



## 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 Philip 'Phil' Campbell

Royal Canadian Air Force 1941 -1945 CAN R130546

I had been born and raised on a farm near Lloydminster, Saskatchewan. It was the end of June, 1941, I was eighteen years old and there was a war on. An Air Force recruiting officer came to town and I went to see him. He told me that with glasses I could not get into aircrew training but my educational qualifications met the requirements for a new field of radio. On the 5th of September, I was in Manning Depot in Edmonton, on my way to becoming an RDF Mechanic.

New Year's day, 1942, found me at the University of Saskatchewan to start basic training in Radio Physics, a course that lasted for sixteen

weeks. In mid-April I was a member of CAN 31 at RAF Station Clinton, Ontario, for advanced training on ASV (Air to Surface Vessel) radar.

On June 6, I was posted to the Y Depot in Moncton, New Brunswick, with orders to report there on June 20. This allowed me just seven days at home, but there was a war on and we were needed in England. What followed was a good lesson in hurry up and wait. We didn't get out of Moncton for six weeks.

In mid-July, we finally got a glimpse of Pier 21 as we stumbled across several sets of rail lines for our coach to the Dominion Monarch on a foggy, rainy evening. The next morning we were on our way, landing in Liverpool, England, eight days later. A train took us to Hastings the next day and on to Bournemouth a week later.

We had arrived in England just as they were installing Gee radar in the main Bomber force so I never saw ASV or AI radars again. From now to the end of the war it was Gee, H2S, IFF, Mandrel, OBOE, etc. radars. I spent most of my time in North Yorkshire.

I returned to Canada in September, 1945, and was released from Service in October. I became part of the 'January Class' of 1946 at the University of Alberta where I obtained a degree in Agriculture in 1949. No, I did not follow up in electronics or engineering! In September, I was off to the University of Toronto to start post-graduate work in Botany. There they had an interesting approach for the ex-service men. We were permitted to register as not proceeding to a degree for our first year, at the end of which you were advised to leave, or Masters degree (either as a terminal degree or preparatory for entry into a Doctoral program) or to enter directly into the senior degree program. I was fortunate enough to be allowed the last choice. I received my Doctorate in 1953.

In 1950, I married a fellow graduate student at U. of T., Marion Hambley of Winnipeg, who was working on a degree in Child Study. Helped her to understand husbands, she said. We have three offsprings: Janet (a school teacher in Winnipeg), Gail (a statistician in Ottawa) and Ian (a chartered accountant in Chicago). All are married and independent.

In May, 1949, I took a position as a Research Scientist (Plant Pathology) in a Canada agriculture laboratory at the University of Alberta on the understanding that I would receive leave of absence during the winters for further studies. In 1955, we thought we were settled permanently in Edmonton so we bought an acreage out of the city and built a log house on it in 1957. But it was not to be! Politics intervened in 1962, and I was moved away from research and into a life of regulatory affairs, first as a scientific advisor on the safe use of pesticides and, two years later, as

technical leader in plant quarantines. This position made me responsible for maintaining records of the pests and diseases of possible significance to Canada's Agriculture and Forestry that exist in the countries with which we trade, and how they might get to Canada and how such movement might be averted. I was also responsible for recommending ways and means of ensuring that those existing in Canada did not move with our exports. This activity meant that I was involved in international trade negotiations and required travelling to many strange and interesting places and working with people of diverse backgrounds.

1989 brought retirement and immersion in volunteer work at the local Seniors' Centre,

delivering 'Meals on Wheels', giving children's classes at the Museum of Nature and pastoral assistance at my church as well as working on radar books and reunions.

William P. Campbell

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