

MY SOAPBOX  
BY  
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Hi Fellow Seniors:

Their life is much quieter now, the pace is slow and the excitement limited. The loudest noise to be heard is a truck or bus passing by. However, this was not always the case for Earl McNames and Earl Moore who now live at Metcalfe Gardens in St. Thomas. As part of my contribution to pay tribute to our Veterans who served in World War II, I interviewed these two gentlemen and asked them to give me an idea of what those War Years were like from their own experiences. I apologize in advance if I make any errors in names or places.

Pte. Earl McNames was 21 years old when he enlisted in the Elgin Regiment in June 1940. After going through basic training in London, Toronto, Quebec and finally to Cape Breton where he was attached to the 25<sup>th</sup> Armoured Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Armoured Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Division.

In August, 1942 he sailed from Halifax on the "AWATEA" which has been requisitioned as a troopship in 1941. She was a 13,000 ton liner, the pride of the Union Line of New Zealand. The Awatea had a history of close shaves with disaster. The Awatea sailed at dawn as part of a convoy in a heavy fog, escorted by American destroyers. That night, however, she was hit amidships, by what at first was believed to be a torpedo, but was later found to be another ship of the convoy. Upon investigation it was found that the ship had an open gash just at the water line and had to be repaired. Volunteers were asked for and five troopers from the Elgin Regiment worked for seven hours shoring up the gash. The ship had to return to Halifax. On Sept. 26, the troops filed on board once again for an uneventful trip to Britain, even though she was traveling alone without an escort. The disembarked at Greenock, Scotland and were then sent to Aldershot, England to rejoin the rest of their division.

Earl's Division was to help reassemble armoured vehicles at Portsmouth for D-Day and on D-Day +6, he landed in Normandy with armoured unit. From there he was transferred to GHQ at Felise Gap, France to help keep track of troop movement and casualty reports. From there he was assigned to Amsterdam, Holland still with GHQ, then to Antwerp, Belgium, then to Ghent, Belgium. May 5, 1945 the war in Europe ended and he was sent back to England. In December 1945 he was sent home in the Queen Elizabeth.

I asked Earl what kept him going through the bad days such as the Invasion, and his reply was "I tried to remember funny occasions just to keep going". Earl never talked about the brutality of war, those memories are personal.

Pte. Earl Moore joined and 2<sup>nd</sup> Elgin Reserves in 1939, but by 1941 joined the RCAF. He wanted to be part of a ground crew but because of a stigmatism, they wouldn't accept him and instead sent him to train for TOP SECRET work. He trained at U.W.O. on what was called 'electronics' (eventually called radar). In October, he sailed on a passenger ship, the Ausonia as part of a convoy. The trip took 13 days to cross the Atlantic because of UBoat activity.

Earl was sent to Bournemouth where for the first time he was shown radar equipment which was 'top secret'. Plane detection system consisted of transmitter, receiver and a screen that could locate enemy planes. This system was known as the R.D.F. (Radiation Direction Finding). He was then posted to Yatesbury which was the main British Training Centre for R.D.F. operators. He went through intensive training on aircraft detection and the unit he worked on was as large as an upright grand piano. He was then transferred to the "Faroe Islands" which were located north of Scotland between Norway and Iceland and owned by Denmark. Winston Churchill indicated they were of great strategic importance to the battle of the Atlantic and there was every evidence that the Germans would have been there had the British not moved first.

"Six Stations were built on the individual Faroe Islands to detect submarines, and also to restock and refuel Allied shipping. The 14 man crew arrived and after a quick weapons course we were moved to Nolsoe Island guarding the East side of the Island and Torshavn. None of our crew had ever worked on Air to Surface Vessel or similar types of equipment. We were all from Chain Home (CH) stations. The principles were the same but the rest we learned from secret documents or by trial and error."

"We never had a fighter capability and therefore our primary job was Early Warning for aircraft, plotting of shipping and tracking our patrols. We frequently plotted enemy aircraft. The work is mostly routine but on one occasion a radar response kept simply appeared and kept growing larger. I could only think of a surfacing U-Boat and so we did a visual. We had passed a position to control and now we added "plotting enemy shipping". Two ships came charging around the point of our island and the U-Boat did a crash dive. He was too late as a pattern of depth charges from each of the ships practically blew the U-Boat out of the water."

"The real enemy of radar was the weather, especially the wind. From October to May we were forced to lash the aerials because of wind. These were hurricane force winds. It took three men to do the job, one to tie the ropes and two to hold that many so he could work." Because of continual damage Earl and his crew finally devised a "Dome" to keep the wind from blowing the aerials down.

On June 6, 1944, Earl was posted to Weymouth to service the radar station to detect injured and crashed planes and to notify Air/Sea Rescue unit of downed planes. In August 1945 he was posted home.

My sincere thanks to both Earls for spending time with me and sharing some of their memories. Space limitation is always a problem with a column like mine and I apologize to both gentlemen for so much editing.

Bye for now and remember these two veterans and thousands of other of November 11 by attending the Memorial Service at the St. Thomas Cenotaph. Also keep in mind that this is the “Year of the Veteran” designated by the Federal Government. What the Federal Government should do is make November 11 a NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE. You can help by contacting your Federal Member of Parliament and demanding they get this done!