



Canadians on Radar Background

In 1940, Great Britain stood alone against the Nazi horde. Her greatest need was for trained technicians to service and maintain her rapidly expanding radar defences. She appealed to Canada and Canada responded. From December 1940, to May 1943, five thousand trained Royal Canadian Air Force Radar Officers and Airmen Radar Mechanics passed through Pier 21 on their way overseas to serve with the Royal Air Force. Dispersed in penny packets from North Africa and Malta, from Sicily and Italy to



Northwest Europe, from the Murmansk Run to Australia, from Burma to Britain and "neutral" Turkey, these Canadian radar specialists provided over one third of the RAF's expertise in this critical, war-winning area. In all, over six thousand RCAF radar specialists were sent to serve with the Commonwealth and other Allied Air Forces.

William 'Bill' Warren McLachlan

Royal Canadian Air Force 1942 -1945 CAN R143991

Upon graduating from high school I became senior ledger keeper at the Province of Ontario Savings Office in Ottawa. As I approached the age of 18, I was lured to the R.C.A.F. and admitted to the radar course which started July, 1941. Although not 18 until August, I passed the medical etc., and was later sworn in. With the successful completion of the course in December, I was sworn in on January 6th 1942, with the rank of LAC, and went to Toronto and RAF Radar School, at Clinton, Ontario. I went on embarkation leave in April 1942, was recalled to receive a Radar Operators' course and then was posted to Preston N.S.. I was involved in the construction of Bell Lake and Louisburg stations, then to Cape Bauld, Nfld. for a 10 month stint. We were replaced in July 1943 and,



after a leave, went to Tusket N.S. In November 1943, I re-mustered to air crew and in Toronto requested Wireless Air Gunner training, but since pilots were wanted at that time, I was returned to radar and was promoted to Sergeant. In November 1944, I reverted to an LAC for an overseas posting, however, I was reinstated to Sgt. and sailed from Halifax on the Mauritania arriving at Liverpool on Christmas Day 1944. I went to Bournemouth depot, and then to Start Point, Devon. I took a radar course at Yatesbury, then became I/C of St. David's Wales.

In July 1945, I applied for the Pacific theatre, and was offered a commission in the RAF to go to Burma but I declined. I returned to Canada on the Ile de France in August and, when on leave, married my Tusket sweetheart

on the 27th of August 1945. I was posted to Trenton, Ontario, and then discharged from Rockcliffe Ontario station on October 9th 1945.

Prior to my discharge, I contacted a friend who had influence with the MacLaren Quebec Power Co. in Buckingham, who suggested I see him when I wished employment. I therefore arranged to be registered with The British Institute of Science and Technology in an Electrical Engineering correspondence course. This was a most fortunate endeavor as I was able to use the credits later as part of my B.Sc degree. I joined the Royal Canadian Legion, Buckingham, as well as the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and later became the President. When we boarded in Buckingham (no apartments) we traveled on my day off to my family's home in Ottawa. On one occasion, while there on our way to Nova Scotia for a holiday, I happened to answer the phone and was surprised to be contacted by an Air Force officer who requested an interview with regard to re-enlistment with the position of instructor at Clinton. I arranged an interview for a later date and, at the end of my holiday, advised my wife to remain with her parents as I was sure to re-join the R.C.A.F. and would advise her of my posting. However, on the appointed day I went to Ottawa and, on my way to the appointment met an old friend who suggested he was getting out of the service because as a Flight Sergeant it was not the place to be. I took his advice and did not

keep the appointment. I returned to Buckingham to shift-work for the Power company.

I became assistant operator at the Masson plant, which with 4 units supplied over 100 Megawatts of 25 cycle power directly to Toronto. After a year I was promoted to operator and transferred to the High Falls station. We experienced rural Quebec in semi-isolated conditions but our daughter Deborah arrived in July 1951, and life took on a new meaning. Having purchased a new Chev. in 1949, we traveled to Ottawa frequently. In 1952 I was moved to Masson again as an operator. My correspondence course kept me busy, as did the dismantling of a school house I had purchased for use in building my house in Buckingham. I became a Scout leader of a very active group which was associated with Ottawa and activities there. Three of my scouts were selected to go to the jamboree in England. We organized the Buckingham Theatre Workshop, which meant acting, directing, stage work, etc. We put on two one-act plays and one three-act per year, which were performed in the high school auditorium. Janet arrived in June 1955, to enjoy her own room in our now completed home.

In late 1957, the position of electrical foreman was offered for the new Singer Co. pulp mill in Thurso, and I was hired. I had been with the power Co. for 12 years. This was a new challenge but, as a lot of the equipment involved electronics, I was way ahead of the 12 electricians under my control. I had previously earned my electrician's licence and, until 1962, was employed as management for Singer. During this time I was elected a school commissioner in Buckingham, as well as one of nine members of the Regional board. This group oversaw the education in all of Quebec west of Lachute. Two new schools were built, meetings were many, material to read and digest was mountainous. In 1962, Thurso was bought by the MacLaren Co. so I was back in their employment. The company paid for refrigeration and television night courses, which were offered in Ottawa and lasted over a year; as foremen were not allowed to use tools on the job, this provided hands-on experience which could be passed on to the electricians doing electronic repairs.

In 1968, Philemon Wright, the new High School in Hull was in need of an electricity and electronics teacher, I was hired and stayed there until retirement in 1984. In the summers of 1970 and 1971 I went to MacDonald College in Montreal and obtained my teaching certificate. I obtained a Special Education and a Reading Specialist from McGill University during those years. When a sabbatical leave was offered, with 80% salary, I applied, and with my previous credits, obtained a B.Sc. degree from Oswego campus of N.Y. State University in 1974. In 1976, I taught teacher certification classes for the University of Quebec in Hull. This was most exciting. I taught in English but my contact with the

University was all in French. I also became President of The Garrison Sergeants Assoc. which at one point had three V.C. recipients as members. I was Deputy Commander of the Legion National Colour Party, Life Member of the Legion, Chairman of Youth Education and 2 nd Vice President.



While at Philemon, I also drove a school bus which provided financial assistance, teaching wood-working one night a week at an Ottawa high school also helped pay off the debts as, at the time, my two daughters were at York University in Toronto. During summer holidays I built a cottage on the ten acres I had purchased on lake Vaughan near Tusket, Nova Scotia. I joined the volunteer Fire Department , and two weekends I trained at the Waverley Nova Scotia Training School, as a member of Lake Vaughan Volunteer Firefighters.

Our two daughters were always very busy. Deborah studied piano, and every Saturday from age 8 to 15, she had lessons at the Conservatoire de musique de Hull. Recitals and music festivals seemed unending but resulted in a topnotch musical education. When she graduated from H.S. I had the honour, as school board representative, to present her with her certificate. She attended a summer course in French at Quebec city, a Spanish course in Ottawa, and later, graduated from York Univ. with a B.F.A in dance. She had been a member of a modern dance trio. She spent two years studying and then practised as a registered massage therapist in Ontario. She is now a supply teacher and French tutor for the school in Wakefield. Janet studied classical violin at the Conservatoire also in Hull. At an early age she was involved with theatre. She went to Ontario Ladies College in Whitby where she graduated from grade 13. After a French summer course in Quebec city, she proceeded to York University and obtained a B.F.A. degree as an actress.

She later obtained a B. Ed degree and teaching certification from Queen's University. As a French specialist from Carleton Univ. she now teaches grade 4 in Wakefield. She sings country music, plays fiddle music and heads a blue grass group. Her students recently made their own ukuleles, played and sang at the West Quebec school concert in Hull. Her retired teacher husband Jon plays guitar and sings, a one man entertainer. They have a 19 year old son, skier, football player and all-round athlete. Their daughter is 16 and attends a private school where

she skis, plays English rugby, basketball and is an excellent swimmer. The role of the mother and wife in a family seems, frequently, to ensure the success of the family members. Having accomplished the traditional role of housewife, Phyllis succeeded in a secretarial endeavor and during a number of years, was employed by Order of Canada, secretary to the director of Security at National Defense, secretary to the director at Energy, Mines and Resources as well as many other appointments. This efficient background provides confidence to the writer in the compilation of this history project.

When I retired, at the age of 61, I found so many things to do. As president of a small Scottish cemetery, many a stone had to be repaired and finances resolved. We purchased a new home which required financing, so I joined the Corps of Commissionaires and became a sergeant at the Communications Security Establishment of the Government in Ottawa, a highly secret position. I drove a school bus for handicapped students, where two wheel-chair students with nurses, were transported. As a handyman I did home repairs, building decks, installing doors, windows or anything that needed fixing. In my Canadian Legion activities, I was the branch pastor for memorial services, and visited the Rideau Veterans' Home in Ottawa where my eldest brother



resided. I still visit one night a week. I enjoy working with Jon who always has a project on the go. In 1990- 91 I redesigned and built a cottage for my Nova Scotia neighbour. This required negotiating with the building inspector, the suppliers, the owner as well as hired help. I nailed a lot of nails, burnt a great deal of midnight oil preparing for the next assignment. The pinnacle was arrived at when the owner presented me with a silver cup with the inscription "BILL Artifex Optimus 1990- 91". When residing in Nova Scotia, I have been a volunteer firefighter for 25 years which often meant call-outs, usually at night, and frequently in bad weather.

The request, by my fellow R.C.A.F. radar technicians to write the Canadian portion of "Canadians on Radar Royal Canadian Air Force 1940-1945" meant I was busy learning the do's and don't's of a computer. The book was published in 2000 and, subsequently, the radar story was displayed in the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa on the 9th of May

2003. I obtained a great number of stories and facts of radar in Canada which were never printed, so in January 2003 I had my book R.C.A.F. Radar 1941-45" printed.

William W. McLachlan

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