

John Howard MARTIN

John Howard Martin was born in Fruitland, Ontario and spent his first 82 years in the Hamilton area before moving to Richmond, where he lived for 18 years. Born on a farm he maintained his love for gardening throughout his life. He was a proud veteran of the Second World War and a member of the Canadian Legion until his death. He spent the majority of his working career with T.H.& B. Railway in Hamilton, Ontario. A devoted historian he was a supporter and frequent contributor to the Hamilton Branch of the Ontario Geological Society. Howard delighted in a life long pursuit of knowledge, and possessed an excellent ability to share that knowledge. Mr. Martin, U.E. Second World War Veteran passed away peacefully at Queensway Carleton Hospital on Saturday, April 17th, 2010 in his 100th year. Predeceased by his beloved wife, Violet (Bassindale). Loving father of Joan Darby (Fred), and Joyce Jackson (Dan). Devoted grandfather of Gillian (Clint), Amy (Jason), Warren (Camie), Bethany (Dave), and Joel (Janet), and proud great grandfather of Malcolm, Nadine, Charley, Westley, and Kaiya. Predeceased by his parents John and Ethel (Gage) and siblings Guilford, Irene, and Roy. Survived by his brother-in-law Harvey.



Mr. Martin was featured in our branch bulletin in December 2003 with the following article:

“In 2003 a lady in North Gower put an ad in Air Force magazine looking for information. Mr Martin saw this ad and contacted her was chosen for a project that the Armed Forces were working on. This project was the documentation of verbal memories of veterans’ experiences in World War II to be used for history and heritage training purposes for Air Force recruits. They weren’t looking for sentimental memories but details of how the veterans dealt with the various situations they found themselves in. In the summer of 2003 Mr Martin received a very nice letter and copies of the video interviews of 52 veterans and a copy of the final edition which includes Mr Martin as one of the 26 vets used on the tape. What an honour not only for Mr. Martin but for our branch as well!!! Mr. Martin and I had a lovely visit wherein I learned a little bit about him and I will share some of his memories with you now.

Mr. Martin is from Stoney Creek, Ontario, where his Cage family relatives are very well known having streets and parks named for them in the Hamilton-Burlington area. He remembers quite clearly seeing and hearing the WWI planes flying overhead when he was about 4 years old and living with his grandparents. Mr. Martin worked as telegraph operator in Hamilton on the railway but lost his job during the Depression. He worked as a car mechanic and joined the Signal Corps in the Militia to keep his telegraph skills honed. When the Air Force started its own Militia he transferred there hoping to be an aeroplane mechanic but was put into the Signal Corps (Communications). When his unit was called up on September 4 1939 and you had to sign up or lose your Militia rank, he and his wife, Violet, were married that afternoon and 1 hour later he signed up. They were determined that the Forces were not going to tell them if and when they could marry, so they married first and signed up second. After being shipped from east to west they ended up in the Eastview (now Vanier) area of Ottawa for about 1 ½ years before he was shipped overseas in April 1944.

Upon his return he resumed his telegraph career in Hamilton with the CP/New York Central Railway at a desk job as a station agent where he handled telegraphs and tickets sales among other things. When the New York head office sent new equipment there was no one who knew what to do with it but his Signal Corps experience made him the perfect man for the job. He ended up in an outside job in charge of the lines needed along the tracks for the telephone, telegraph and teletype.

Mr Martin and his wife had 2 daughters and when his wife passed away 10 years ago, he decided that Burlington was too big and busy for him, but having visited his daughter, Joan Darby over the years, thought Richmond a good spot to settle. Mr Martin remembers one incident at our branch when an Army vet was berating an Air Force vet for not being overseas during the War- the Army vet didn’t understand that the Air Force had to go where they were sent and could not apply to go anywhere.

Mr. Martin says the world never changes - no matter where you are or what happens -things pretty much stay the same and history repeats itself. He is a wonderful, articulate, gracious man with more interesting memories than I have space for - he’s a great conversationalist too! Thank you Mr. Martin for your time, your story and your memories.”

He will be sadly missed by his friends and family, but will be forever remembered.