
GLENGARRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

BOX 416 ALEXANDRIA ON K0C 1A0
November 2004 Volume 34 No. 8 ISSN 0229-6705

next issue: February 2005

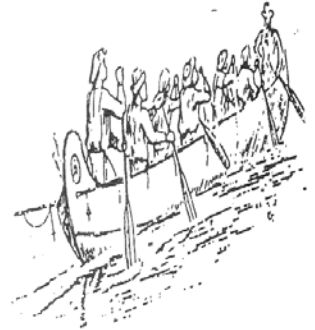
NEXT MEETING

Date: Thursday, November 4, 2004

Time: 8:00 p.m.

Place: Nor'Westers & Loyalist Museum, Williamstown, ON

Topic: World War II: A Hero of Our Own



The Ode for the Fallen

*They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.*

Excerpted from the poem by
Laurence Binyon
(1869 - 1943)

1914-1918

1939-1945

1950-1953

World War II: A Hero of Our Own

Pretty much everyone in the Glengarry Historical Society knows **Len Fourney** who attends nearly all of our meetings with his elegant wife, Ann. To those of you who knew him in his Lancaster Township days, he will still be “Leonard.” But the name maketh not the man. Len Fourney earned manhood through hard work and moral courage.

Len is a Glengarry native, having attended both Picnic Grove Elementary School and Williamstown High School. His career or careers, as he had many, took unusual and unique twists and turns. It all started on the family dairy farm where Len spent his teenage years plowing with a three-horse team while simultaneously obtaining a distributorship to sell oil and grease. You might say that sales and horses were in his blood as he spent the three years before enlisting in the Canadian army establishing horse-pulled wagon and sleigh routes in both Lancaster and Charlottenburg Townships to distribute bread and sweet goods.

Then the War came and that will be the focus of Len’s discussion on **Thursday, November 4, 2004**. Len’s army career is reminiscent of a Horatio Alger novel, “Risen from the Ranks” indeed. As a private in the Canadian Provost Corps, (to the uninitiated like myself, that would be the Military Police) Len was posted overseas with the Third Canadian Division. He had married first wife, Maizie Edna Munroe of Truro, Nova Scotia just 17 days before his posting. The army promoted him to Corporal in 1942 and thus began the journey of a lifetime.

The army usually reserves Officers Training School for the educated, the crème-de-la-crème, not farm boys from Lancaster Township. The diamond in the rough had already peeked through, however, and Len’s

superior officers encouraged him to apply with the promise that they would support his application. The magic of Len’s life began when, in 1943, he graduated from Canadian Officers Training School in England as a Lieutenant.

Despatches for distinguished service during the heavy fighting at Caen in France mentioned Len with the result that he was promoted to Captain in 1944 and appointed Commanding Officer of “2/4 Provost Unit” in Holland. By the end of the War in 1945, Len had been promoted once again to Major and Provost Marshall, responsible for all Canadian Provost personnel in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

In 1946, Len was named Officer in Charge of the Firing Squad for the planned execution of German General **Kurt Meyer**. In fact, at one point, Meyer was handcuffed to Len, a very traumatic experience for Len who, at the time, was only 25 years old. In Len’s own words, “fortunately Meyer’s sentence was commuted to life imprisonment hours before execution was scheduled.” Many of us speak, sometimes loosely, about such events. For example, “Oh yes, so-and-so was executed after the war” but just imagine the horror, at 25 years of age, of watching someone being shot to death and carrying with you, for the rest of your life, the knowledge that it had been your responsibility.

Following the Kurt Meyer affair, Len was posted back to Canada and transferred to Reserve Status in August of 1946 at which time he embarked on an equally illustrious civilian career. Until his retirement in 1984, Len worked for a number of enterprises in Industrial Engineering, Training & Development, Salary Administration, working his way up to become Director of Human Resources and, finally, Vice-President for Marketing and Development. It seems

that Len made as much of an impression on the business world as he had in the army.

Len's life, however, was not all business. For many years, he was involved as a volunteer, director and founder of many of Cornwall's community services. He has also been an active member of the Freemasons since 1951, holding many responsible positions both near and far, from Lancaster to Venezuela. In 1999 The Masonic Association of the Eastern District of Ontario honoured him with a gala "Appreciation Night" and in 2000, Len became honorary Vice-President of the Eastern District.

Len and Ann now live in a beautifully appointed condominium in Cornwall with a lovely view of the Saint Lawrence and Len has taken up writing and genealogy. He has written a plethora of stories and I urge you to encourage Len to have more of them published. One of his short stories, "**What I learned at the General Store: Cattle Feed and Lessons in Living – you could get both at MacLean's**" was published in the September/October 2004 magazine Our Canada. This is a lively and heart warming tale of growing up on the dairy farm in Lancaster and we will surely have a copy on display at the GHS meeting (but don't anyone dare swipe it, it's MINE!).

There is an old adage that the Military Police have no sense of humour. Ah! But you haven't met Len Fourny yet. If you come to the meeting on **Thursday, November 4, 2004 at 8:00 p.m. in Williamstown**, you will have the opportunity to see the twinkle in Len's eye that puts the lie to that old adage.

Who was Kurt Meyer?

Meyer was born in Jerxheim on December 23, 1910, the son of an NCO in the German Kaiser's Army, who died as a result

of wounds suffered during World War I. He studied to be a merchant and was employed as a miner and factory worker before joining the Mecklenburg police force in 1929 where he remained until 1934. Meyer first became involved with the SS in 1931 and joined the SS's Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler (LAH) Division full time in 1934 where he served as a platoon leader and, later, commander, in the LAH's anti-tank company.

Meyer fought in the 1939 Polish Campaign and in 1940 in both Holland and France. He was later transferred to a motorcycle company in the Reconnaissance Battalion in the Balkans and Russia. Known as a dare devil on a motorcycle, Meyer broke eighteen bones and suffered four concussions before the war's end. He later commanded the assault on the Klissura Pass in Greece.

In 1943, Meyer attended training for regimental commanders and was transferred to the Hitler Youth Division, the 12th SS, becoming the youngest division commander in the German armed forces.

In 1946, the War Crimes Tribunal brought the following charges against Meyer:

1. Back in 1943, Meyer had ordered troops under his command in Belgium and France to deny quarter to Allied troops.
2. While Commander of the 25th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment in France, he was held responsible for his troops killing twenty-three Canadian prisoners-of-war in the villages of Buron and Authie on the day after D-Day.
3. On the same day, June 7, 1944, he ordered an additional seven prisoners-of-war to be killed.

4. The following day, June 8, 1944, Meyer's troops again shot and killed yet another seven Canadian prisoners-of-war at his headquarters in L' Ancienne Abbaye Ardenne. Meyer was captured in 1944, and, at the war's end, went on trial for the murder of these Canadian prisoners-of-war. He was condemned to execution by a Firing Squad which sentence, as we shall hear from Len, was commuted to life in prison. Meyer was released from prison in 1954 due to poor health and died on his birthday in 1961. (Source: [ww.wwirelics.com/kurtmeyer.html](http://www.wwirelics.com/kurtmeyer.html))

The Notice Board

A Little Auction Anyone?

Onagh Ross rides again! We are all by now familiar with Onagh's untiring work and generous contributions to the GHS. She has offered to give us an unsought for treat at the November meeting a little auction.

Wearing her bookstore hat, Onagh came across two little gems that will interest all you history buffs so she is putting them up for auction to the highest bidder, proceeds to go to the Historical Society:

Item 1

J. Russell Harper (1833-1889)

by William G.R. Hind

Only one copy

Item 2

The Portrait Photographs of Duncan Donovan

by Jennifer Harper

Two copies

May the best person win and a great, big **THANK YOU** to Onagh.

Lost & Found

Our usual host, The Alexandria United Church-on-the-Hill found a set of two (2) keys on a round, red, Roy's keychain. If anyone has lost these keys, please see Carol Graham Baxter or Grant Cameron at the next meeting to make arrangements for their retrieval.

Change of Venue

Don't forget that the November 4 meeting will take place at the **Nor'Westers & Loyalist Museum** in Williamstown at 8:00 p.m. Our thanks to **Joan P. MacDonald** for agreeing to host the event.

End of the 2004 Season

Well, folks, we have reached the end of the trail for another year. Our attendance has climbed significantly this fall with 68 and 58 members respectively attending in the last two sessions.

Our next meeting will be the **Annual General Meeting** potluck on Thursday, **February 3, 2005**. Imagine, 2005 already! Remember when we thought the world was going to end on December 31, 1999? Weren't we fooled??

Thank you for your support over the past year. I wish all of you happiness and health throughout the coming Holiday Season.

And, finally,

*“May the roads rise with you
And the wind be always at your back,
May the rain fall soft upon your fields,
And until we meet again,*

*May the Lord hold you
in the hollow of His hand.”*

Rosemary
O'Flaherty