

Memorial 1995

Helen COWICK

Helen was born in Montreal in 1924 where her father worked for Canadian Pacific Steamships. On leaving school, Helen worked for the British Ministry of War Transport but, in December, 1942 (just having turned 18) Helen enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). She was sworn into the RCAF in January, 1943.

"Immediately after joining the RCAF I was sent to Rockcliffe for Basic Training - what a horror that was. I remember being trundled off in a bus (along with a large group of other gals) to Rockcliffe and herded from one place to another, picking up bedding, uniforms, etc. and being assigned to a top bunk - I don't think I slept at all that first night as I was afraid I would roll over and fall out. We were all very frightened by the corporals and sergeants and I swore right then and there if I ever got to be one of them I would be a nice one. (I did and I think I was.)"

Things did not rapidly improve. "My most horrifying moment at 'basic' was when they lined us all up in the barrack block, sleeves rolled up and we marched down a line with hands on hips and we received 7 shots, one on each side as we went down a line of doctors. I came to on the washroom floor with a miserable sergeant standing over me and telling everyone else there was nothing wrong -- I was just a sissy. At that point I was ready to go home." But she



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didn't. After basic training, Helen was shipped off to Toronto for secretarial training at Havergal College.

"My first posting was to No. 1 Wireless School in Montreal. I worked in the Orderly Room and there I fulfilled the WD's [Women's Division] motto which was 'They Serve That Men May Fly'. I replaced a corporal who was able to train for aircrew. My jump from AW2 [airwoman second class] to LAW [leading air woman] and corporal, all in one day, came six months later. I remember having to go out on the parade square and put a flight of men through parade drill .. it was a little nerve wracking but I made it and the guys in the flight behaved very well."

Helen's next postings were to St. Hubert and Lachine ["Join the air force and see the Island of Montreal?"]. At the repatriation depot at Lachine, she worked on documenting the return of servicemen from overseas. Then she was shipped to #12 Equipment Depot (where else but east-end Montreal), once again doing Orderly Room work. "My service of 3 years was certainly not all that exciting but it was interesting. We spent a lot of time doing Victory Bond Sales. They used to herd us on to street-cars or busses and deposit us at the aircraft factories where we used to go through the plant and try to interest the workers in buying war bonds. (I got a few dates that way.)"

"At #12 Equipment Depot, I met my husband Tom. We went roller skating on October 7th and on the 27th we decided to get married. We had to wait until January as at

that time you had to be 21 (in Quebec) to get married without parental permission (my Dad was very ill at the time). We were married by the Station Padre and had our reception on the base." While Tom stayed in the RCAF for 21 more years, Helen left it to become a mother (one son and one daughter) and



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home manager. Still, she enjoyed the connection with service life and missed it when they left for "civvy street". Helen and Tom have lived in Richmond since 1958 and celebrated their 49th wedding anniversary this year. Richmond is their home and they have been very active in village life.

Their contributions to Branch # 625 have been many and important.



June 2016: Helen Kate Cowick, nee Hughes, passed away peacefully in her sleep at the age of 91.

She is survived by her son Bill (Nancy) and daughter Janice Gregory (Derek). Nana to Adrienne Oliver (Karim) and Alexandra Taylor (Shawn) and great nana to Devyn, Jayden, Lauren and Ethan.

Helen will be well and truly missed.