day began as it did for all troops assigned to “A” and “B” Squadrons; they had been allotted to land on the beaches in floating DD tanks, the allies secret weapon. The intention was to place armour on the beaches ahead of the infantry, to give them heavy and direct covering fire vitally needed if they were to survive and achieve their objectives against well entrenched enemy opposition.

The DD tank was a tricky and somewhat quirky piece of equipment. Experiments had been conducted prior to introducing them to the respective crews leading the designers and concerned senior officers to introduce survival procedures if a tank sank. This was fortuitous because it happened; one such sinking was Jim's tank. Lucky for him and others who had to swim for it, they were trained in survival.

Tankers are trained to fight on land except in a DD tank where you are first a sailor floating on the sea and maybe even a submariner if you sink. This underwater possibility gave rise to a devious training scheme. Five men, a standard Sherman tank crew, were issued life jackets and oxygen bottles, complete with instructions, loaded into a tank situated on a barge outfitted with a large crane. With the hatches closed, the tank and crew were lowered into the water allowing it to fill. In the dark, surrounded by water, the crew donned their oxygen equipment, forced open the hatches, then all five scrambled though the dark water to exit out and –hopefully - float to the surface.

Note: This procedure was related to me by Corporal Jim Fisher. Jim was well into his 90s at that time but his recall was sharp. The obvious conclusion to come from his detailed and emotionally charged recall is that the training was so traumatic it remained a vivid memory for Jim after more than 70 years.

Anaemic Crew in England

All tanks in the Regiment had been given names starting with the letter of their Squadron. James's tank, part of "A" Squadron, became the *Anaemic,* so named because the paint used in preparation for deployment was a sickly, putrid green, making it look rather – well – anaemic. The plan was to carry all tanks across the Channel, or "Ditch" as the English called it, in Landing Craft Tanks (LCT). The floating DD tanks were to be launched 7000 yards from shore then power-driven by their own propellers. (Some accounts give shorter distances; this distance is provided by a personal account made in 1971 by Major J. Stewart Duncan, OC of "B" Squadron, whose tank *Bold* sank, as did *Anaemic.*)

The soon to be unfortunate *Anaemic* was crew commanded by 5th Troop's Lieutenant Bill Little and driven by Jim. The task of getting successfully to shore is totally due to the co-operation between the crew commander and the driver. The propellers are driven by gears operating from the rotating tracks whose operation are the responsibility of the driver. By changing gears and pulling on the tiller bars, left or right, he could both alter the speed and direction of the floating monster. Because the driver, our Jim in this case, had to rely on a tall periscope, tall enough to see over the screen, its awkwardness was overcome by getting directions from the crew commander standing on the rear deck.

The DD tank while a marvel of technology and initiative, was nevertheless an awkward, 30-ton, floating canvas and steel blob, unable to manoeuvre properly in a tidal running, wind driven sea, which it was on that day (a fact attested to by everyone who was there). To assist the problematic steering, a real piece of technological genius was devised in the form of a 20-foot- long rudder extending over the back of the tank which was the responsibility of the hapless crew commander. He was delegated to stand behind the turret, in the line of fire, and wield this thing about to augment the driver's steering conducted below. Somehow it worked – most of the time.

The first trick in launching a DD tank from an LCT is to exit it without sinking. To make sure, the driver allowed his tank to descend a steep steel ramp at a very slow speed. He had to inch into the sea slow enough to not put too much pressure on the flimsy screen held up with steel struts and compressed air bags. Once that little job was completed, he lowered the props, geared up to 4 knots - or less in this case because of the rough seas - and as Jackie Gleason liked to say, "Away we go"!

Righty-ho! The next scene is: *Anaemic* is launched with Jim working merrily away in the driver's seat, pulling on tiller bars and shifting gears assisted top side by Lieutenant Little on the rear deck working wonders with his trusty rudder when suddenly - the unexpected happens. The old saying of "If you can't help don't hinder" is applicable here. A rocket firing LCT after letting loose its salvo onto the beach, powers away blatantly disregarding the vulnerable floating tanks. The wash it works up completely swamps Jim's tank and down it goes. (It went down on June 6th and is still there.)

Years later Jim recounted these brief but memorable minutes for the authors of *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps, An Illustrated History.* In this excellent book he describes the *Anaemics* swamping and subsequent sinking:

> "We got some screen damage above the water line from the gunfire, but not serious enough to prevent us from gaining the beach. Lieutenant Little got us all out on the deck just in case, and we were steering from the deck tiller. …We were just off the beach obstacles when one of our LCTs fitted out as a rocket ship came in behind us and fired its broadside. …The launch complete, it turned away from the beach and its bow wave came over us from the rear and we went under." (p. 233)

Note: The book indicates that the tank recovered and now identified as *Bold,* sitting proudly on Juno Beach, was *Anaemic.* This discrepancy develops from some confusion and discussion which surrounded its recovery. The basic question was: what tank have we recovered? When Jim and Lieutenant Colonel Bill Little* viewed the tank in person in 1971, they recognised certain artefacts retrieved as those of their tank *Anaemic.* Both men became convinced it was, in fact, their old tank, but acquiesced because they felt the name *Anaemic* was not befitting the importance of the tank's significance as a war memorial to the First Hussars, their old Regiment. So *Bold* it became. (p. 234)

*Lieutenant Colonel W.R.C. "Bill" Little remained in the RCAC after the war. He attained this rank when he assumed command of the Fort Garry Horse in August 1960 to November 1964.

One Still on the Bottom

Because the crew were already out of the tank before it sank, their survival training wasn't needed, but the previous traumatic dunking back in England was the necessary cue prompting the early exit. In that context - their training paid off. The tragedy for the *Anaemic* crew was that Loader/Operator Trooper George Hawken was machine gunned in the water and killed. He was possibly the first Regimental casualty on that day, one of 21 KIA. Jim and his remaining three tank crew were picked up by another ship and returned to England along with the remaining Major Duncan's crew. (From Duncan's tank, *Bold,* which sank under similar circumstances, Trooper Roswell Tofflemire drowned.)

The standard operating procedure (SOP) for any troops who found themselves separated from their unit was to include them in a reinforcement chain. This was a formal command which had the responsibility of sending these detached troops to any unit requiring reinforcements regardless of prior affiliation. Naturally, this objective created the opposite reaction from the subjected troops who wanted no part of being separated from their mates.

Within the stranded First Hussars cadre fetched up in England, schemes were enacted to circumnavigate the procedure. On June 12, Lieutenant Little, Jim Paisley and the remaining crew, managed to return to the Regiment in France. The joyous reunion was overshadowed by the lingering after affects from the day before when “B” Squadron was practically wiped out in a well-laid ambush by German tanks and anti-tank guns.

Back in the fray, with the same crew and a new tank, Jim Paisley saw out the rest of the war. Many incidents occurred along the way, some good, some bad. In that regard, Jim’s war was no different from any other survivor. There was one however, which happened while in Holland near the war’s end in April 1945.

Two Regimental cooks needed to get closer to the front lines where a kitchen had been established. “Why walk when you can ride,” Jim might have mused, and to that end, he offered to take them along on the tank, piggyback style. As they rolled along, they soon encountered a tree blocking the road. Perhaps thinking it was quite natural to find a fallen tree in a battle zone, Jim jumped down to get it moved. Trouble was, it was a trap, the tree had been placed there as part of a well-laid ambush. No sooner had Jim hit the ground when the rounds began to fly at him and his tank. He scrambled back up, only to receive a shrapnel wound in a place where the sun doesn’t shine. But as bad as that was, there was worse to come. The two cooks sitting outside the tank received direct fire and were killed.

This tragic incident stayed with Jim for the rest of his life. Because it was at his invitation that the cooks were on the tanks in the first place, he accepted responsibility for their deaths. To add to his grief, back at the first aid station where he went for medical attention, he passed by the bodies of the two men. That image, coupled to their violent death, remained forever on his mind and conscience.

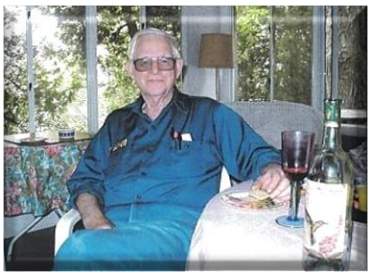
On a return visit to Normandy years later, he took the time to search out the graves of the two cooks. They were Private George H. Madden and Corporal Edward T. Ware. Both died of their wounds on April 17, 1945 and are buried at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands.

The day-by-day exposure to horrible images of the dead and wounded accumulated in a soldier’s mind. From the slaughter seen with the eyes came a build-up of fear within the mind for the man’s own survival. It was a natural response to flee and get the hell away from it all, to find somewhere safe. Best described as a fight-or-flight response, the overall result, after many months of combat, created adverse symptoms which the discharged soldier brought home with him to Canada. Today we identify these symptoms as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) a diagnosis from which we are

sympathetic to the victims. We are all in tune with its consequences and personally benefit by not apportioning any shame or embarrassment to the veteran. It wasn't always this way.

When Jim came home, he put on a good front and no one suspected anything wrong. It was only later when he was married, living close to his loving bride who had the added advantage of being an attentive nurse, did his war-related symptoms become obvious. Fortunately, he was a strong man married to a strong woman who helped him through his momentary flash-backs. Husband and wife treated them as a family problem, to be shared and dealt with together. Eventually his growing family became aware and helped him along too. In that respect he was a lucky man because many weren't so fortunate. Over the ensuing years, some untimely deaths of war-time friends were whispered about by the veterans followed by the silent prayer: "There but for the grace of God go I."

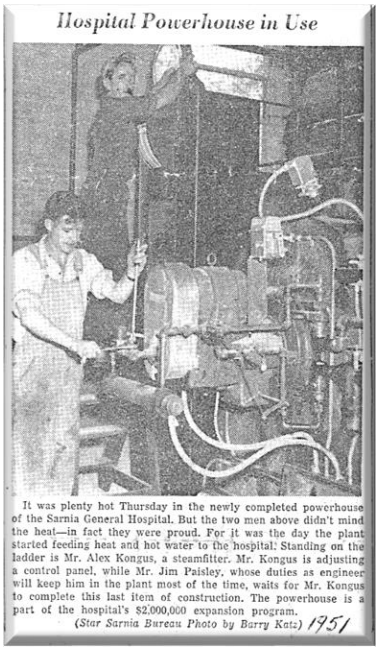
On a trip to Juno Beach, as daughter Ann stood overlooking the tranquility of sea and sand stretched out in the sunshine, a picture formed in her mind's eye seeing her father there on June 6, 1944. In Jim's life time it was a challenge for him to overcome a war induced inhibition for recalling those days, but on a few cherished moments together with Ann, he managed to relate some personal stories from long ago. Now here she was years later on a special visit to Juno Beach drawing upon those intimate moments with her father. So vivid were the images, she could almost visualise his young self before her in real time. She felt honoured that he would confide in her his innermost memories which for the most part he kept squirreled away - too difficult to relate out loud. Through her own history reading, Ann was aware that the beach and country off to the east held many tragic tales, but at least she had heard from her own father some of his.



The mornings she recalled, were hard for her dad. He would be "distracted, moody and withdrawn…" but it faded away as the day progressed. "As the day passed, so did your [his] darkness." Did he deal every day with survivors' guilt or the newly identified PTSD? No matter its name, she identified and deeply appreciated the death and destruction he had lived through as the source for his anxiety.

For Ann he was – her hero!

His family today can tell a listener in chapter and verse, how that day of the cook's death had lingered on in Jim's mind to affect his demeanour. Noticeably, he became overly cautious when it came to other people's lives and his involvement with them. When dealing with his children and grandchildren in particular, the watch word became – protective. He cleverly designed little games and created mythical figures as protective measures for his children at play. At the family cottage by Lake Huron, the children never went into the water without adult supervision because if they did – the "Under Toad" would get them. After his own children were grown with children of their own, they watched with amusement as he applied the same techniques to his grandchildren.


Hospital Powerhouse in Use

It was plenty hot Thursday in the newly completed powerhouse of the Sarnia General Hospital. But the two men above didn't mind the heat—in fact they were proud. For it was the day the plant started feeding heat and hot water to the hospital. Standing on the ladder is Mr. Alex Kongus, a steamfitter. Mr. Kongus is adjusting a control panel, while Mr. Jim Paisley, whose duties as engineer will keep him in the plant most of the time, waits for Mr. Kongus to complete this last item of construction. The powerhouse is a part of the hospital's $2,000,000 expansion program.
(Star Sarnia Bureau Photo by Barry Katz) 1951

Coming back after four years of extensive military training including nine months of dangerous life-threatening combat, James was more aware than most civilians that success is obtained through training. Building upon this tried-and-true army principle, James sought out professional training in Windsor to become a stationary engineer. With the new diploma tucked under his arm, he beetled back to Sarnia to take up employment at the local hospital. It was in this environment, much less dangerous than his war time experiences, that he toiled away the next few years.

Trooper James Paisley had spent four years training and nine months fighting the “Hun,” but once inside this august medical institution he met his match. Transitioning from an army of men, he was suddenly challenged by an army of women, a cadre of well organised female nurses.

One nurse who stood out from the bright-white clothed pack was Marjorie Doreen Lethbridge. The oldest daughter of three girls born in Owen Sound to Guy Lethbridge (b. ca. 1898, in OS, d. March 20, 1981 in Sarnia) and Ann Maher Plaunt (b. 1901 in the Ottawa valley, d. March 20, 1988 in Sarnia, the same month and day but different year from her husband). Marjorie, Marj her most often used name, became a Registered Nurse on the staff of the Sarnia General Hospital in 1951, a position of advantage when it came time to meet the newest hospital engineer, James Paisley.

Never one to shy away and give up, undaunted by the opposite sex, Jim forged ahead seeking remedies to problems found. He was a man who craved order and economy in all aspects of his life. He hated waste. “Why,” he mused, “can’t those limp wristed nurses turn off a tap?” His question remains unanswered.

Marjorie Ward overlooked the tap-turning and turned her attention to the tall and reticent ex-soldier who seemed to be everywhere at once, he committed to an efficiently running hospital. Once the overtures were made, coming from both directions by the mutually attracted couple, the courting proceeded - but it took time.

With both man and woman working shifts at the hospital, time became a factor not easily conquered despite the best intentions. Jim set aside enough time to teach Marj how to drive. Ever teach anyone to drive a car and the opposite sex? True patience at play here for both parties, and love, which always finds a way.

Better time together was found working inside the hospital. When a corpse needed shifting from the morgue, Jim volunteered for that job too, making sure as he and Marj wheeled the man along, that the feet proceeded the head on the gurney. He was a true stickler for proper protocols, was our man Jim!

Shift work, driving lessons, corpses, all obstacles were overcome and they became engaged to be married. In a double ceremony with her sister Jean and her beau Ted Forbes tying the knot together, Jim and Marj were married on April 10, 1954.

In pre-war days Jim had always lived in some parts of the oil patch. One of the oldest oil wells in the South Western Ontario black gold oddity, is at Oil Springs. This historical industrial relic still lays bare ancient "jerker lines" criss-crossing the landscape slowly withdrawing oil for the near-by refineries. The town and surrounding countryside are the site of North America's first commercial oil well, discovered when asphalt producer James Miller Williams set out to dig a water well in September 1858 and found free oil instead. Despite the amount of oil extracted being small, the town can still boast the existence of *Fairbank Oil Company* that is now the oldest petroleum company in the world.

Growing up through his adolescence years against a backdrop of oil and chemical industries, would eventually pay big dividends for Jim in his post-war life. Seeking higher pay, better future and pension, leaving the dripping taps unresolved, Jim left the hospital to find a position as a utilities operator with *White Rose Oil* located in the Chemical Valley. This company eventually became *Shell Oil.*

People who don't live in the Sarnia area more often than not are caught between the attractiveness of cross border shopping, the Bluewater setting and the contrasting unattractiveness in sight and smell emanating from the Chemical Valley. The combination of oil refineries and chemical plants spewing contaminates into the air is a definite turn off which for some visitors the wonder becomes – how do people live here?

Well, the answer is - to the work seeking residents – good paying jobs! These same workers probably wonder if visitors ever stop to realise that, if industries like this didn't exist, what would power the car you're driving as you hurry though? And why not consider all the chemical items used each and every day in your home? In other words, despite the drawbacks, these are essential industries and everyone working there is providing a valuable service.

James Paisley stayed at *Shell Oil* for many years, finally retiring in 1988. The many pipes which criss-crossed the Steam Plant in which he worked were covered in asbestos insulation. At certain times, through wear and tear, the deadly substance would become air-borne, contaminating the workplace with its lung-destroying fibres. It was to blame these fibres which everyone attributes to Jim's poor health in later years and ultimate death from lung cancer.

Shell Oil Sarnia

To commemorate Jim's passing on May 30, 2002, his daughter, Ann Wilkinson, who perhaps was the closest to Jim of his three children, composed a testimonial booklet containing memories from family and friends. The booklet is a real treasure.

A co-worker at *Shell Oil,* Dave Goodale, recounted a few stories he witnessed at work involving Jim. Apparently, Jim was at work, as in most instances in his life, a man on a mission, constantly on the move. It was said that if you wanted to find him the best advice was “to stay in one spot and Jim would pass this way shortly.” He was a driving force in the plant, a man of intellect and ingenuity, coupled with an ability to see his ideas functioning and valuable. Dave goes on to state that all the operators working with him “considered Jim the heart and soul of the Steam Plant.”

But everyone has a few foibles. There was the time he got out of his car (a Russian *Lada* which in itself tells you something about this man) and left it running with the doors locked. Ann was summoned to the rescue, bringing a spare set of keys. Embarrassed? You bet, but not enough to stop him from doing it again. That next time, the car ran until the tank drained to empty. Remember, he worked at *Shell Oil*; not the best use of the precious spirit he was helping to make. His answer to avoid a reoccurrence: he simply filled the tank with less gasoline to avoid the waste. Simple solution eh!

Dave’s final remarks place Jim in a special category, he wrote: “Our Jim Paisley was a real hero. Our Jim Paisley was a true leader. Our Jim Paisley was our friend and we will miss him.”

Ann’s contribution extends to three pages of heart felt memories of her dad. The depth of feeling expressed on those pages defies repeating in any meaningful way on these pages. There is one paragraph, however, which tells us a great deal about this man in an everyday setting and her warm memories of him. Ann writes:

> Dad never met anyone he didn’t like except perhaps the odd politician. He always had a smile and a joke to share. Dad truly believed that everyone was created equal. He was a lot like a toasted marshmallow: crusty on the outside and a puddle of mush on the inside. He could be moved to tears by the thought of a child in need or an injustice done. He was such a softy that Mom banned the family from watching “Lassie” on TV. It was bad enough that Ann would spend the entire show crying, but when Dad also cried - that was just too much!”

Ann instinctively knew she couldn’t read aloud her written words. In her stead, she turned to her good friend Gigie McGlynn to do the honours.

From the First Hussars there are comments by RSM (Ret’d) Peter Wood CD, and the acting Commanding Officer of the Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel C.O. Judd CD, who presented a Canadian flag to the family on behalf of the Regiment. Jim’s dedication to all aspects of the Regiment is a common refrain from both men.

There is also an acknowledgement from Major (Ret’d) Mike Steele CD, Treasurer of the First Hussars Trust Fund (Museum) for a generous donation in memory of Jim. Mike goes on to assure the family that the donation “will help to maintain the Regimental Museum and ensure the preservation of the military history that Jim felt was so important.”

On hand to assist at the funeral was a contingent of Hussars who acted as Honour Guard, including: pall bearers, ushers and Piper Sergeant (Ret’d) Terry Mills CD, to play Bonnie Dundee, our Regimental march past. Sergeant Mills while waiting outside preparing to play the Last Post, found himself checking more than once if in fact it was a church he was attending. He was puzzled

by all the laughter he could hear coming through the open doors from within. A eulogy of Jim's life did that to people.

In keeping with the solemn funeral proceedings in Paisley style, Marjorie recounted a humorous episode which had Biblical references. "The Rapture," Jim reminded her, "is when all good men will suddenly be whisked away to heaven regardless of their earthly presence at that moment." He warned her that if at that moment he was driving, "be prepared to take over the wheel and avoid an accident." As an afterthought, he expected to leave his clothes behind on the car seat. To this prediction, Marjorie replied "that heaven would be a messy place with no women to pick up after them, but moreover, she would "rather that he left his wallet behind instead."

The response to this story and others like it, is what Sergeant Mills heard while standing outside the church.

Contained in Ann's testimonial booklet is a long, long list of characteristics and personal qualities of her father. A few of the highlights are:

-He was a great reader and scholar, especially of poems. Before the war he worked at a pharmacy forgoing pay in exchange for permission to read magazines and newspapers.
-He possessed a thirst for knowledge, leaving no stone unturned to find new facts which he would gladly share with others even if they weren't particularly interested. His children remember him for this reason.
-Humour couched most of his comments and yet he was a responsible, caring and serious human being.
-Children and their well being was a passion. In later life he drove to London once a week to attend his grandson's nursery, taking part in their activities. He later recounted and felt blessed for all the wonderful things he had learned from the children, acknowledging by name each child responsible for the little gift of advice to him.
-"Woman's work" was not part of his vocabulary. He pitched in to do housework, wash dishes and with three children to care for, diapering was all part of a day's work.

Guy's Vimy Trumpet

The Paisley family and Marjorie's, the Lethbridge family, both claim military heritage. Marjorie's father, Guy, was an infantry man in the Grey and Simcoe Foresters, crossing the Atlantic to fight "Fritz" in WWI. He was delegated to act as "Bugle Boy" for the unit to which he was attached, the same unit which fought at Vimy, the great accredited Canadian victory. The same is true for Jim's father, Fred, who, as noted above, fought in the trenches and Vimy, was awarded the MM and lived to tell the story.

Following years later in Jim's footsteps to join the First Hussars were daughter Ann and son Robert. Ann joined the Regiment age 22 and served as Trooper for three years. Robert attained the rank of Corporal while serving for six years. Both served in Sarnia at the Major G.H. Stirrett Armoury. The youngest Paisley, Tom, while never a member of the military, today works in London for *General Dynamics* manufacturing light armoured vehicles (LAV) favoured by countries around the world. The military heritage extends to Ann's son, Sergeant Scott Wilkinson, currently serving with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI).




The Paisley Warriors: Jim and Ted before the war. Jim before overseas. Old soldiers 50 years on.

Accompanied by Jim's grandson: Sergeant Scott Wilkinson, PPCLI

At the close of WWII, a Global War and world's first total war, the First Hussars Association was formed in 1946. Open to all ex-Hussars, they met at the Dundas Street Armouries for camaraderie, enjoy a few beers and swap stories, true and false, The Association proved a good means of keeping in touch with old friends. No longer in uniform and back on civvy street, everyone was looking for gainful employment; to this end, the Regimental contacts became a useful job resource.

Jim Paisley was an early recruit to the Association, probably a founding member. Whenever his shift work at the hospital allowed, he drove the fifty miles to London for a meeting. His attendance at the yearly June 6th parade when D-Day and the June 11th loss to "B" Squadron was commemorated, would have been high on his list each year.

The other commonality which no doubt generated conversation, was marriage. The immediate years after the war kept the wedding bells ringing across Canada. First marriage and then – the baby boom! In good quick time, the Association filled out to include wives. After all, what's a party without a pretty girl to dance with. But, in true form, the ladies soon proved their worth. After 1954, a new recruit was Marjorie Paisley.

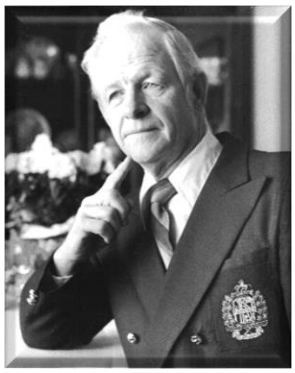
In due time a Ladies Auxiliary was formed, which helped move the Association away from strictly a military organisation to one of family. What man would conjure the notion of a "penny sale" to bolster the coffers, complete with little signs made from cardboard pantyhose inserts? Prices were scratched on them to dot tables offering items for sale. Even children and grandchildren of veterans pitched in, writing signs and arranging goods to make these sales a success. Michelle Lundy, granddaughter of veteran William "Red" McCormick, was one such young volunteer. Some of the "valuable" items offered for sale were gathered together by Jim's daughter Ann. The joke was that more was taken home than brought in.

Extending beyond their Regimental affiliation, both Jim and Marj can be regarded as a caring couple, committed to their community and the underprivileged of the world, devoting remaining free time to many worthy causes. Jim over the years gave many hours to the Multiple Sclerosis

Society and the United Way. In due course, he became a strong supporter of an organisation which initially was Marj's focus, it is the locally-founded group – RAYJON.

Begun in 1986, the purpose of this group is to support partners in Haiti and the Dominican Republic to enhance their wellbeing and capacity to improve their lives. The intention is to provide a bridge between those who can help, these would be Canadians, to those who need it, the poor and impoverished people living there. Jim shuffled so many boxes of donated goods to the warehouse he became his own *"Federal Express."* Marj remarked that "if I had a nickel for every box he carried, I would be rich."

He would have to hustle a lot to best his committed wife and her contribution to RAYJON. As of 2017, she had made 47 trips to these countries distributing eye glasses collected in Canada for distribution anywhere they were needed. Doing the math, her last trip was at age 87. Even the *"Energizer Bunny"* can't beat that record because Marj just - "keeps going and going and…"



Jim on the other hand, never went to any of these countries; he always begged off. He confessed one day, after viewing pictures of the smiling, cute, little brown faces peering out at the camera from the many impoverished areas RAYJON attended, that he would never be able to leave them behind and go home alone. Such a man was James Ward Paisley.

Courseulles-sur-Mer, France, March 1996:

The occasion is to officially transfer the responsibility for the maintenance of *BOLD* to the people of France.

Present are: Monsieur de Maurques, Mayor
Monsieur Perraton who assumed the restoration of the tank.
Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) W.R.C. Bill Little, 5th Troop Commander in *ANAEMIC.*
Trooper (Retd) James Paisley, driver of LCol Little's tank which also sank.

Perhaps a befitting ending to this humble attempt at depicting James Paisley's life is to record a favorite poem of his for solemn moments. The source for this poetry is a good indicator as to the depth of Jim's intellectual interests, his love of words and meaning. It appears in Ann's funeral booklet to her father because it's a poem he wished read at his funeral, and it was.

This is a piece by a Latin poet, Gaius Valerius Catullus, ca. 84 – 54 BC, from his works, Carmina, on the burial of his brother. The words from Ann's booklet are: "It's a poem that Jim felt conveyed his own passion for his comrades."

BY MANY LANDS AND OVER MANY WAVE
I COME, MY BROTHER, TO YOUR PITEOUS GRAVE,
TO BRING YOU THE LAST OFFERING IN DEATH
AND O'ER DUMB DUST EXPEND AN IDLE BREATH:
FOR FATE HAS TORN YOUR LIVING SELF FROM ME,
AND SNATCHED YOU, BROTHER, O, HOW CRUELLY!
YET TAKE THESE GIFTS, BROUGHT AS OUR FATHER BADE
FOR SORROWS TRIBUTE TO THE PASSING SHADE;
A BROTHER'S TEARS HAVE WET THEM O'ER AND O'ER:
AND SO, MY BROTHER, HAIL AND FAREWELL EVER MORE!

Medals:

1939 -1945 Star

France and Germany Star

Defence Medal

Canadian Voluntary Service Medal

War medal 1939 - 1945

HODIE NON CRAS

(Today Not Tomorrow)