



AUTUMN 2011

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Between Us

The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre ♦ OTTAWA, ONTARIO



Brant Scott photo

Guy Robitaille: Helping our POWs reintegrate into Canadian society

By Brant Scott

Everyone has a bad day now and then, but Guy Robitaille's harrowing experience on July 27, 1943 brought his war to a sudden end.

When Guy led his platoon to fight for possession of a hill in Sicily that day, his body lay in bloody ruin and he earned a Military Cross for bravery. Fragments of the German phosphorus bullet that ripped into his left thigh would burn for the next three months. Surgeons left the wound open so they could extract the searing pinhead-sized fragments during thrice-daily cleanings. Now at 91, Guy still carries a scarred cavity in his leg the size of a baseball. Shortly after taking the bullet, Guy took shrapnel from a bomb in his right bicep. But it was the chunk of shrapnel deep in his chest near the heart and collapsing a lung that ended his war. The

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MILITARY CROSS FOR BRAVERY: Guy Robitaille enjoyed successful careers during WWII and long after when he served with NATO. Wounded three times in just over an hour in 1943, he now resides with us at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre.

Perley Rideau Foundation board profile

Kenneth Dye: The kindly uncle and watchdog who sustains quality of life

By Brant Scott

Kenneth Dye has carved out a reputation – or two – in the nation's capital.

He is known as the mild-mannered practitioner of common sense on the Board of Directors at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation -- the favourite uncle who freely dispenses sage advice. Literally, he is a 75-year-old Boy Scout and the former treasurer of an Ottawa church association.

Flash back to Ken Dye in the 1980s, who made prime ministers tremble and cabinet ministers responsible. Ken is still remembered today for his no-nonsense tenure as one of Canada's prominent Auditor Generals who monitored the spending habits of both Liberal and

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Guy Robitaille: Helping POWs reintegrate into society ... *continued from page 1*

scrappy soldier from Quebec was wounded three times in just over an hour. His chest would be wrapped in a sticky field dressing for nearly a day before anyone with medical credentials would examine the damage.

“I was the Van Doos No. 9 Platoon Commander and led 35 troops along the dry bed

of the Dittaino River,” explains Guy. “We tried to get through at night and had to turn back when we couldn’t see. I knew the Germans had their mortars trained on the river bed, so I was not happy when we were ordered to try again in daylight. As the leader, I was the prime target and got hit with a bullet and shrapnel. While I was lying in hospital for nine months, I heard on the radio I would be awarded a Military Cross for my so-called bravery.”

Ever since Guy Robitaille was a child in Lauzon-Lévis, Quebec, he wanted to be a part of the famous Van Doos Royal 22^e Régiment. The eighth child of a mother who died when he was just five years old, Guy then lost his father in 1936. He joined the militia in 1937 and delivered bread until he heard the clarion call of war overseas in August 1939. He quickly ascended through the ranks of sergeant and captain and

would culminate as Lieutenant Colonel in his post-war military career. Guy married Annie Fox just a month before he was shipped to war overseas and recently celebrated his 70th wedding anniversary.

When Canada declared war in 1939, Guy set about making good on his mobilization order for



PROUD YOUNG VAN DOOS COMMANDER: Guy Robitaille led the Van Doos No. 9 Platoon into battle on July 27, 1943 and his life changed forever. He went from the battleground to nine months in hospital when German mortars abruptly ended his war in a Sicily river bed.

Defence of Vital Points by securing Quebec ammo depots, bridges and anti-aircraft guns along the St. Lawrence River. After he succumbed to injury in Sicily, Guy’s military background helped him cultivate an interest in the treatment of Canadian prisoners of war at the hands of the Japanese. Canadian troops were forced into hard labour by the Japanese and Guy wanted to help reintegrate them into society after the Japanese

surrendered.

“I was heading to Manila in the Philippines to organize POWs, and I bought a box of Laura Secord chocolates in Montreal for an old friend who was hopefully being released from a Japanese labour camp,” recalls Guy. “I carried those chocolates through England, Egypt, Australia and finally to Manila and ended up in a tent with a group of POWs. We talked for a



BRAVERY LEAVES IT MARK: The young soldier from Quebec who laid his life on the line received a Military Cross during WWII. After the war, Guy Robitaille turned his attention to helping long-suffering Canadian POWs reintegrate into society when they returned to their homeland.

while and I asked them if they knew where my friend was. There was complete silence when one of the men told me I had been sitting beside my friend for half an hour. I looked at this man who used to weigh 200 pounds and now he was only about 100 pounds. I couldn't help myself and started to cry. I dug the chocolates out of my pack and when he opened them, they were full of maggots. That's when we started to laugh."

Guy went on to create a program that would inform Canadian families of the status of individual POWs, provide POWs with fast cash for essentials, explain the rehabilitation process to the victims, and identify Japanese officers who contravened the rules of war. Guy says the POW rehab process has never been widely publicized in Canada, yet it was an essential part of the healing process for

those who suffered through years of deprivation and hardship.

Guy Robitaille has been a resident at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre for nearly a year, where he is vice-president of the Veterans' Council and a lector at the Chapel. He remains upbeat about what life has to offer and enjoys visits from Annie, who still occupies the family home in Ottawa. They have two daughters and a son. After his promotion in 1961 to Lieutenant Colonel, Guy's career included serving NATO through the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe and operations and military intelligence postings in Ottawa. He retired in 1971, and remains spry with crystal clear recollections of the people, dates and locations that were the theatre of his youth. **BU**

C.P.A. 1 40/P & S/1420 (3080)				
Date recommendation passed forward				
Received		Passed		
Brigade 1 Cdn		Division 30 Corps		
Schedule No. (to be left blank)		Unit Royal 22e Regt.		
Army No. and Rank Lieutenant		Army Group 18 Sep 43		
Name Guy ROBITAILLE (Christian names must be stated)		Army Group 18 Sep 43		
Action for which commended (Date and place of action must be stated)	Recommended by	Honour or Reward	(To be left blank)	
<p>For bravery, courage and leadership in the front face of the enemy on the 28 Jul 43 at SANTA MARIA, SICILY. This officer commanded No. 9 Platoon in the daylight attack on point 246 near SANTA MARIA and whilst advancing on the enemy position was wounded in the thigh.</p> <p>He continued forward up the sheer, bare slope with his men, and was hit again by shrapnel in the right arm. This did not stop him, however, from continuing to lead his platoon.</p> <p>Just before reaching the summit he was again wounded, this time in the chest, and was unable to continue further, but in spite of three serious wounds he continued to direct his men and encouraged them. After finding out that the attack was successful he insisted that the wounded nearby get medical attention before him.</p>		Immediate M.C.		
		(J.P.E. Bernatchez)	Lt.-Col. Comd. R. 22e R.	
		(M.H.S. Penhale)	Brig. Comd. 3 Cdn. Inf. Bde.	
		(G.G. Simonds)	Major-General GOC 1 Cdn Div.	
		(Sgd) O.W.H. Leese,	Lieutenant-General, Comd. 30 Corps.	
	(Sgd) B.L. Montgomery,	General, GOC Eighth Army P.T.O.		

DOCUMENTING THE DAMAGE: Guy Robitaille heard on the radio in hospital that he would receive a Military Cross for bravery. This document arrived later on by mail and proclaims he was the recipient of an "Immediate M.C." and it also cites, "...in spite of three serious wounds he continued to direct his men and encouraged them."

Poppy campaign raises much-needed funds – **Local Legion branches share long history with grateful Perley Rideau veterans**

By Brant Scott

Ever noticed that the Royal Canadian Legion doesn't charge for that poppy on your lapel?

There is no price for a poppy, but the donation you make in return is priceless – you are helping to provide Canadian veterans and their spouses with a collective voice, financial assistance, and comfort in their twilight years. Members of local Legion branches provide a welcome presence throughout the community, and the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre is a popular hub for the organization's energy and goodwill.

The Legion's administrative onion skin peels back from the Dominion level through Provincial, District, Zone and to the local Branch. While the successive levels communicate closely on policy and services, the branch members make important decisions on how to support veterans in their area.

"We are concerned with the care and comfort of all veterans," explains Legion G5 Zone Commander Blaine Kiley at the Perley Rideau's annual Poppy Tea kick-off. "We try to ensure that all veterans and their spouses in the region are taken care of, and the Poppy Fund is our driving force. We refuse no veteran or their spouse in need."

The Poppy Fund in the Ottawa region collects about \$900,000 each year, and each branch does its own fundraising. The branches spend what they raise by allocating their Poppy Fund proceeds back into the community. Given the concentration of some 250 veterans at the Perley Rideau, several Ottawa-area branches share their time and funding with the Health Centre. Generous Legion volunteers have created a schedule to visit the Health Centre on an on-going basis to help run the pub and bingo events.

"The Legion has a constant presence at the

Perley Rideau, but it's not limited to this place," says John Morrison, the Legion's Provincial Service Officer and liaison with Veterans Affairs Canada. "We visit veterans and their spouses wherever they are. We are already planning to present each Perley Rideau veteran and spouse with a warm vest bearing the Legion insignia on December 23. It's our annual Christmas present to keep the chill away during the winter months, but we see residents proudly wearing them all year-round."

The Canadian Legion of the British Empire Services League was spawned in Winnipeg in 1925 and the organization we know today added the "Royal" with the Queen's consent in 1960. The nature of the organization has an aging membership, yet it keeps evolving as younger members fill the ranks. Today, the Royal Canadian Legion is the largest of the many veterans' organizations in the country with 340,000 members.

Morrison, who spent 30 years in the Canadian Armed Forces, says the beauty of the Legion's organizational layers is the trickle-up policy structure.

"The unique thing is the reverse-pyramid of management," he explains. "The members tell the hierarchy what they want. The Dominion Command of the Legion is responsible for the rules over the ten provinces and territories. So, the changes we want start at the branches driving it from the bottom and upward through the chain."

"Our Dominion representatives appear constantly before parliamentary committees to advocate for veterans," he adds. "We watch closely the government's proposed changes to Veterans Affairs and defence policy to make sure

they don't have an adverse effect on veterans. If they do, we approach the government to advocate for them and their spouses."

In a day and age when a sceptical public hesitates to support administrative costs in not-for-profit fundraising, the Poppy Fund turns every cent it raises over to veterans' needs. The proceeds are used for one-time funding and directed toward virtually anything a veteran or their spouse might require. The fund contributes to essentials from dentures to fuel bills, depending upon the applicants' needs. The only stipulation is a bona fide requirement for financial assistance.

"All of the Poppy Fund money goes back into the community," says Blaine Kiley. "Our books are open to the public and all the funding goes to veterans comforts and benefit. The poppy campaign does not pay for any administrative costs, salaries or rentals. There are no overhead fees for the campaign. There is a provision for certain expense claims made by poppy campaign organizers for out-of-pocket travel, but our volunteers tend not to submit those claims. We're all in this for the veterans and their spouses and all members are asked to actively participate."

The Legion helps out when veterans in need have requirements beyond the normal Veterans Affairs allocations. They could get funding in whole or in part for a hearing aid, eyeglasses, wheelchair, clothing, structural improvements at home and a host of other needs. The funding is provided on an emergency basis and a request may be refused if the applicant is found to be independently affluent. According to the Legion charter, the Poppy Fund cannot be used toward sustaining the branches.

"We might help provide something to read,

help purchase a furnace, a new roof, windows, and all sorts of things," explains Morrison. "If a branch was threatened with closure due to lack of funds, it could not use any portion of its Poppy Fund to help. It can't support a branch in its endeavour to stay open."

Kiley suggests any veteran, spouse or dependent who needs Poppy Fund assistance should contact their local Legion branch to request funding.

"We are here to help and we will look at each and every request," he says. "We will



LEGION POPPY FUND HELPS VETERANS: Royal Canadian Legion G5 Zone Commander Blaine Kiley (left) and Provincial Service Officer John Morrison attended the Perley Rideau's 2011 Poppy Tea kick-off. Local Legion branches have a rich history of donating their time and money to veterans at our Health Centre.

determine if assistance is allowable and if we're capable of providing it. If it's a small amount, the branch will look after it, and if it requires a larger amount, we can go up the chain to secure funding."

Veterans and spouses who wish to apply for funding should contact their local Legion branch. Anyone interested in how they can become a Legion member can call their local Legion branch or Ontario Provincial Command at 905-841-7999. **BU**

Perley Rideau Foundation board profile Kenneth Dye ... *continued from page 1*

Progressive Conservative governments from 1981 to 1991. No shrinking violet when Pierre Trudeau and Brian Mulroney tried to stonewall the Auditor General's Office, Ken Dye broke with convention and sued the federal government for withholding information. So, the kindly uncle can bare his teeth when politicians try to hide the facts and dismiss Ken Dye when he's on a mission.

At a robust 75, Ken is a gregarious man who is generous with his time and knowledge. Few Canadians can claim to have received his four honorary university degrees. Back issues of Canada's newspapers show he makes a much better friend than enemy. And he is a great friend to the Perley Rideau. He puts in hours each month to help the Health Centre Foundation raise important funds to help residents stay happy and comfortable.

Ken's charity experience comes with a rich pedigree, too. He is the former treasurer of the Richmond Hospital Foundation in British Columbia, the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, and vice-president and treasurer of Scouts Canada. A quick look at Ken's résumé shows this is a modest man who understands numbers and how funding

works. Everyone wants Ken to be their treasurer.

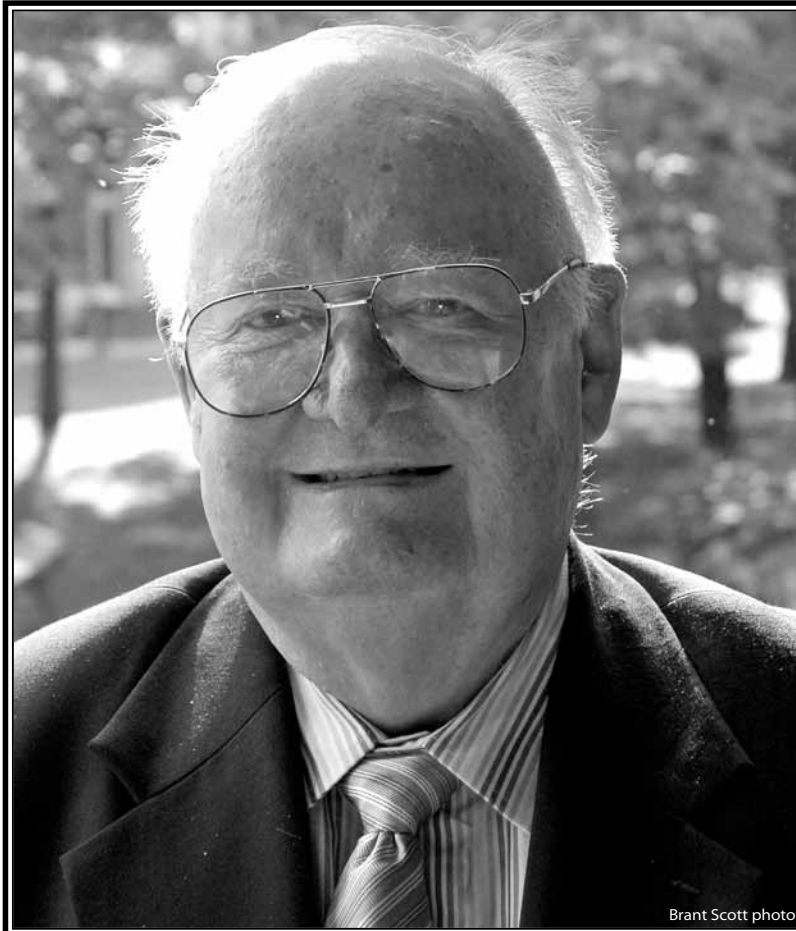
Canada's Auditor Generals have acquired a reputation as fiscal watchdogs who can affect the ebb and flow of government policy. When it's suggested this is a powerful position to be in, Ken Dye plays down the potency angle.

"I don't think it's a position of power," he reflects. "It's more like influence. The Auditor General cannot make the changes alone. The changes have to be made by the executive government and they have to agree that the issues raised by the Auditor General are worthy of attention. I was lucky. I had a pretty good batting average with the cabinets of the day going along with our recommendations."

Ken cites his recommendations on federal cash

management as particularly successful in creating annual savings for Canadians taxpayers from the '80s right up to the present.

"The government accepted all our recommendations on cash management," he said. "We saved \$200 million in the first year and we continued to save \$200 million every year since then. That's a lot of money over the past 20 years. Canada's banking system was very old fashioned and wasn't taking advantage of electronic transfer



KEN DYE IS IN THE HOUSE: Former Auditor General of Canada Ken Dye donates much of his spare time to help Perley Rideau residents. The Perley Rideau Foundation Board of Directors derives great benefit from his analytical skills and experience. Ken stays active in the local community and in several developing countries around the world.

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Ottawa Legion branches are an important asset to the Perley Rideau



By Daniel Clapin, ACFRE, Managing Director
The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation

The Royal Canadian Legion has secured a sterling reputation as a community booster, and there is much evidence of that energy here at the Perley Rideau.

The Perley Rideau Foundation computer records show that local Legion branches have donated nearly \$900,000 since 1988. There are no computer records prior to 1988, but we know the Legion branches' generosity has been an ongoing tradition for many decades.

When the Perley Rideau was becoming established at our current Russell Road location, the Legion was there for us. When we built the Guest House – *a home away from home*, the Legion was there for us. In fact, they assist us day in and day out with both financial donations and thousands of volunteer hours for veterans.

The Perley Rideau enjoys an annual celebration with local Legion members where we discuss how the generosity of the local branches helps us thrive. In early October, we met with these dedicated volunteers to explain how their donations were directly invested in important equipment acquisitions to make veterans' lives more comfortable.

Some Legion funding has been used to purchase custom bathtubs at \$17,000 apiece. Special tubs are needed that provide aging residents with efficient and easy access. Our current 17-year-old tubs require a constant cash flow for maintenance, and there comes a time when replacement is the wisest solution. The Legion members recognize this need and have been helping to buy new equipment that our veteran residents share and enjoy. The Perley Rideau Foundation is very grateful to the Legion branches for their assistance and understanding.

While many local Legion branches help Perley Rideau residents financially, their donation of time and tender loving care with veterans is just as important. We could use a swinging door on the Health Centre to accommodate all the Legion members who visit so frequently to help officiate with our bingo events and pub operations. They

also sit with our veterans and perform one of the most vital volunteer functions – communicating with our residents. Each of us hopes there will be someone to talk to during our golden years, and the Legion members do their best to make sure every voice is heard and each life is fulfilled.

Providing financial assistance, volunteer energy and TLC are the most selfless acts anyone can provide, and the Royal Canadian Legion has evolved into an organization driven by its grassroots. We are proud to present a feature story on page 4 of this edition of *Between Us* that helps to explain the Legion's relationship with the community. Legion members across the country work very hard to prepare for the annual autumn Poppy Fund campaign, and they can rest assured that veterans at the Perley Rideau and throughout the region benefit so much from their kindness.

There will always remain a close bond between veterans and the Legion, and the Foundation will continue to prosper from their continued support, guidance and attention to detail.

Thank you Legion members!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel Clapin". The signature is fluid and cursive.

***The Perley Rideau is home to
450 residents, 250 of whom are war veterans***

***We appreciate your support in making a
bequest in your will and/or
making a donation***

***Please contact Daniel Clapin
The Perley and Rideau
Veterans' Health Centre Foundation
1750 Russell Road
Ottawa ON K1G 5Z6***

***Email: dclapin@prvhc.com
Internet: www.prvhc.com
613-526-7194***

of funds. The government would have to wait for the mail to arrive with money from Whitehorse to Ottawa, and we were able to get that money in the bank on the same day. We also saved \$200 million a year on improving the unemployment insurance system, and again that's an annual recurring saving. Those are big bucks."

Exploiting technology

Ken's 10-year tenure as AG 30 years ago put him in the right place at the right time to be a pioneer in exploiting computer technology for running the unwieldy government machine and his own office.

"I'm astonished that many people who meet me still remember me as the auditor general," he says. "I can still get on a plane and people say, 'Go get 'em auditor general,' but I finished that job in 1991. I even get compliments in China from people who want my advice. It's quite flattering, really."

The technology that Ken helped to develop is the gift that keeps on giving as he spends his golden years working as an international consultant. He has been instrumental in the installation of similar computer efficacy in several Third World countries in recent years.

"In 1984, we invested \$300,000 in a software called IDEA – Interactive Data Extraction for Analysis – which was a system to extract data out of a client's database and it worked very well. In fact, it worked so well that I took it to the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. Most CA firms in Canada didn't have anything like it. I told the CICA that if they modified it to accommodate private sector interests such as inventory, accounts receivable and capital stock, then IDEA could be sold around the world. The CICA agreed and put in their own \$300,000, and that product is still being sold around the world today, all these 25 years later. So, the taxpayer has had a stream of royalties and got their money back."

Ken's colleagues installed that same software in Bangladesh this year. His post-government life

as an international consultant for two or three months a year has allowed him to travel the world and build auditor general capacity in developing countries that derive great benefit from his advice and experience. Ken wanted to develop the software when he saw the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) was totally dependent upon the government to provide the information he needed. He wanted to create an instrument that would extract the required information without being dependant on the client. So, he created the software that would allow the OAG to steer its own ship.

Discussed skiing with Trudeau

Ken was originally appointed to the non-political position of AG by then-prime minister Pierre Trudeau. Before he would accept the post, he insisted on meeting Trudeau to get a few things straight.

"I explained my political views to him," explains Ken. "It so happened I voted Conservative in the previous election and I had also voted Liberal before. But, he wasn't interested at all. He did have some very good advice on skiing at Whistler, where I still have a home.

"I made a deal with him that when I called, I would be able to speak directly with him, not a helper," he adds. "Mr. Trudeau promised. I called three times and twice I found him very helpful. The third time I asked for background information on the government purchase of Petrofina for Petro-Canada, and he said he couldn't do it. Then he retired. I didn't bother the next prime minister, Mr. Turner about it. But then Brian Mulroney was touring all over the country trying to get elected saying, 'I'll give Ken Dye whatever he wants.' So, when he became PM, I reminded him that I wanted this information and he declined to give it to me. So, I sued him. It had never been done – no Auditor General had sued a prime minister before."

Media reports of the day highlight a showdown between the Prime Minister's Office

and the Auditor General's Office.

"That did not please Mr. Mulroney," Ken recalls. "I won in the Federal Court and the government did not like the opinion, so we wound up in the Federal Court of Appeal. There are three judges there and only one agreed totally with my argument. From there we went to the Supreme Court and it decided it was not a matter for the Supreme Court and should go back to Parliament. In reality, Canada paid \$1.5 billion in cash and another \$900 million in tax concessions, so the government paid \$2.4 billion for something that was worth less than a billion. Canadian taxpayers got hosed when they acquired Petrofina."

Having been through the fiscal wars with three Canadian prime ministers, Ken Dye brings his considerable experience to benefit the residents at the Perley Rideau. It begs the question how he came to choose the Health Centre Foundation as the place to invest his expertise.

"The reputation here is wonderful," he says. "We've had friends stay here and they've all been more than satisfied with the exceptional care they received. The health centre ranks very high in the region and across the province. This is an organization to be proud of. They do a really good job. I am very impressed with the new Foundation managing director, Daniel Clapin. He comes with a very well thought-out agenda and lots of experience. He has a great way about him that encourages confidence that this is a very worthy cause. I had nothing to do with his hiring,

but I've been delighted to meet him and work with him. I think he is an excellent choice."

Ken points out that the Foundation contributes about \$300,000 a year to the Health Centre that provides a direct benefit to residents. The funds provide comfort to residents that contribute to the quality of life at the Health Centre.

"I don't think quality of life is a frill," he says. "What we are providing is not being provided through funding from the province. What we do makes residents' lives much more interesting and comfortable. Anyone who has a mother or father and is looking for a wonderful home for them

to spend their later years, this is the place to see."

At a stage in life when most people plan to slow their pace, Ken Dye hopes to be leaving for China later this fall to consult with the Chinese government about training opportunities for Bangladeshis. Ken's consulting exploits help to pay for the vacations and cruises he takes with Frances, his childhood sweetheart and wife of 52 years. Together

they have paddled more than 600 miles on the Yukon River and worn out hiking boots on the West Coast Trail. While the spirit is still willing, the knees are wracked with pain. Ken looks forward to surgeries next year that will hopefully allow him to toss aside his cane and hit the ski slopes again at his beloved Whistler. Given his celebrated past and bright plans for the future, only a fool would bet that there is a limit to what Kenneth Dye will accomplish. **BU**



KEN DYE - GOVERNMENT WATCHDOG: Former Auditor General of Canada Ken Dye had a reputation for keeping a close eye on government high fliers during his 1981-91 tenure. This popular 1989 Ottawa Sun cartoon by Susan Dewar highlighted Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's withholding of important information. The Auditor General's Office response was unprecedented when it sued the federal government to demand statistics Canadians wanted to see.

Gordon Pitts: Out of the tank and into the sky

By Brant Scott

World War II was not exactly a breeding ground for young tank crewmen with a penchant for making their own rules.

It takes a scamp with charm and guts to bounce around wartime Europe, lost and chasing their regiment. After leaving the army and joining the Royal Canadian Air Force after the war, Gordon Pitts had the keys to countless Avro Harvards for joy rides through cloud-studded skies. At 89 years old and now nestled in his room at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre, Gordon looks back on his heyday as an aeronautics engineer with clear blue eyes a-twinkle.

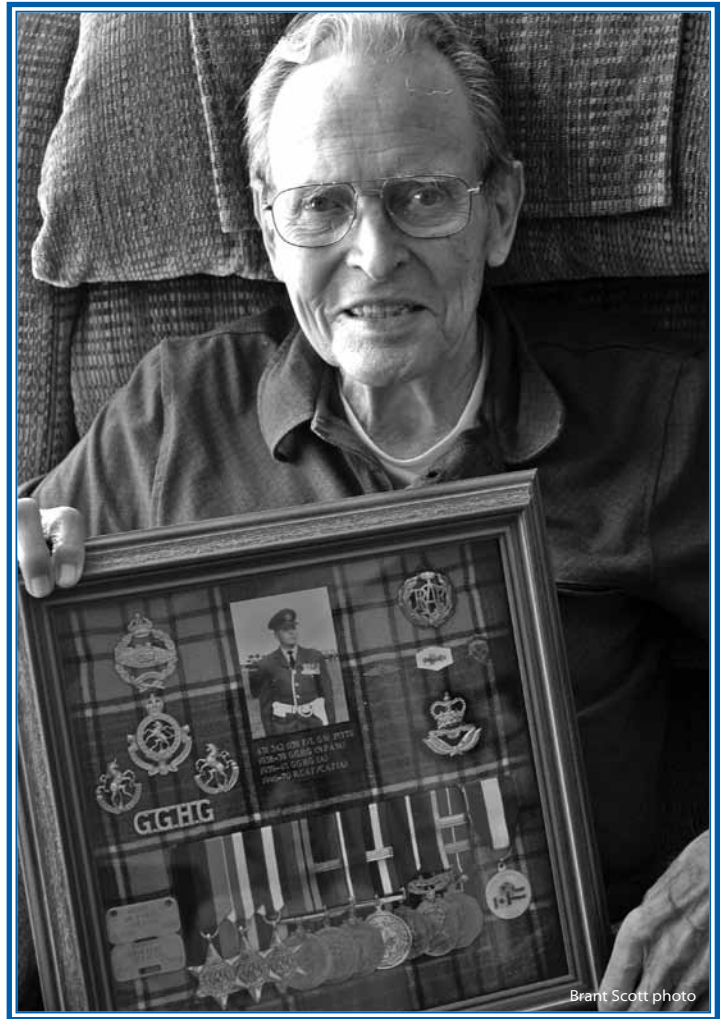
"When I was stationed at Cold Lake in Alberta, I could get a Harvard pretty well any time I wanted," chuckles Gordon. "My boss used to get me to fly him to Winnipeg to see his girlfriend. Lots of people asked me to pilot for them because I guess they had a lot of confidence in me. I was a qualified pilot, but my main job was aeronautics engineer after the war."

Gordon has a history of working under the radar, too, and it started in his teen years. He used to sneak into Maple Leaf Gardens in his hometown Toronto to catch a bird's-eye glimpse of the Leafs. One night Canadian broadcasting icon Foster Hewitt spotted him lurking high in the rafters above the ice.

"I used to cheat a little bit because I couldn't pay to see the Leafs," Gordon explains. "Foster Hewitt asked me what I was doing up there and when I didn't have a good answer, he said, 'Well, at least come inside.' So there I was, sitting in the Maple Leaf Gardens gondola with Foster and Bill Hewitt as they broadcast to hockey fans across the nation. Foster was a great man and very kind."

Gordon's family chides him that sneaking into Leaf games was the beginning of a resourceful future that would cost him his stripes more than once. He was a cavalry man, too, and later helped train the military horses used in Toronto for crowd control and security. He patrolled the Welland Canal by horse before he went overseas.

When the call came to join the war effort



MAN OF DISTINCTION: Gordon Pitts picked up his share of medals for paying his dues in a WWII tank. He would occasionally get separated from his unit in the European theatre, but he learned to make the most of it. After the war, Gordon became a popular Harvard pilot and aeronautical engineer.

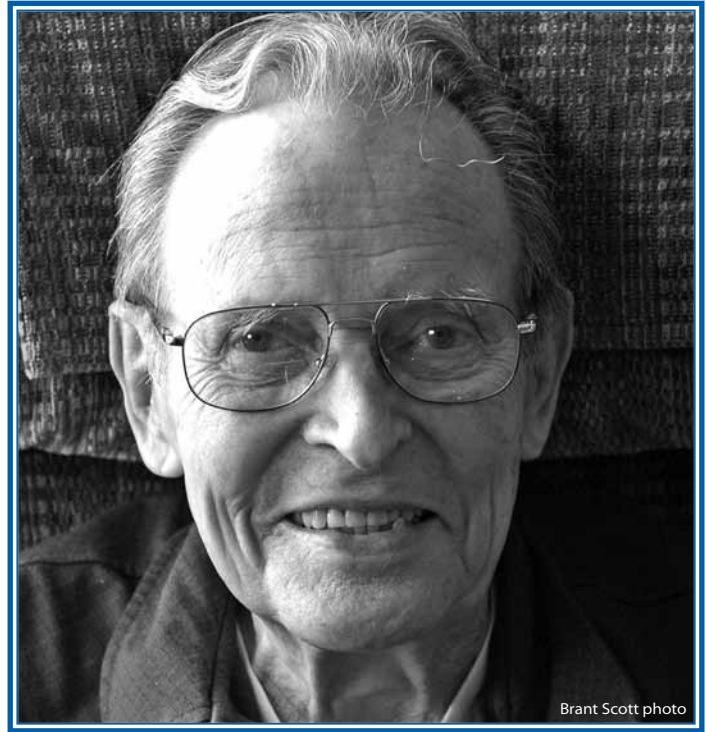
across the pond, Gordon was assigned to a tank division that took him through England, North Africa and Italy.

"On the way to Europe, I got a so-called reward for not being affected by seasickness on the Irish Sea," he recalls. "I had to climb up the inside of the foremast to the crows-nest and be the lookout. That was definitely not the place to be. You just feel your way up the rungs in the dark. When I spotted a periscope going through Gibraltar, I hit the alarm. But, it was only six Brit submarines coming through the narrows."

Gordon spent more time in the dark in a tank, trying to wrest Europe back from the Germans. In the tank staging area when the regiment prepared to leave Italy, Gordon was left behind. Secrecy was essential with spies everywhere, and the Allies wouldn't even tell each other where they were headed. Once you were separated from your comrades in arms, locating them was a crapshoot.

"I got left behind lots of times," Gordon laughs. "One time I was with a couple of other guys, with no tank. We had to find out where the hell our regiment was. We borrowed an old rusty hulk of a jeep. Nobody would talk to us because they thought maybe we were spies. We hopped on a landing ship tank to Bordeaux. We heard our regiment was there, but had already left. We got a truck and went to Paris to holiday for a few days. I was the boss and felt we deserved it. No wonder I was popular."

After Gordon embarked on his aeronautical career, he was assigned to maintenance on the Avro Arrow two days before the historic contract cancellation. He later met his wife, Karin, at Boeing and they married in 1982. Between them they have four children and six grandchildren. After nearly two years on the Perley Rideau waiting list, Gordon moved into the Health Centre



Brant Scott photo

ENJOYING LIFE AT THE PERLEY RIDEAU: Gordon Pitts, 89, says the care and services at the Perley Rideau are "unbeatable." He met his wife, Karin, when they both worked at Boeing. She visits often to talk about the good old days, and the good days ahead.

this summer. He describes the facility and the staff as "unbeatable," and those blue eyes just keep on twinkling. **BU**



Brant Scott photo

RED RIBBON FORCES DONATION: The Perley Rideau gratefully received a \$1,200 donation from Red Ribbon Forces to provide comfort to veterans and their families. From left to right are Foundation Managing Director Daniel Clapin, veteran and volunteer Maurice Bilodeau, veteran and Perley Rideau resident Guy Robitaille, Red Ribbon Forces organizers Eleanor Bookman and Brian Goodfellow, and veteran and local piper Jack Coghill.

The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation

Perley Rideau
Foundation

Memorial Tributes

July 1, 2011 to October 24, 2011

Honour someone special with a donation to
The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre

Robert Armstrong • Mildred Barker • Howard Barnes
Donald Barry • Irene Besharah • Merton Bowen
Elizabeth Breckenridge • Gerald Burton • A. Keith Collins
James Conroy • John Corbin • Arthur Corrigan • Lola Curtin
Chester Dalrymple • Malcolm Davies • J. Claude Desjardins
Charles Drummond • Pearl Elliott • James Findlay
Les Fitch • Douglas French • Ian Fripp • George Gaudry
Maurice Gourdeau • Douglas Graham • Ronald Gray
Pauline Gribbon • Helen Hallonquist • Clay Hiltz
Joseph Jeffrey • Allan Johns • Walter Laframboise
Doris Lancaster • Andre Landriault • Suzanne Lemieux
George Lindsey • Margaret Magwood • James Martin
Anita McCreath • Mary McElveny • Margaret McLeod
James McQueen • Oscar Oslund • Jean-Maurice Parent
George Powell • Thomas Rheaume • Mary Richardson
Herbert Russell • Charles Sauve • Allison Sennat
Hubert Snow • John Stelter • James Stevenson
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The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre is a 450-bed long-term care home with 250 beds designated for veterans

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Writer/editor: Brant Scott
Layout: André Campeau

The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation

1750 Russell Road
Ottawa, Ontario K1G 5Z6
Tel: (613) 526-7173
e-mail: foundation@prvhc.com
www.prvhc.com

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Email: foundation@prvhc.com

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