

Leonard SAULL

Leonard Saull was born in 1918 in Montreal where he attended commercial high school and served with the Royal Montreal Regiment Cadet Corps. After graduation he worked with a stock brokerage firm and served with the Duke of York's Royal Canadian Hussars (militia) before WW II. "During service with this unit, I was on the mounted escort for the visit of King George and Queen Elizabeth to Canada in May, 1939."



In late August 1939, his militia unit was placed on internal security duty in the Montreal area, guarding bridges and other strategic sites until several months after the war began. When the unit returned to its reserve status, Len joined the regular army in February, 1940. His troop ship left Montreal on the 19th of April, 1941 but not as a part of a convoy. It never reached the other side of the Atlantic. It was the only troop ship torpedoed in the North Atlantic (200 miles off Northern Ireland) during WW II. Len was one of only 36 survivors picked up by the Royal Navy and taken to Londonderry. A few days later, he shipped out of Belfast for Liverpool where the sight was grim indeed; Liverpool was under a terrible bombing attack at the time. Finally, he reached his assigned station -- with Headquarters (HQ), 1st Canadian Corps -- at Leatherhead, just outside of London, on the 15th of May, 1941. In March, 1942 he was posted to HQ, 1st Canadian Army. The next several years were involved with training and waiting and, happily, marriage and the birth of a daughter.

Although his unit was ready to move across the English Channel on the 10th of June, 1944, there was severe congestion in the area of the landing beaches. They returned to base and set out again on the 15th of July, arriving in Normandy on the 24th. "We remained there for some weeks but when the Caen-Carpiquet area was cleared and the German retreat through the Falaise occurred movement was brisk."

Len's first impression was how crowded the area was, the confusion of people and machines on the move, the dust and the destruction. Once Caen fell and the Falaise Gap was closed, what surprised Len was how quickly the advance was. He also remembers the rocket attacks on Antwerp after it was captured but before the Germans were cleared out of the Schelde Estuary. In November, HQ moved to Breda, then Tilburg, Grave, Hengelo and finally Apeldoorn. After the full Liberation of Holland and the subsequent victory in Europe, Len stayed on the continent for several months. Although he had sufficient "points" to obtain an early return to Canada, Len was informed that his wife would not be able to follow for another year. So he volunteered to stay over in Europe.



"I returned to the United Kingdom in September, 1945 and was employed as Court Reporter with the War Crimes Investigation Unit. I served in this capacity at Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer's trial in Aurick, Germany. In the course of duties with this unit I travelled to Vienna, Salzburg and Berchtesgarden. I spoke with Kurt Meyer for many hours and knew him well."

In June of 1946 Len returned to Canada, followed by his wife and family the following month. He stayed in the forces until 1964, retiring in the Ottawa area. He then joined the public service "to raise my pension" and finally retired at 60 with 37 years of service in total. Len married Eileen Benstead in England in 1942 and a daughter was born in 1944. Two sons rounded out the family and all three children live in the Ottawa area.

Len passed away on August 10, 2006 and is survived by his wife of 64 years Eileen, children Beverley (Wayne Philips), Michael (Anne) and John (Monica) as well as 7 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. Eileen is still a member of the Richmond and his son Michael is an active member, serving on the executive committee and as Sgt-at-Arms.

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