

John Paul LeBlanc Biography

J.P. LeBlanc was a ninth generation Canadian, and a native of St. Anselme (Dieppe), New Brunswick where he was born on October 14, 1921. Mr. LeBlanc was a WWII RCAF veteran with Bomber Command who headed overseas in 1942 from Pier 21, aboard the Queen Elizabeth. He flew thirty-two missions before returning to Pier 21 in Halifax with his war bride wife Trudy LeBlanc nee Tansey.



He retired in 1982 as Director-General, Nova Scotia Region, Employment and Immigration Canada. His career as a public servant placed him in Moncton, Ottawa, and Vancouver among other locations. Throughout his career Mr. LeBlanc was recognized for his excellence. When he retired the Mi'kmaq Chiefs of Nova Scotia presented him with a Peace Pipe in appreciation for dedicated service to the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq. His additional professional activities included work with the Institute of Public Administration in Canada (Executive Committee), the Federal Institute of Management (past President), the Nova Scotia Heads of Federal Agencies (founding member), the Halifax Board of Trade, the Canadian Association Mental Rehabilitation (Chairman), the Canadian Army Militia Unit (training officer, quartermaster, adjutant, battery commander), the Civil Service Federation of Canada (Secretary, Moncton), and the Mayor's Municipal Committee on Training for the Unemployed (Windsor).

Throughout his life Mr. LeBlanc was a dedicated volunteer with organizations such as the Canadian Paraplegic Association, Nova Scotia (Chairman of the Board, 10th Honorary Life Member); the United Way (Chairman); the Real Opportunities for Prisoner



Employment Association (Chairman); the Seniors' Planning Committee for Gerontology Institute (Chairman); the Advisory Council for Native Economic Development; the Knights of Columbus Council; Dalhousie University, Government of Zimbabwe Training; the Archdiocese of Halifax; Pastoral Council and Building Our Future fundraising Campaign; the Canadian Martyrs' Parish Council (Past President); the Friends of McNab's Society; Fédération Acadienne de la Nouvelle Écosse; Le Groupement des ainé(e)s de la Nouvelle Écosse; the Rotary Club; Goodwill Industries; the GreaterWindsor Foundation; the Boy Scouts Association; and the Association Catholique de la Jeunesse.

Mr. LeBlanc was a past Board Director for Nova Scotia with the Canadian Immigration Historical Society and he is the founding President of the Pier 21 Society. In 1988 he

saw the need to recognize the service personnel that went overseas, as he had as well as the one million immigrants that entered Canada through Pier 21. He and the Society lobbied to gain National Historic Site status for Pier 21 and on Canada Day, 1999 Mr. LeBlanc's dream was realized as Pier 21 re-opened as a National Historic Site.

In 1988 J.P. LeBlanc co-wrote *Pier 21: The Gateway that Changed Canada*. Two years later he wrote *A Portrait of an Acadian Family 1643-1990*. He also penned articles for the *Southender* and several boating magazines; his reminiscences of the war have been donated to the Pier 21 Society.

John Paul LeBlanc was a devoted husband and father of five whose children and grandchildren are as much a part of his legacy as the museum he helped to create.

In 1995 J.P. LeBlanc combined his love of the written word and his affection for Pier 21 when he penned *Ode to Pier 21*. Upon receiving the poem the editor of *Gam Magazine* wrote:

“Your ‘Ode to Pier 21’ was so deep and touching that I just had to put my work aside and go for a long walk. You got so much into so few words and so beautifully. Whatever your plans you must carry with you the knowledge that through your efforts Halifax has maintained so much of her tradition. What a heritage to have contributed! Thanks from me and from the thousands if only they knew.”

Ode to Pier 21 - 1995

By John LeBlanc

Unimpassioned, I am no longer the Pier 21
Of wooden ships and ocean liners,
Of barred windows, wire cages, and prison cells.
I gave way to the jet aircraft.
Hushed, abandoned, postponed,
I stand the husk of bygone days.

Silent, I am the platform that processed
Kings, queens, princes and paupers,
Intrepid pioneers, immigrants,
The detainees, inadmissibles,
Lost souls, penniless, the threadbare,
Those with USA destinations.

The torpedoed, refugees from tyranny,
Oppression and revolutions -
Displaced peoples - each

Sought land, hope, harmony, liberty.
War Brides ... I greeted them all.

Ships of all descriptions conquered the ocean,
In Halifax Harbour, calm waters hugged their keels,
Soothing the spirit of their passengers.
Pouring from them they peopled the land.

I salute national heroes off to war,
Sailors, soldiers, airmen,
Both men and women - merchant seamen,
Those at rest at sea, in unknown and
Imperial War Graves, in Flanders Field.

I want to become the Pier 21
With walls that speak out.
I want to recall the hustle and bustle,
Of officials and volunteers,
Helpful hands ... dockhands, the longshoremen,
Counselling words and smiling eyes -
The Sisters of Service, the Red Cross, Religious groups,
The nursery ... the cafeteria,
Red Caps, Aid to the traveller ... and
Welcoming ambassadors and rail stop delegations.

My international landmark
Welcomed passenger boats, to-day cruise ships.
My plaque and interpretive panel,
Commemorate my history of national significance.

My guests gave Canada growth, nationality and diversity.
With generosity of spirit and in kind
They contributed to devastated Europe.
Heritage is my emblem of world understanding.
A visit is ennobled, the future bright.
To foster common ground is my vision.