

Area family remembers sacrifices made by fathers in Second World War

By Paula Brown

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

For nearly two decades Mulmur resident Joan Wallace has stood beside the cenotaph outside of the Shelburne Town Hall on Remembrance Day, November 11, helping to lead residents through the singing of the national anthem.

In that moment, when the ceremony of remembering those who sacrificed their lives has begun, she takes a moment herself to think about her father Raymond Hardick and father-in-law Ken Wallace, who both served during the Second World War.

"It's a very important day, there's no doubt about that, for both of our families and anything I can offer to do to help," said Joan. "I feel I'm contributing, I'm carrying on what my dad did."

Born in Sarnia, ON, in 1925, Raymond Hardwick was too young to serve when the Second World War began in 1939, so instead he worked as a farmer. Later he was employed by Muller's War Time Service and Imperial Oil. When he reached the age of 18 in 1943, he enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and was shipped overseas in the summer of 1944 to fight in the Second World War.

Hardwick was stationed in Wickenby, England as part of the Bomber Command, Squadron 12.

During his 13th mission, Hardwick and his crewmates Doug Harrison, Doug Adams, Les Wallace, Bill Brooke, Geo Smith and Bill Tracey, were on route to Nuremberg, Germany on March 16, 1945, when their plane was attacked by enemy forces.

"A fighter aircraft came in after them and Dad caught sight of it a couple of times. He called for a corkscrew, which is an evasive action, but it came up from beneath them and shot them up pretty good," explained Joan.

Losing altitude quickly, due to damage to three of their four engines, the plane remained in the air for roughly three hours bypassing a German airstrip at less than 5,000 feet before eventually crash-landing on an American airfield near Rheims, France.

In the midst of the attack, Hardwick was shot multiple times in his position as rear gunner and sustained injuries to his leg. The March 16 mission would become his last as he was shipped to England to convalesce from his injury before returning home to Canada in September of 1945.

"Even 70 years later he would have shrapnel come out of his legs from the injury," recalled Joan. "But he never stopped and it built in him a character of determination."

After returning home, Hardwick married his wife, Mary, in June of 1946 and the two settled with their three daughters - Dale, Joan and Mary-Lynn - in the Town of Shelburne.

Hardwick purchased and operated Hardwick Jewelers on Main Street in Shelburne until his retirement in 1995.

"As the child of a veteran, I saw what he lived with everyday being wounded. You never understand what they lived through during the war, but saw what they lived with everyday for the rest of their life," said Joan.

Her connection with Remembrance Day extends even further past her father, with her husband Bob Wallace's father also serving in the Second World War.

Like many children who grew up with fathers serving in the war, the details of Ken Wallace's time in Europe are scarce as he kept many of his memories close to his chest.

?He never talked about it,? said Bob. ?It wasn't until later in life that it all came back up.?

A fourth-generation Mulmur resident, Ken Wallace was working as a machinist in the city when he and a group of friends decided to enlist in the war in 1943. Wallace served in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in the Fighter Squadron 428 and was a trained radio operator. He was a participant in the D-Day Invasion of Juno Beach in France and helped establish the Spitfire Airfield, located about three miles inland from the coast.

Wallace returned home to Canada in October of 1944 following a back injury from diving into a foxhole while under attack from enemy forces. At the time he was shipped home, he weighed no more than 120 pounds.

?The conditions he lived in were horrendous,? said Bob.

The biggest thing Joan and Bob have learned from being the children of veterans isn't the stories of their time overseas, but the years of continuing to give back to their community.

?They came home and both started volunteering,? said Bob.

Hardwick was a member of the Shelburne Rotary Club, served on Shelburne Town Council, volunteered at the Shelburne Legion Branch 220 for over 40 years as the service officer and was involved in both the local hockey and curling clubs.

Wallace served for years on the local school board and was part of the movement to expand outside of single-room schoolhouses. He also helped as a driver for the Canadian Cancer Society and Shriners Hospital for Children. In what is known as one of his biggest acts of volunteerism, Wallace was part of a group of residents who helped fundraise for the Lost Soldiers Memorial outside of Shelburne Town Hall for which he received a Governor's Community Volunteer Award.

?They felt a duty to go to Europe because something terrible was happening and when they came home, they still had a sense of duty; that never changed,? said Joan. ?That sense of community and being involved kind of rubs off of you, it really does.?

Raymond Hardick passed away in 2007 at the age of 82. Ken Wallace passed away in 2015 at the age of 93.

But their legacy lives on through their volunteerism, sacrifices on the battlefield and decades of dedication to the Shelburne community.