

Roy “Mickey” and June McLeod

Sheffield England, October 1, 1945

Courtesy of: **The First Hussars**

Written by: Nick Corrie

Name: Roy “Mickey” Willard McLeod

Rank: Warrant Officer Class II

Born: 17 June 1918, Owen Sound

Served in: WWII

Service: Canadian Army

Battle Group: 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade

Regiment: 6th Canadian Armoured Regiment (First Hussars)

Service Details: Joined the ranks of the First Hussars cavalry in 1936. With the outbreak of WWII, he was one of the first to transfer from the Reserve to the Canadian Active Service Force given the Service Number A 35

Service Notes: Before leaving Canada, Roy was trained as both a Driver Mechanic and a Motor Mechanic. He was to follow this elevated mechanical trade throughout the war, working on both tanks and wheeled vehicles. In that capacity he was one of the unheralded thousands in the Allied armies who served in the active war zone behind the lines.

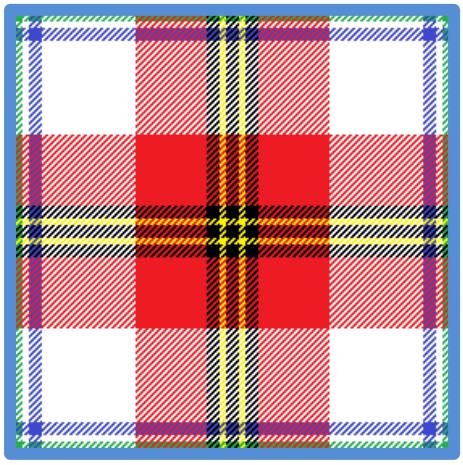
HODIE NON CRAS

CANADIAN WAR MEDALS -NW EUROPE

Roy Willard McLeod – Personal History: 1918 – 2002

McLeod is a surname derived from the families of the ancient Dalriadan clans of Scotland. What sets Clan Macleod apart is its distinctive name and historical significance. The names Macleod and McLeod may appear different, but in essence, they are one and the same. The Mc in McLeod is an abbreviation for Mac, derived from the Gaelic word for "son." When Mac is combined with another name, it signifies "son of" that particular name.

Thus, MacLeod represents the proud lineage of "son of Leod," with Leod being a revered ancestor or progenitor of the clan. Over time, the spelling of MacLeod transformed to include the unique variant, McLeod. Both versions not only signify the same noble heritage but also showcase the clan's distinctive journey through the annals of history.



Canadian MacLeod Tartan

In various documents McLeod has been spelled MacLeod, MacCleod, MacCloud, MacLoud and many more. In Canada, the name McLeod is the 179th most popular surname with an estimated 20,126 people with that name.

History has the first MacLeod's appearing on the Isle of Lewis, the main island comprising the Outer Hebrides. The main city there is Stornoway which serves as the port for both Lewis and Harris Islands. The city's name draws in a strong connection to Canada and the many Scotch[1] who settled

[1] Special note: Over a period of centuries, the people of Scotland have always in their vast world presence, exalted under the proud name Scotch, like the whisky they make. As time has intervened, the alternative "Scots" has gained favour. "Never say it Laddie." When the settlers came from Scotland to North America and elsewhere on the planet, they arrived as Scotch. Proud Highland Regiments have fought and died on battlefields the world over as Scotch soldiers. John Kenneth Galbraith, noted professor and economist from Dunwich Township, wrote a book about his family and others who settled in South Western Ontario (Upper Canada) entitled *The Scotch* because they never – ever - referred to themselves using any other word.

here. Canada's Stornoway, privately built in 1913, is a house located at 541 Acacia Avenue in Ottawa's Rockcliffe Park neighbourhood. It has served since 1950 as the official residence of the leader of the Official Opposition. It has a rather poor reputation as a cold forbidding pile, perhaps reflecting the name's stormy, Western Isles origin.

The Scotch put down strong roots in Canada, contributing to our country's development and survival. One of the first successful Scotch settlements in the Americas was in Nova Scotia in 1629. In Latin Nova Scotia means New Scotland, a natural draw for people from the Auld Scotland.

The Scotch were prominent among the many Europeans crossing the Atlantic seeking a better life. Many Scotch were forced out in what became known as "The Clearing of the Highlands."

Crofters leaving Scotland

Beginning in the middle of the 18th century, culminating in the late 1800s, the Highlands of Scotland underwent drastic changes. A shift from small agricultural holdings to bigger farms was part of the problem, but the biggest reason, the best known and remembered in history, was the clearing of the Highlands' crofters as their small farms were replaced by herds of cattle and sheep - the people gone forever. Families were forced out, burned out in some cases – and forced to find new lives in unsettled countries. North America, closest to the old, was the big beneficiary, receiving hordes of strong, dedicated settlers anxious to begin life anew. Canada benefited from their spiritual faith, work ethic, dogged determination while not forgetting their hereditary canniness.

As Christians, in addition to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity found in the various denominations transported across the sea, these settlers had a very practical working trinity followed just as religiously: God, family and country. They placed

God before family because they knew all good things come from God. As they stared into the stands of virgin forests blocking out crop growing sunshine necessary for survival, what better helpful force could be found to clear the land than in God Almighty?

Violence and upheaval were not confined just to the Old World. The American Revolution followed by the ill planned and executed War of 1812, developed a new class of settlers, driven out of the newly-constituted United States. During the Revolution, any settled New England immigrant who enjoyed life after years of hard work and Indian threats to life and limb but identified as a supporter of the Crown, were forced, threatened with death in many cases, to pull up stakes and head north to British North America. Eventually these driven out Loyalists proudly brandished a new banner as - Untied Empire Loyalists. As a reward, they were granted free land to help them start again and build a new country that became – Canada. A walk through any old settler's cemetery gives evidence to the number of Scotch who made Canada their new home.

In search for Roy Willard McLeod's family line, Ancestry search has identified his first Scotch/Canadian progenitor as one Angus McLeod. The problem of identifying the correct Angus progenitor stems from the habit among the Scotch of favouring for their males, the name Angus, it derived from the Celtic meaning "one" and "choice". Sorting through the Bruce County records for the correct Angus is not an exact science, leaving one to select as the best candidate the most likely Angus McLeod. Without any absolute assurance, the most likely Angus selected from all the men in that era sharing the name, the best contender is identified below.

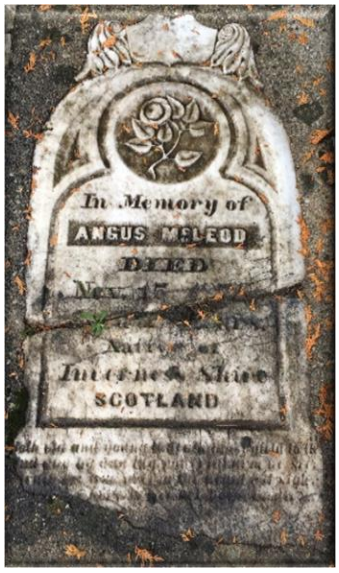
Most early MacLeods/McLeods who arrived in Canada during the early 1800s came as farmers. The McLeods' traditional home, originating in the Outer Hebrides on the Isles of Lewis, offered fishing as an attractive alternative to farming. Our Angus McLeod didn't hail from the McLeod traditional homeland but instead came from Caithness, located on the very tip of mainland Scotland, where fishing provided a good livelihood. The love of fishing transferred very nicely when Angus and wife

Margaret settled in Southampton on Lake Huron, a very profitable fishing port on an inland sea.

Malcolm second row, left side

The Great Lakes of which Lake Huron is but one, were always described in the country's early days (somewhat diminished in modern times) as literally teaming with fish of prized species in great demand. The assumption is that our selected Angus McLeod, recorded in Bruce as a fisherman, transferred his seasoned ocean fishing skills to become a Great Lakes fisherman. That fact helps to explain why his grandson Malcolm is seen in the accompanying photograph, posing with other commercial fisherman in Southampton. Later, in the census of 1921, Mack and his family are living in Owen Sound, a good-sized port on Georgian Bay. At some point, he became a cook. Despite no evidence that he became a ship's cook, it's a well-known fact that a cook is a valuable position in the many ships plying the Great Lakes.

A simple list of the McLeods from Angus to Roy:



Angus McLeod b. 1799 Caithness, Scotland. d. November 15, 1871. Southampton. Buried Southampton Pioneer Cemetery, Bruce County
M. December 30, 1819 Latherton, Caithness, Scotland. Margaret Sinclair b? & d.?

Son: William John McLeod 1856-1934 (died Stratford) and Jeanette Reid b. 1860 Arkwright, Ont., d. 1934 Stratford. Jeanette's parents were James Reid and Ann Gildart? both from Ireland.

Grandson: Malcolm "Mack" McLeod
b. 1887 Paisley, Bruce Co.
m. Sept. 10, 1912 in Wiarton to Mary Ellen Arnold
d. 1935 at 62 Front Street, London of pulmonary tuberculosis. Buried Mt. Pleasant.

Great grandchildren: Eugene 1913-90 Denzil 1914-64 Leona 1916-77 *Roy 1918-2002 Madeline 1920- Kenneth 1921-1921

The 1921 census shows Malcolm and Mary Ellen lived at 1850 4th Ave., Owen Sound.

One important detail missing from the Ancestry list is any mention of Mack McLeod's war record from WWI. One over-riding reason prompting many young Canadian men to join up in 1939, was in recognition of their father's previous war record which invariably came from WWI. Another reason was British ethnicity; those who signed up either had British ancestry, and here we have the McLeod's as Scotch, or were born there. Young Roy grew up for a time in Bruce[2] County, which by its very name shouts out – Scotland. In Roy's home, Mack was living testimony of the war's importance, thus, a strong influence for him to join up. It's understood that his brother Denzil also joined some army unit.

Denzil

A short history of Malcolm McLeod's military history in WWI:

Beginning in 1915, the army began recruiting men from all over Bruce County, dividing them into companies. Mack was recruited into "C" Company, 160th Battalion under the command of Lt. Col. Adam Weir. From today's Bruce County's file, *Bruce*

[2] Initially the name Bruce was promulgated via the descendants of King Robert the Bruce (1274-1329). Bruce County is named after James Bruce, Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, Governor General of the Province of Canada 1847-54.

Remembers, it records that Malcolm McLeod had already spent two years in the militia, serving with the 32nd Battalion.

In 1916, the entire Battalion was sent to London's Wolseley Barracks, aka Carling Heights, for some basic training before shipping out to England. Living entirely under canvas, Mack contracted pneumonia. After his second attack, he was discharged as "Medically Unfit" and sent to Westminster Hospital for treatment before being sent home. This vulnerability to lung related illness would occur later in his life.

Roy first joined the First Hussars in 1936, a militia Regiment which had been cavalry since 1856. Supposedly coming from a non-farming family, if he was familiar with horses, he didn't learn their intricacies at home. Horse-drawn vehicles for delivering bread, milk, ice, and even junk wagons, were still common in the relatively-new gasoline powered age but watching them go by was hardly a learning experience. If his "horse sense" was lacking, he found himself in good company because about the only equine sense city raised men had was that a horse's street strewn manure was good for mom's roses.

When researching the experiences of a First Hussars cavalryman in the 1920s-30s, a biographer benefits from viewing a film carefully housed in the Regimental Museum. Many film clips show foot drill meant to instil basic discipline but the main training was in the saddle. Summer camps on Port Stanley's popular cliff park, Invererie, were highlighted by mounted march pasts for visiting senior officers, followed by gallops along the beach and trots up and down the many dusty roads in idyllic Elgin County. The occasional stirring charge across open fields against an imaginary foe was a must for a cavalry regiment. Many happy faces shine out from that old film as men riding bare back wrestled with each other or groomed their mounts, ate chow or simply

relaxed with pipe and cigar. Families and dignitaries lined the field as witnesses to a passing era. No one in those halcyon days could guess it would all be swept away.

In the accompanying photograph, a group of pre-war First Hussars dressed in WWI uniforms stand proudly together as cavalrymen. Shown on the right is Corporal Roy Willard McLeod while on the left is Trooper William Herbert Beavis. Both men went Active in 1939 and later, in far-off England, unknown to either man, Roy would marry William's cousin June. Much would happen in both lives before the nuptials would happen.

In the 1930s, most western countries began to acquire some type of armoured vehicles, the new models spinning off from their WWI vintages. But the deep Depression, coupled to appeasement as a method of avoiding war, spawned stingy military budgets. The fiscal minded Canadian government of Mackenzie King clung to both reasons like a drowning man clinging to a life preserver. His government survived, but over at the nation's military headquarters, the red-tabs feeling justified having no money and frankly no modern ideas anyway, marked time maintaining all mounted regiments; the First Hussars was but one.

When joining the Active army, the first document the recruit encounters is called the *Attestation Paper.* It records all the pre-war details pertaining to the recruit and from those details the army decides the unit in to which he will be assigned. Roy declared his birthdate as 19 Sep 18 in Owen Sound, religion Presbyterian, was a truck driver and had been in the First Hussars Militia since 14 May 36. He signed the document as to its correctness and thereby joined the army on 4 Sep 39.

His Service Number was A-35. “A” was for District 1 in SW Ontario. His number 35 and the date signify he joined two days after the Regiment was mobilised; they shared the honour of being one of the first two regiments to become the Canadian Active Service Force (CASF) in WWII. Britain declared war on the 3rd and Canada on the 10th. This first step in the recruiting process was conducted in the Dundas Street Armouries, the home of the First Hussars.

1933 Carden-Loyd front line Canadian armour

Volunteering to go Active in 1939, Roy by this noble gesture, unknowingly moved into an entirely new military experience. He gave up mounted astride a live animal, to perhaps find himself encased in a cold steel tank battling it out against the enemy’s often more deadly tanks. But in 1939, no one, neither the recruit nor the senior staff, had an inkling of how the war would come to rely on tanks to engage in a new mobile slugging match. Slowly, clumsily, the Allied armies adapted to the realties. The Canadian experience was the most pitiable of any.

Not content to make only that huge commitment during wartime, Roy Willard McLeod managed to pack in one more of a more personal kind. On November 3, 1939, he married Maude Irene Eden, a resident of London. If there was a honeymoon after the nuptials, no leave for Roy is recorded though he probably was given some. His first recorded leave, and perhaps the first real opportunity the newlyweds enjoyed, wasn’t until March 1940 when Roy was granted 23 days leave. With the constant pressure of training and moving from one billet to another, Camp Borden 100 miles from London, a strain on married life could be expected.

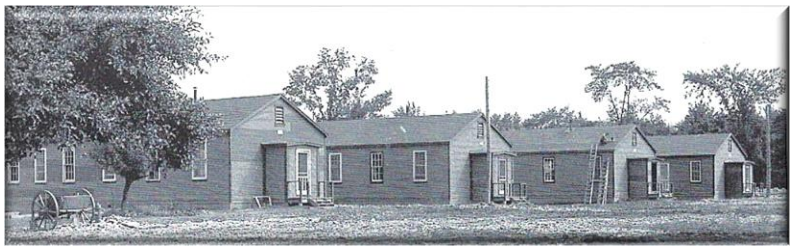
There are many reasons for the uptick in marriages when war was declared. If one looks for financial reasons, there was the federal government's Dependant's Allowance. The proper motive for marriage is love, which in wartime brings with it the emotional comfort bestowed to the spouse who is going off to war. Through her marriage vows, the bride supports her husband who needs all the help he can get.

Hollywood puts the two unions, wife and army, in a more literal, pithy way: the wife may have her husband's heart - but the army has his ass. No doubt trying their very best, the Canadian army put together living accommodations and training syllabuses that were not in everyone's best interest. An old axiom has developed around successive wars fought over the years: when a new war breaks out, the military powers feel bound to fight it relying on lessons learned in the last. That dictum took root with Canada's military leadership in 1939. Forgetting the illness caused by camping out under canvas in WWI, the Regiment, newly designated as The First Canadian Cavalry Regiment (Mechanised) were again camped in bell tents at Wolseley Barracks. Predictably, bouts of pneumonia born by the winds of November drove everyone indoors, into an unused poultry building at Queens Park. No one had left London yet, but already to a man they began to realise that "war was hell."

After the tents and sick parades, the old axiom was predictably applied to their training: The High Command felt bound to fight the new war based on WWI learned lessons. WWI was a static war of trench digging, mud, rats, trench foot, bad food, and certain death from machine guns and artillery. Initially, no one had any reason to think the new conflict would be any different. This picture shows WWI veterans at Queens Park

instructing new recruits, also wearing WWI uniforms because there were no new ones, on the manly art of trench digging, a practice which saved their lives in the last war.

Farley Mowat, who later in life became a prodigious author and active environmentalist, early in the war he joined the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, the famous "Hasty Ps." In their Regimental history, Mowat wrote that the new troops on parade resembled "a motley collection of comic opera soldiers from a third-rate vaudeville production." The uniforms, made mostly of wool, were moth-eaten and ragged, varying in age and style. Some men for a time continued to wear their civilian clothes. It was a poor start for the Hussars, but in time, as Tip Top Tailors mustered a large work force of skilled seamsters, they began to turn out 25,000 uniforms a week.



Armoured School H-huts still unfinished

Finally, in May 1940, the Hussars entrained for the newly built Canadian Armoured Fighting Vehicles Training Centre (CAFVTC)[3]. Their proud departure, with parades and stirring music, was premature. The Centre wasn't ready, so everyone came home to wait hoping while away that the chickens weren't roosting on their cots. In good time the Regiment regained its traditional name of First Hussars, thanks to a campaign launched by a very formidable entity, the London Free Press. This stroke of sanity was followed by the Training Centre becoming Camp Borden and even more eventually, tank crews were trained at the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps School.

Upon arriving in Camp Borden for the second time in late 1940, but still in time to help erect some huts, the Regiment discovered that the only tanks available were a

[3] In recognition of these early awkward war time name changes and creations, our Regimental Historian, Mike McNorgan, so accurately points out that "In every Canadian conflict from South Africa to the Gulf, someone in Ottawa determines that the best way to meet the crises is through the creation of *ad hoc* units." Pg.71 *The Gallant Hussars*

few old British Vickers Light Tanks. A soldier's prerogative is to grumble, albeit out of ear shot from the RSM. To soften the disappointment in the ranks, a promise was on offer that enough tanks were on the way to equip the Regiment.

All this muddle was taking place in 1940, a year after the Germans overran far-off Poland. Now the world watched and recoiled as the Blitzkrieg of German armour and Stuka bombers sliced through the Low Countries into France. The remnants of the British, French and even Canadian reinforcement army at Brest, France, had fled to the only safe land surviving in a hell hole of tragedies – the United Kingdom. This new mechanised war graphically illustrated the tank's importance to all but the most obtuse military cadres. And here in Canada's Camp Borden, while German troops marched triumphantly behind their formidable tanks, men of the First Hussars were found sitting in old outdated death traps.

The father of the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps (RCAC) was Lieutenant-Colonel F.F. Worthington, known fondly as "Worthy." He had been introduced to armour in Britain in 1936 and was now to apply this knowledge in the 1940 Canadian context. His first order of business was to find tanks - quickly. Searching below the still war neutral American border, were a number of French Renault designed, American built, M1917 Light Tanks. To avoid neutrality problems, the Americans sold 250 as scrap metal, no doubt an apt description considering their 5mph top speed, light armour and machine gun weaponry.

One can't imagine what thoughts were going through the men's minds as they scanned over the ridiculous, outdated, tank facsimiles. Since every man-jack of them were volunteers, their resolve to stick it out speaks volumes for the quality of the average Canadian soldier.

The tanks the First Hussars used for training in Camp Borden 1940-41

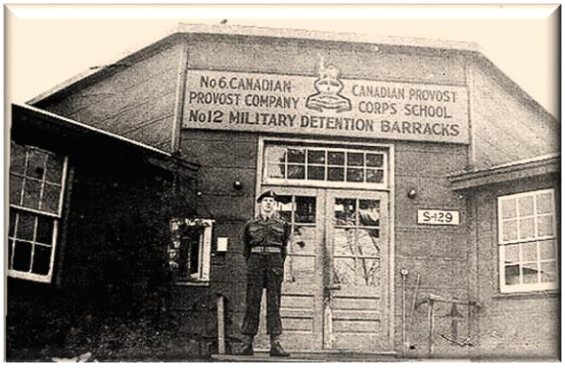
Once the new tanks were in place, the training stretched through the 1940-41 winter until the Regiment left for overseas in late 1941. This wasn't a plan laid down, it simply evolved with time and circumstances. Archival colour film footage shows both the few Vickers (left above) manoeuvring through the snow, using their greater speed to chase the ponderous Renaults (right above) like hounds after tortoises. Worthy is visible many times, supervising his little domain. The run-down state of the army wasn't his fault; to his credit he created the best available where no one else could or would. Today he is regarded, and rightly so, as the father of the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps. His grave lies on a hill in Camp Borden overlooking a park of old tanks, two of which he used in 1940-41.

Major-General Franklin Worthington 1889-1967

While reading through the army records for Roy McLeod, obtained through *Library and Archives Canada* (LAC), one can't help noticing the constant change in his rank. From the first line recorded 4-9-39 to the last date on the next page, 23-4-40, his rank changed six times! From Trooper (Tpr) to Acting Corporal (A/Cpl) to Lance Corporal (L/Cpl) back to Tpr then up again to L/Cpl finally finishing where he started- as Tpr. He actually asked to revert to Trooper. Perhaps to avoid any more all-consuming paper work and pay book changes, the army was only too glad to oblige.

Roy's background as a truck driver fast-tracked him for driver training. Part of that position in the tank crew also meant a certain amount of mechanical training. His first qualification designated him as a Driver Mechanic Group "C." This grade was earned at Camp Borden. For his next driver's course, he was transferred to Army Trades School Hamilton. Completing this course singled him out as a Motor Mechanic Group "C" which implies he has a broader range of mechanical ability from that of a driver only. He managed all these skill grades as a Trooper, no changes.

Training at Camp Borden during this early stage of the war, struggling along with old, useless equipment, varied little. The army's attitude towards troops is to keep them on the move; idyll hands are the Devil's toys. One common open charge pointing to disciplinary action was often levelled against a man who went Away Without Leave (AWL). Roy went astray twice: his first charge of AWL for one day was followed by gone for 16 days in September 1940. That little lark earned him 24 days in Detention, aka Piss Can. The Borden No. 12 Military Detention Barracks, highly visible at the south gate, was a forbidding multi-winged monstrosity lying in wait like a giant spider ready to suck the life out of any prisoner. In keeping with the Detention's arachnid image, the Provost staff never failed to prey upon every miscreant until their independent, rebellious behaviour was sucked clean. For Roy one stop was enough; he behaved for the rest of the war. Or, as soldiers are wont to say, "his misdeeds went undetected."



At some point before leaving Canada, Roy acquired a nickname. His mates noted that he always seemed well equipped with a "mickey of rye" in his pocket so in turn they gave him the moniker of Mickey. If he still managed to have a mickey in his pocket while in supply-strapped, war-torn England, he was unique. All whisky was hard to come by; the troops happily settled for a mug of warm English beer and were damn glad to get it.

Oronsay torpedoed 9 Oct 42

In October 1941, after twenty-six months of training, the Regiment was finally ordered overseas. Debert, Nova Scotia played host for a few days then they entrained for Halifax, their port of departure on the troopship *Oronsay*. Not exactly the *Queen Mary*, it was a former *Orient Steam Navigation Company* liner built in 1925 for Mediterranean/Pacific cruises. A warm water cruise ship of dubious vintage crossing the North Atlantic in November – what could possibly go wrong? By all accounts, recorded after arriving in England and for as long as memories could recount, everyone aboard was seasick for the entire voyage; sickness was so extreme that the bilge pumps didn't just pump out seawater.

After a nine-day crossing, the regiment landed at Liverpool, then entrained for Aldershot, arriving shortly after midnight. Aldershot Garrison was the home of the British army since 1854 with some of the barracks almost that old. The Hussars' first stroke of bad luck found them placed within the confines of Willems Barracks. Quoting the regimental history written post war by Lieutenant Foster Stark, 1951, the barracks were described as "dilapidated greystone buildings, built after the Crimea War…the rooms were bitterly cold and damp, and beads of water oozed from the perspiring walls in streams to the floor." The old maladies of colds and pneumonia encountered at Wolseley returned to challenge the MO's bag of medicinal remedies. With nowhere to turn to for better conditions, the Hussars invented quick fixes to make their surroundings at least habitable.

Lieutenant Stark goes on to single out the food dished out to the troops. He noted, "During this period, the rations were undoubtedly the worst ever consumed by the Regiment." His observations go on to mention how the fussiness of the British

military establishment ordered respirators to be carried at all times, with far too many training sessions with them, annoying attention to blackout discipline, dress parades, and the bloody, bloody rain. It all "combined to make all ranks slightly on edge and irritable." So much for the rosy picture presented in the London Free Press by a visiting British General in 1940, promising good food and accommodation.

Colonel Back takes the salute

To dispel the reader from believing that this was the first month of 30 more of the same, Stark concluded: "At any rate they had come to the conclusion that…it was a good country and everyone was glad to have a hand in the defence of it." In other words – the Hussars soldiered-on!

BRITAIN PREPARED TO EQUIP TANK BRIGADE FROM CANADA

"More Divisions of Canadians Come Here the Better," Says General—Provision of Food for Troops Presents No Problem

London, April 15—(CP)—Lieut.-Gen. Sir Wilfrid Lindsell, in charge of administration, home forces, indicated today that the war office is ready to equip the Canadian tank brigade when it comes to England to join the Canadian corps.

The brigade is expected in this country this year. Asked if it could get tanks quickly if it came without them, he said: "The Canadians would get tanks if they needed them."

He said priority is one of the questions which has to be taken into consideration when equipment is being distributed, since forces on the war fronts get first call.

Sir Wilfrid, speaking to war correspondents, said the volume of army supplies is "quite satisfactory" and the scale of reserves complete.

Regarding the food situation in Britain, he said additional troops from Canada would not place a burden on the army's food supplies. All the food requirements, in addition to gasoline and other everyday needs of the Canadians, could be met.

Once a month's leave was over and the Regiment was settling into their ancient barracks, everyone looked forward to training on more modern tanks. It is said the first casualty of war is truth; reviewing the tanks on hand for their training, they were reminded of a pledge made back home by that same British General who promised good food then unabashedly piped that in the UK there were also plenty of tanks: *Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.* It's an old proverb that sticks to this moment in time like flies to sticky paper.

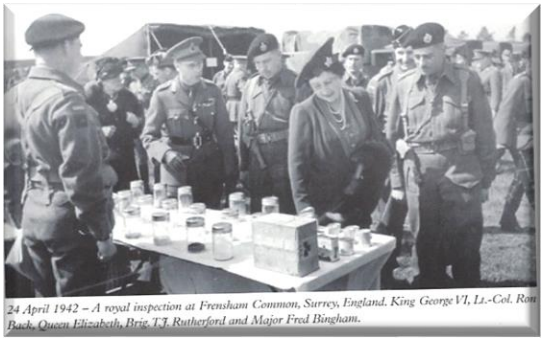
The Canadian request for training tanks, coming at a time when Britain was fighting in North Africa against the superior armour of Rommel, meant first priority of all new production had to go to the British fighting units. The Canadians would play

Crews training on Mark VI tanks in England circa 1942.

second fiddle to the active war's demands, receiving a variety of decrepit tanks in a piecemeal fashion until, and here is the irony, Canadian-built Ram tanks arrived to provide a full regimental training regimen using a decent tank. (Picture right).

A review of the facts in 2024 leaves one to wonder why the First Hussars had to brave the North Atlantic in winter when food, tanks, fuel and acres upon acres of training space were in abundance at home? C'est la guerre.

In April 1942, while at Frensham Common, Surrey, Their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth paid a visit to the Regiment. The Hussars no doubt felt honoured a second time, proudly recalling an earlier occasion when the Regiment stood Honour Guard as the Royal duo passed through London in 1939. The Royals timely pre-war presence on their cross-Canada tour lifted everyone's spirits after ten years of Depression misery. For a chance to view the King and Queen with war clouds looming, seeing them in person helped dispel some of those deep concerns held by Canadians facing new war prospects.


24 April 1942 – A royal inspection at Frensham Common, Surrey, England. King George VI, Lt.-Col. Ron Back, Queen Elizabeth, Brig. T.J. Rutherford and Major Fred Bingham.

As time moved on, so did the Regiment, to various locations around the British Isles where they received more and more training. They trained in practically every type of course on offer to make them efficient, but it must be pointed out – it was also designed to keep them busy. The army hates to see idle bodies hanging about with nothing to do so they invent things to occupy their time. They had arrived in Britain

probably eighteen months before actually needed, so they marked time until "the real need to know" training began. In late 1943 and early '44, with the issue of Sherman tanks, the Regiment got down to serious training, driving on and off landing craft designed to take them across the Channel to France. Once there, to be disgorged in a frontal assault against enemy fortifications on a beach not yet identified.

Hidden inside the canvas screen is a Sherman tank

While the Regiment trained with an increasingly professional approach readying them for war, details of how the allies would attack Europe were under way behind the scenes. One of the most exciting developments which directly involved the First Hussars was the concept of a floating tank. This secret weapon, known as a Duplex Drive tank (DD tank), was to be launched far out from shore and navigate through the sea under its own power to arrive on the beach *before the infantry*. To achieve this miraculous undertaking, special training was given to respective crews under secrecy. Not even unassigned Hussars knew about them but mechanics would most certainly have been the exception, learning their intricacies before D-Day.

A Normandy beach 6 Jun 44

The Regiment landed on Juno beach on 6 June 44. By day's end, 21 Hussars lay dead with 17 wounded. For the next five days, there was no let-up in fighting or deaths. Tanks and crews were lost as the allies struggled to hold on to the hard-won ground. Despite the incessant daily struggle they were enduring, their next major encounter coming five days later on June 11 stands alone for disaster, particularly in regards to "B" Squadron.

After the initial mauling, the Regiment stood ready to receive new tanks and crew replacements which they did by the 10th. The next main Regimental objective involved the battle for Caen, an objective planned for but never achieved on D-Day.

The orders given on 11 June directed the Regiment to take the town of Le Mesnil-Patry with "B" Squadron working in support of "D" Company of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada. (Major James Stewart Duncan,[4] The Officer Commanding "B" Squadron on D-Day, was not engaged in this battle. His tank "Bold" sank on the approach to the beach. He arrived in France on the 12th.)

A few destroyed tanks after 11 Jun 44

The battle account is long and complicated; the full story of the ambush is described in *The Gallant Hussars.* In those details, this fact stands out: when the sun set on this horrendous day, we can now state that 11 June 1944 was the bloodiest single day in the history of the Regiment. Now known as "The Black Day" of the First Hussars, the statistical aftermath is the best proof: Hussars: 45 KIA; 37 tanks destroyed[5]. Queen's Own Rifles: 53 KIA.

It was into the debris of this slaughter that Roy arrived in France on 13 June, probably with a large contingent of other replacements. Two peculiarities exist in his records: One Nominal Roll source places Roy in "A" Squadron and the other oddity is an absence of any written record indicating a posting in line with his trade. Roy was a qualified Motor Mechanic Group "B" and was drawing that level of trade's pay. He was tapped for that trade's qualification in Hamilton and again soon after arriving in the UK, on 28 May 42. From that date on he would work as a mechanic on the various tank models and other vehicles. Fortunately, his pay records verify his service as a motor mechanic in North West Europe until relieved six months later because of a medical condition.

[4] On D-Day Major Duncan's "B" Squadron outperformed all other Allied Forces. As planned, they landed on the beach ahead of the Regina Rifles, 15 DD tanks out of 19 launched. The combined force was inland in a record half hour.

[5] The tank loss represented 61% of the normal full complement of 60.

Military history naturally follows and describes all wars in terms of battles fought, or lost, concentrating on the men engaged in battle. Right-dressing the record straight, working close to the front lines and sometimes mixed into the battle lines, a multitude of skilled men feverishly met the challenge daily to have a full complement of tanks in the line. As a mechanic, Roy was but one tradesman making an unheralded contribution amongst not only mechanics but also machinists, blacksmiths, welders, carpenters, painters, chauffeurs, electricians, warehousemen, clerks, engineers, supervisors, radio experts, toolmakers, and leather and canvas workers.

In a lull, rest when you can

Job of welding common every day

Engine change in the field

In the midst of battle, these skilled mechanics kept the wheels turning, ensuring that military vehicles of all kinds remained operational even under the most challenging conditions. Their dedication and expertise were essential to the war effort. One unidentified mechanic has left us a short but valuable description of his typical day: “We didn’t stay in one place; we were with the Army and moving with the front lines, repairing tanks, trucks and all the equipment with them. We fixed what we could on the road, but if we couldn’t fix it, we’d bring it back to the shop.”

Rebuilding after the June 11 slaughter created such a chaos, the Regiment was told to stand-down until ready again. Roy was caught up in this melee. Once the

Regiment was re-equipped with replacements of men and machines, they returned to the battle, never stopping until the enemy's defeat on 8 May 45. As various operations designed to push back the enemy unfolded, Roy continued to work in the van of skilled tradesmen. Without any written evidence, the reader must picture all these men working hard "to do their bit."

Typical behind the lines scenes of mechanics and crews having a brew, a smoke or simply relaxing to the best of one's ability to do so. The dog is Monty, named after of course - Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery. Though Monty is a dog, his story is no less interesting than his namesake's.

Monty was an English dog befriended by a group of mechanics. When they were ordered to cross the Channel, they drugged him, stuffed him in a kit bag and took him to France. The enemy sometimes at night tried to infiltrate the lines to kill sleeping troops – they hadn't reckoned with Monty. His sharp ears responding to a threatening noise brought on a prompt Grrr! In short order the enemy was quickly dealt with thanks to Monty. When the Hussars reached Holland, Monty was given to a friendly Dutch family. Like the mechanics he befriended and warned, he is an unheralded hero.

On July 7 the First Hussars and the whole Allied front began to move again; the objective was Caen, the original objective on D-Day a month earlier. This was Operation Charnwood, the first of many plans designed to carry the Allies through France, Belgium, Holland and into Germany, ultimately wearing down the enemy into capitulation. The enemy stood ready to repel the attack bolstered by the fanatical *12th SS Panzer Division (Hitlerjugend)* equipped with the lethal 88mm anti-tank gun, the same gun which had decimated the Hussars on the 11th. On July 25 Caen was taken.

With the Americans sweeping across Northern France driving the Germans in wild retreat before them, the Canadian, British and Polish armies were combined in

Operation Goodwood, to drive south to the French town Falaise, putting the Germans into a pocket. Two more operations were needed, Operation Totalize and Tractable, before the Poles met the Americans on 19 August. With the enemy "in the bag," the next problem was how to deal with thousands of prisoners.

Roy's good friend going back to cavalry days, William Beavis, was posted to "B" Echelon. Their responsibility was to supply, and in that role he operated close to but typically behind the front lines. On 8 Aug the entire Regiment including "B" Echelon, suitably arranged behind the front line in a single-file, waited for a daylight formation of American bombers to drop bombs on the enemy as a preliminary for the ground attack. With eyes strained skyward, everyone saw waves of Flying Fortresses and Liberators come in overhead, but tragically bombs started falling off target onto the Echelon.

In a war zone, and that practically covers the whole world in WWII, but in this tragic unexpected incident in war torn France, a mistake sharply illustrates that working behind-the-lines was never considered a perfectly safe place. "The Regiment's "B" Echelon…was caught in the rain of Allied bombs with the result that eight Hussars were killed and a further 20 wounded." Unfortunately, William Herbert Beavis, A 381, was one of the eight killed. He is buried at Bretteville-sur-Laize, France.

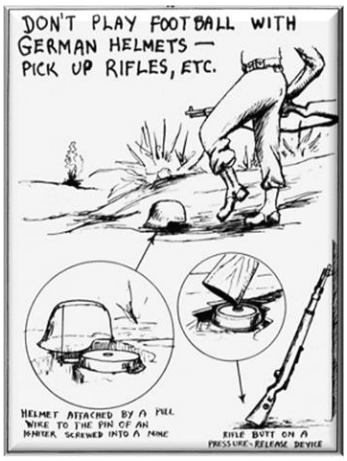
Bombing aftermath

First Hussars pals Roy and Bill

Inscription reads: A 381. TROOPER W.H. BEAVIS FIRST HUSSARS 8TH AUGUST 1944 AGE 31

The memorial from his mother Elizabeth reads: IN MEMORY OF MY DEAR SON WILLIAM SADLY MISSED BY MOTHER AND FAMILY.

Despite working behind the lines, one skilled artisan declared after the war that he was "scared all the time." In a post war admission, a First Hussars veteran, Jim Fisher, stated before he reached the beach in his DD tank, he lost all the bravado built up after years of training; from that moment on, and for eleven months more, he lived in a world of stress. Jim knew most men, if honest with themselves, felt the same. To read that a behind-the-lines mechanic felt the same stress/scared anxiety shouldn't surprise anyone. Whether combatant or mechanic, they were all trying to survive in a theatre of war.



Part of the reason for continuous stress was the inability to trust for safety the most innocuous objects. This warning poster illustrates the point but doesn't include comfortable chairs, candy bars, toys, a bottle of wine, the ground they walked on or the dead; all could be booby-trapped to kill the unwary!

Reinforcing Jim's disclosure years later in the same post-war world of relative peace and calm, Roy casting his mind back to wartime experiences, related to his son Paul a story which provides a sharp image of stress-stricken tank crews who have returned to harbour after a day in battle. He described a young man so petrified he was like a statue, unable to move, stuck in

the tank waiting to be rescued. After the young man was sedated by the Medical Officer, carefully, compassionately, Roy helped to inch him out, help him down and placed in the care of the MO for assessment and treatment. That particular man, and one must assume many others like him, succumbed to the danger and cacophony of battle to such an extent they were declared Mentally Unfit. In retrospect, is it desirable or fair that men who suffered mental wounds go unrecognised? Shouldn't their names be recorded according to other wounded reporting standards, that is under the heading - Wounded in Action? Today all mental instability falls under PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The First Hussars on 1 January were near the Dutch – German border awaiting an operation which would take them into Germany. The extremely cold winter brought much suffering to the Dutch, who gratefully accepted aid from Canadian army supplies. While supply lines helped the Dutch, mechanics were challenged to keep the Shermans operational. Roy related to son Paul how he built bonfires under the tank's belly plates, the covering below the engine, in attempts to keep the oil fluid. This little trick was fraught with two problems. First, slopped oil and fuel accumulates inside on the plates presenting the possibility of an even bigger fire! Second, what other danger could present itself with a fire at night? – Snipers looking for an easy target. Ach! No worries Jock!

As the bonfire under the tank would indicate, to get the job done a mechanic had to be resourceful. England is a wet country and the wet infiltrates everything, including vehicles. Roy's solution to a cranky truck that wouldn't start one morning was to take the distributor cap over to the mess tent, and to the cook's consternation, he popped it into the oven. The cook protested to higher authority eventually reaching the ears of Roy's Colonel. Paul has left a written record of the outcome: "As the story was told to me [by Roy], the Colonel marched into the mess tent and gave the cook hell about hindering the operation of vehicle movement

which was a priority over a clean oven…" In army parlance - the cook was "pissed on from a great height."

Fuel line trouble? No problem. While working on a problematic fuel line, Roy borrowed an old plumber's trick to stop the flow of a faulty water pipe. He simply stuffed the severed line with bread remembering to next clean the fuel filter. This incident, the cook's oven, and the warming of oil with a bonfire, are the humorous incidents in mechanic Roy's involvement behind the lines. His more complete experience is gained by considering the remarks above from other so called "behind-the-lines mechanics" working in the dangerous battle zone bringing on bouts of stress and fear.

It was at this inauspicious time that Roy suffered a setback due to the same cold hindering the tanks. Upon enlistment, the Medical Officer examining Roy described in incomprehensible medical terms a chronic foot condition commonly known as bunions. At times (many know this) they can flare up, especially in the cold. In Roy's case, the big toe crossed over the other toes producing excruciating pain inhibiting one's everyday routine especially walking. With a certain degree of sangfroid, the MO in 1939 deemed the condition too minor to label Roy Medically Unfit. Nevertheless, on a freezing cold 3 Jan 45 his foot pain was so intense that he went on sick parade. With fresh professional medical eyes and a new appreciation, the condition had become a serious disability to the extent that Roy was admitted to a UK hospital, away from France for the duration. Unlike his sketchy records in France, the hospital records in the UK are exhaustive.

On his first assessment, the Medical Officer examining him noted he had the greatest pain in his right foot. Dispelling any possibility that Roy could be "slinging the lead" to avoid danger, the MO wrote "He is a very good man."

Reviewing Roy's continuing changes in rank from 1940, when he reverted back to Trooper, in March 42 he was promoted to Lance Corporal (L/Cpl), a rank he held until January 44. Moving up in rank from that date on, he served as a Corporal (Cpl) until promoted to Lance Sergeant (L/Sgt). Once removed from active service, he became a ward of a UK hospital from 3 Jan to the 26th when he was discharged. On 9 Feb 45 he was posted to #2 CACRU (Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit). Within that Corps, his records note that, as a motor mechanic instructor serving in the training squadron, he was "happy at his Job" and wanted to continue serving, to "do his bit."

Upon arriving in England in November 41, the entire Regiment was given a few weeks leave in early "42. Any soldier who had a family connection in Britain immediately set off for a visit. Bill Beavis, originally from Sheffield, despite the Blitz or maybe because of it, beetled for home, taking with him his long-time good friend Roy McLeod. It was on that visit that Roy met Bill's cousin June. While only a girl of fifteen, she was the oldest of four girls. Did June a teenager and Roy married, know what time would bring them?

If upon meeting for the first time an attraction was nurtured between the young English girl and older Canadian soldier, one step was necessary before the relationship could blossom; Roy needed a divorce. Two years later on November 17, 1944, Roy was granted a Decree Absolute from Maude Irene back home in London, Ontario.[6]

[6] There are no figures indicating how many service men were divorced overseas in order to remarry. But the divorce rates attributable to the disruption of society abroad and home, increased from 1940 to 1946. Considering a new set of time, place and circumstances surrounding a new love which every married man might experience, the trend above seems to indicate that love and romance bloomed often, single or not. The reverse coming from a wife back in Canada to her absent husband also happened. Those romances resulted in the dreaded "Dear John letters."

For a life change, one that brings with it a new title without rank, no medals only responsibility, marriage happens. On October 1, 1945, Roy Willard McLeod married June Beavis in the Registry Office in The County Borough of Sheffield, Yorkshire, England. The figures below show the surprising number of Canadian Service Men's wives and children who came to Canada for a new life.[7] The large numbers suggests that Canadian men serving overseas weren't training and fighting all the time.

In July 45 promoted to full Sergeant, Roy was transferred to #8 Canadian Repatriation Depot. Next, and on a roll in November 45, he was assigned to The Regimental Police Wing, part of the Repatriation Depot. While there he caught the Brass Ring and was promoted for the last time to Warrant Officer Class II (WOII).

As the newest Seargeant Major, the first person he thought of was his wife June. It was near Christmas in 1945, when he arrived late at her parents' home in Sheffield where she was living. She was in bed but the moment is recorded in her diary: "Mac came in about 10:30 and came up to me. He has Sgt. Major's crown up now. Looks smart too." She wrote on about their night together and how wonderful she felt in his arms. "We were both so happy to be together again and held so close." The love expressed that night shines through in many pictures of the couple in later life, all 57 years.

With this rank he served the Depot as a Company Sergeant Major (CSM). He maintained that rank until his discharge at home in London, 1946. Roy must have been a dab hand with a sewing needle. One wonders how, with every change in

[7] Arriving by steamer in 1946, were 47,783, war brides, bringing with them 21,950 children.

rank, he managed to sew on, or take off, the stripes designating his rank? An unbelievable story of rank changes if ever there was one!

Flexing the power of his new distinguished higher rank while still in England, he ordered that two men going on leave who refused to clean up and be presentable, be taken into the showers, cold no doubt, and be scrubbed raw with that ubiquitous bar of "Sergeant Major's Soap." That job done, the duo went off, a little red and sore but definitely clean.

June Beavis was born June 11, 1926, in Rotherham, England and promptly baptised on the 23rd in the Cranbrook Parish Church. June was obviously a responsible child, eligible for suitable recognition. In 1938, She received a Certificate of Attendance for punctuality every school day. The next year she earned a Certificate of Merit for passing her academic subjects, plus achieving high marks for her domestic skills and crafts.

The Leaving Certificate dated July 25, 1940, released June from school to seek employment. With the bulk of the male population in uniform, women were in big demand to volunteer for war work. At the time she was married she was a laundress. Later, in Canada, June would continue to demonstrate her amazing talent and work ethics by operating a tow truck, one essential part of husband Roy's future garage. Obviously, a good girl to have around!

The return home policy of the Canadian army at first glance was straightforward. Basically, it was a simple plan of first in, first out, but added to it was - where did the man serve and for how long? If a man served for the entire eleven months of fighting in North West Europe, D-Day 6 Jun 44 to surrender 8 May 45, he topped the list. No fault of Roy's, but he was pulled from France in January 45 spending the remainder of the year serving in the UK. This disqualified him for a priority sailing date.


LONDON ACCLAIMS HUSSARS

A happy consequence of remaining longer was the opportunity to spend more time with his new wife in her familiar surroundings, enjoying the restored peaceful countryside and June's family. His posting to the Repatriation Depot was an easy go, made easier when the bulk of the First Hussars left for home in early 1946 arriving at London's CNR station to a welcoming crowd on January 14, 1946.

Enjoying aboard ship some of the perquisites of rank, Sergeant Major Roy Willard McLeod left England in February 46 on the *Cunard Line, RMS Queen Elizabeth*. His Discharge Certificate was signed at Wolseley Barracks on 6 April 1946.

What a great time to arrive back home. South Western Ontario experiences four seasons. Stepping off the train in early spring, Roy was just in time to witness the trees turning from dank brown to fresh green, and in the morning sunshine, the migrating birds started each day with a serenade of songs. They were glad to be alive, and with the war over, so should have every human being. Good-bye war, good bye Depression, hello to a whole new world. World wars can and do change everything. For a total change, Roy had to wait until August when June would arrive.

Given the large numbers of women and babies going to Canada and even greater numbers of service men and women anxious to do the same, wives and children were given second priority.

Eventually, once the great backlog of service personnel was cleared, the family migration began. June Beavis McLeod would sail away from her homeland on August 9, 1946, aboard the *Cunard White Star*, *Aquitania*. Her ticket was provided free, courtesy of the Canadian Free Passage Scheme. Coming with her was a packet of documents, both personal and official, that every war bride needed. June's

attention to detail and preservation, awards her surviving family with a rare treat to read in the twenty-first century, her entire trip details from the old world to the new.

No woman was allowed to leave her home country who wasn't physically fit, free of disease. Tucked away ready for inspection was her Good Bill of Health signed on 1 Aug 46 plus both her Birth Certificate and Marriage Licence. Crossing the Atlantic from Southampton to Halifax was apparently delightful, arriving as a Landed Immigrant (stamped on the Immigration card) after only six days, on August 15, 1946.

From that point on to her ultimate destination in Canada, June was under the charge of the Department of National Defence, (Army). For her comfort, she was provided with two train meal tickets, value 75 cents each. On some unspecified date and time (perhaps from ship to train on August 15?), she left Halifax by train and was to pass through Toronto with a stopover in London at 5:35 PM. Her last listed destination was Grand Bend via Parkhill. Presumably Roy met her in London because there was no train connection between London and Parkhill – ever!

Why Grand Bend? Roy was living with his mother Mary Ellen and step father Carl Smith who operated a small restaurant. Perhaps Roy needed a complete distraction from his war experiences and found it at the lake side helping with lunch deliveries. This beach resort was a favourite stop for tourists who flocked there each summer to enjoy hot dogs and French fries but especially the large Lakeview Casino Dance Hall situated beside the lake. The location was a prime entertainment spot allowing the big band sounds so popular

in the 1930s and ‘40s, to drift out the windows, gifting a free concert to the happy young couples cuddling on the beautiful white sandy beach.

Grand Bend, like all beach resorts, closed up in the winter, creating a migration of people back to the bigger cities. Roy and June headed for London. With thousands of veterans back home, accommodations in short supply during the war, became even more scarce driving couples to live for a time with relatives. The beach-weathered McLeod’s shifted from parents to reside for a time with brother Malcolm Eugene and his wife Dorothy. When a house became available in the Ealing area of Hamilton Road, Roy and June bought it. Besides a desire to live independently, one other motive is obvious - Roy wanted to work as a mechanic.

At the corner of Wellington Road and Base Line, a small garage equipped with Saddy gas pumps and a tow truck was “just the ticket” for the hard-working couple. June could turn her hand to any work she fancied and the tow truck was no exception. She learned to drive it in some unknown cemetery, followed by instructions in towing skills. At various times and places, startled stranded drivers could find themselves hitched up to June’s tow truck. Then seizing the opportunity while exercising a degree of canniness, she might pull car and driver back to the garage where Roy could work his mechanical magic, thus doubling their income!

In her “spare time” she pumped gas and housed boarders in the garage apartment upstairs. Another apartment on the ground floor was rented to wartime family friends. June and Roy (Honey and Mic) had all the bases covered; they were a real team.

Over the course of early years in their married lives, Roy and June McLeod exhibited another quality common to well-adjusted couples – the desire to have children. With none coming, they exhibited the very human side of their marriage by unselfishly turning to adoption. In a few short years, two girls and a boy were adopted and given loving care within the growing family. (Glenn came later.)

Paul and Glenn

Jill and Paul

Anne and Jill

Roy's whole life exhibited a strong independent life style; when he married June, he found a soul mate. After a few years operating the Wellington Rd. garage, they became restless, began looking for new prospects. With the idea of building a new garage, in the early 1950s they moved to a house on the 5th Concession, Westminster Township. The lot was suitable for a planned garage but unfortunately, the Township Council nixed those dreams. Undaunted, disappointed no doubt, they turned their strong work ethics to seek out over the ensuing years a variety of work.

Once McLeod Motors was in the past and the dream of a new garage had disappeared, Roy, recognised as a veteran, was hired at Central Ordnance Depot on Highbury Ave. With its closure, Roy moved on for a while to Hamilton. Returning to London, he found work with Gord Chant Auto Wreckers.

Their 5th Concession home was on the south edge of London, near Westminster Veteran's Hospital. June was hired as a cook, but so typical of her drive and dexterity, she managed to juggle two other jobs at nearby restaurants.

As the years rolled by, the rural life began to sour. The house, bought with the expectation of a business venture that never materialised, had no potable water supply for a family of two adults and four children. Drinking water was acquired elsewhere and carried in by the pail full. In a modern world, with many demands, country life is not always idyllic. In 1977 the McLeod family moved into the city, residing on Dulaney Drive.

As the Maple, so the Sapling

Perhaps when Roy and June (Mic and Honey) had become comfortably resigned to never having children of their own, one day June announced she was pregnant. In 1964 she gave birth to a healthy, and they would soon learn, very capable boy they named Glenn, middle name Malcolm after his grandfather. When Glenn reached his teen years, he joined the Royal Canadian Army Cadets (RCAC). The Cadets were naturally structured around military discipline, striving to have each cadet turning out looking smart and behaving in a respectful manner. Glenn quickly fell in line with the routine to become a leader, a Cadet Sergeant, while his overall demeanour brought him to the attention of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award committee.

The underlying reason for the award states: Young people growing up in this modern, complicated world have many difficulties to face, and opportunities for personal achievement are often limited. The Award is intended to help both the young as well as those who are concerned for their welfare. [It] provides an introduction to worthwhile leisure activities and voluntary service, as a challenge to the satisfaction of achievement and encourages the development of young citizens. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award programmes take between one and four years to complete, and they must be completed by the participant's twenty-fifth birthday. There are around 300,000 new participants annually.

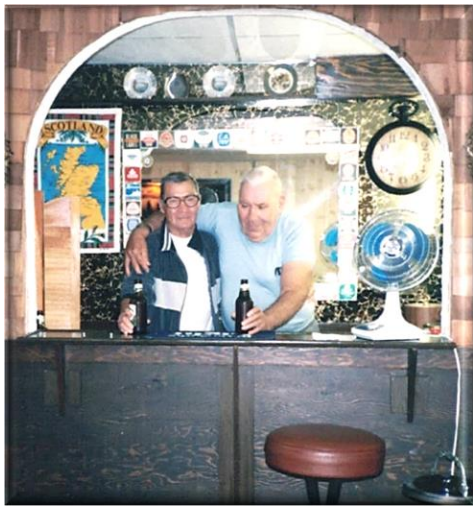
Less obvious perhaps, but certainly unheralded for Glenn's success, is the contribution derived from good parenting. Take a bow Roy and June; you deserve a round of applause.

In 1980, at London's Wolseley Barracks, before the assembled Number 9 RCAC and a gathering of parents and friends, a ceremony was held, presenting to Cadet Sergeant Glenn Malcolm McLeod, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. A year later a pall of grief befell the entire assembly.

On May 7, 1981, while driving his parent's car, Glenn was taking six fellow cadets to a rural address for some type of military training course. Driving on a gravel road, a tricky road surface for the practised but especially for a young man with no prior experience, the car veered off the road, killing six, including Glenn. The seventh cadet received severe wounds. Glenn was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery with his WWI veteran grandfather and namesake, Malcolm McLeod. The impact of the loss was felt in the McLeod home for years later.

June, unlike Roy's reticence, managed to keep active. Over the years she returned to England, visiting family and old friends left behind in 1946. Collector plates, spoons and dolls became her passion. One doll, resplendent in the McLeod tartan and topped with sprig of heather, drew Roy's attention and appreciation.

Never one to be idle, June's labour of love was her garden, a quiet place to wile away most summer days. But then she was English, wasn't she? In England, what's a home without the English garden?



But alas, time comes a cropper. Roy's mobility was challenged, requiring a walker or scooter. Seen in the accompanying picture with brother Eugene, despite his handicap, he still managed to trip down to his man-cave for some light refreshment. Not long after the twenty-first century unfolded, the onetime boxer, First Hussars cavalry man, WWII veteran, motor mechanic, entrepreneur, husband and father known famously as Roy, Mickey or Mic, suffered a heart attack. He passed on November 19, 2002 and is buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

To the always so capable June, suffering from grief and new experience of living alone, her vast capabilities began to slip away. The slow onset of dementia robbed her memory and the ability to lead the orderly life so recognised for her. When daily visits from family became an overwhelming challenge, outside care was sought to take over some of the responsibility. Placing a parent in long term care is never easy, but that day for many of us becomes a painful necessity. June lived her

last two years in the Country Terrace Nursing Home in Komoka, passing on February 15, 2006. She is buried beside husband Roy.

True togetherness

Roy Willard "Mickey" McLeod met June Beavis in her home town of Sheffield, England, in January 1942. They were married on October 1, 1945, and after the war, June came to Canada as a war bride and remained married to her Mic for 57 years. Their love for each other and family leaves behind three children, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, with special mention for Glenn.

Now that's the kind of war story that should be shared. It was certainly a joy to write. Nick Corrie

Medals and Decorations:

1939 – 45 Star

France and Germany Star

Defence Medal

Canadian Volunteer Service Medal

War Medal 1939 – 45

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CANADA