

William Ernest Hall
by Daughter Connie
Fuzesy
WWII Veteran
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CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM
PIER 21



I am submitting this information on behalf of my dad, William Ernest Hall, who served with the South Saskatchewan Regiment, and still resides in Stoughton, SK. My dad's memory is slipping a bit, but his memories of his time overseas during WWII are still quite clear. Dad thinks he went over near the end of 1943, so he would have been about 23 years old. He could have stayed home since he was the only boy in the family to help his father farm, but he wanted to go and serve his country. Even after all that he went through and all of the horrible things he must have seen and heard about, he's never regretted that decision. I often feel that the men and women of that generation had tremendous courage - they just did what needed to be done.

Dad spent 6 weeks in Regina, SK, then went to Camp Shilo near Brandon, MB for 3 months for advance training. He went on to London, ON where he trained in motor mechanics for 2-3 months. While overseas, he drove a flame thrower, and two other men rode with him. Their job involved going ahead of the troops in order to flush out the enemy. One soldier operated the flame, while another in the back watched out for the enemy. Dad said it could be quite scary because you had to get very close to your target, which could be a building or a foxhole. They also had to watch out for landmines, and Dad remembers one close call in particular. He'd parked his flame thrower and if he'd been off just a few inches, a landmine would have killed him.



Dad remembers the train ride to Halifax and he recalls about 2-3 dining cars. Troops were given a card, which indicated what time they were to eat, which was twice a day. Most of the guys played poker and some played music. When the train pulled up to Pier 21, they had to show a card, and once their names were called, Dad and his buddies boarded



the Ile de France with about 9,000 other troops. They were told when to eat and meals consisted of meat and potatoes, sometimes dessert. Dad's not sure if there was a beer parlour on board, but thinks there may have been booze smuggled by some of the guys. He remembers a few American guys had a little band (banjo, guitar and fiddle) - one of the guys once played at the Grand Ol' Opry. They played really good country music. The boat ride took about 4 days and it had to detour around by Iceland in order to avoid German submarines.

Dad arrived in Scotland and his first impression was that the buildings were very old, but he was awfully homesick, too. Nobody

talked about what could happen. Dad then went to Aldershot, UK by train and stayed in the camp there for about 2 months. He then went to a battlefield in France. He fought for about a year. Dad was wounded - he received some shrapnel in his leg, and some of it is still there. Unfortunately, he also caught Scarlet Fever, and the fever damaged a valve in his heart, so he's had two heart operations in his later years. He remembers some good times, though. He received a birthday cake from his mother (triple layer chocolate cake) and, amazingly, it arrived in pretty good shape! However, Dad wasn't around when it arrived and by the time he got back, some of the other guys had had a few pieces already, but they were kind enough to save a piece for Dad! They all had a good laugh over it. Dad also remembers seeing the British General, Montgomery, walking along the front line with some other captains. Dad was very impressed. Dad recalls being about 20 miles out of Berlin when the war ended and the



Canadians could have taken Berlin, but the Americans held them back. There's speculation as to why this happened - apparently, there was a little animosity between the Canadians and Americans.

Once the war ended, Dad went back to England, then took The Amsterdam back to Halifax, along with 6,000-7,000 other troops. Dad remembers a jovial mood on the ship, but some of the guys did talk about what happened. That didn't happen very often, though. In Dad's case anyway, he felt he needed to learn to forget the bad things that happened, so he could get on with his life.

I hope my dad's memories aid in the understanding of the soldiers of WWII. They were incredibly brave men and women who were willing to give their lives for this country. I think that the soldiers who made it back left a little bit of themselves on the battleground. This part died along with their buddies who paid the ultimate price for freedom. We need to remember so we can honour their loss.



