

# Fort York News

Fort York Branch 165 Royal Canadian Legion

Battle of the Rhineland February 1945



February  2025

Fort York Legion Branch 165  
1421 Yonge Street  
P.O. Box 69009  
Toronto, ON M4T 1Y7

<https://fortyorkbranch165.wildapricot.org/>

### Future Events

Dinner at RCMI..... March 20

Garden Party..... May 22,  
(Rosedale)



### Newsletter Staff

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Writer..... Capt Larry Rose  
Editor..... Ann Unger

All Fort York 165 members should have received a Legion lapel pin. If you need one, please contact us.

If you require a name tag or Legion lapel pin please contact the secretary and he will arrange to have one made for you. The cost is \$5.00. Indicate whether you prefer a magnet or pin closure for the name tag.

### Executive 2024-25

President..... Bill Utton  
Immediate Past President..Col Geordie Elms  
1st Vice President..... HCol Barry Downs  
2nd Vice President..... Capt Sam Billich  
Secretary..... Col Fred McCague  
[f.mccague@rogers.com](mailto:f.mccague@rogers.com)  
Treasurer..... Leonard Feldt  
Membership Officer..... Patricia Luna  
Events Team..... Malcolm Morrison-Chair  
LCdr D. Murakami  
Simon Milberry  
Chaplain..... Maj Gillian Federico  
District D, Zone 5 Rep... LCdr Donna Murakami  
Fort York News..... Terry Sleightholm  
[tsleight46@gmail.com](mailto:tsleight46@gmail.com)  
Sergeant-at-Arms..... Simon Milberry  
Remembrancer..... Terry Sleightholm  
Branch Services Officer. Cdr Ed Sparling  
Assistant Br. Serv. Officer..... John Anderson  
Sunnybrook Rep..... LCdr D. Murakami  
RCMI Liaison..... Susan Cook  
Members-at-Large..... Glenn Carter  
Tom Pam



*Fort York Branch 165*

*Since 1925*

## The Calgary Hangar Flight Museum's GEMS FROM THE PAST

By Capt. Larry D. Rose

A pristine-looking and handsomely restored Hawker Hurricane is among an array of gems to be seen at the Calgary Hangar Flight Museum. The Mk XII Hurricane on display is the product of a seven-year-long restoration. During the Second World War this aircraft had flown on Canada's west coast. In early 1942 there were fears that the Japanese might raid or invade North America so there were RCAF fighter and patrol aircraft based at Patricia Bay, near Victoria, Tofino, on Vancouver Island, and other BC locations.

The sleek Hurricane, when it was first introduced in Britain, was on the cutting edge of fighter design. It was among the first to have a covered cockpit and retractable landing gear. Both the Hurricane and the Spitfire were essentially to be armed with eight machine guns which were deemed essential to take on the latest German fighter planes. Of course, both fighters became flying legends during the Battle of Britain. More than 1,400 Hurricanes were built in Canada. Some of them were flown in Canada, some were shipped to Britain, and others were sent to the Soviet Union.

The Mark XII on display was built in 1942 at Canadian Car and Foundry in what is now Thunder Bay, Ontario. It is not well known that the chief aeronautical engineer at Canadian Car was Elsie MacGill, the first woman in her field in this country. Among the challenges for MacGill was to re-design the aircraft to North American standards which included incorporating the Packard Merlin engine.

The Calgary Hangar Flight Museum, located at the south end of Calgary International Airport, includes restored and replica aircraft along with engines, models and displays. The museum was founded in 1975 by aviation enthusiasts and former Second World War pilots. At that time the organization was called the as the Aero Space Museum Association of Calgary.

The museum moved to its current location in 1985. The main building dates back to the Second World War, and so the name "Hangar Museum." Its second building is a gigantic, but unheated, tent. Funds have not been available to

build anything more permanent, but fundraising is underway.

It is always interesting to spot aircraft not normally seen together, but placed side by side at a museum. At the Calgary museum a de Havilland Vampire is next to a Sabre fighter jet. The contrast is dramatic with the Sabre towering over the British fighter. The Vampire, introduced just after the Second World War, had to be built as light and small as possible because the first jet engines were very low powered. Parts of the plane are plywood.

The Sabre dates from the late 1940s, not much later than the Vampire. The display Sabre was reconstructed mainly from a USAF aircraft that served as a chase plane at Edwards Air Force Base in California. It accompanied the Bell X-1 aircraft, among others, on some flights and the Sabre was flown by legendary pilot Chuck Yeager. Parts from Canadian-built Sabres had to be used to completely reconstruct the plane.

Apart from many military aircraft, there are a number of civilian planes on hand, including one of the greatest aircraft of all time, the Douglas DC-3. The DC-3 first flew in December 1935 and production of it was ramped up in spectacular fashion during the Second World War. As many as 11,000 of them were built and the RCAF continued to fly them until –amazingly –1989.

The display aircraft had been flown at one time by another aviation legend, Buffalo Airways, based in Yellowknife. Some aircraft, including a CF-101B Voodoo, on strength with 416 Squadron, RCAF in the 1960s and 1970s, are on display outdoors. There is simply no room for them in the main building or the tent. The plane is clearly deteriorating in the cold weather and rain but there is no other cover available for the present time.

In addition to many other attractions, the museum displays a number of plaques which carry the names of those inducted into the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame. Among those honoured is our late Branch 165 member, Wing Commander Russell Bannock. He was inducted in 1983 and was also a chairman of the Hall of Fame for some years. W/C Bannock died in 2020 but is still remembered and much revered by many branch members.





The author with the museum's S-55 Sikorsky



Sabre



Vampire

## The Mayfair Club: Helping Our Veterans

Malcolm Hamilton and I attended the Mayfair Club's annual Veteran's Breakfast on Thursday, November 7th. The club sponsors a free breakfast for members but asks them to donate to a fund for Veterans. They also have other events towards this end. Most, if not all, of their efforts flow to the Sunnybrook veterans through our trust fund.

In addition to Malcolm and myself there were three other guest speakers: Capt Bench is a member of Mayfair and a Reserve officer with QOR. After his regular force service, mostly peacekeeping, he left to finish his education and today is a Professor at York University. BGen Chris Snider and Kathleen Nimigon from Sunnybrook were also in attendance. Chris has taken over for Cdr Ratcliffe as the head of the Sunnybrook Veterans Association and we all know Kathleen.

Thanks to Mayfair marketing head, Anita, who took the pictures.

Fred McCague



Welcome to  
Fort York Branch 165

Hans G. Bathija  
Jason Genua  
Hussain Karoji  
Petra U



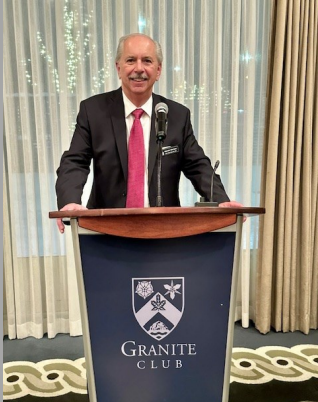


## Mayfair Club





*Dinner at The Granite Club*





*Dinner at The Granite Club*



*Granite Club*



## Madeleine Riffaud, 'the Girl Who Saved Paris,' Dies at 100

**M**adeleine Riffaud, a French Resistance hero who survived three weeks of torture as a teenager and who went on to celebrate her 20th birthday by helping to capture 80 Nazis on an armored supply train, died on Nov. 6 at her home in Paris. She was 100.

Her death was announced by her publisher, Dupuis. Ms. Riffaud went on to become a crusading anticolonial war correspondent.

She was propelled into the anti-Nazi guerrilla underground in November 1940 by a literal kick in the backside from a German officer. He sent her packing after he saw Nazi soldiers taunting her at a railway station as she was accompanying her ailing grandfather to visit her father near Amiens, in northern France.

"That moment," Ms. Riffaud said in a 2006 interview with *The Times of London*, "decided my whole life."

"I landed on my face in the gutter," she told *The Guardian* in 2004. "I was humiliated. My fear turned into anger."

She decided then and there to join the French Resistance.

"I remember saying to myself, 'I don't know who they are or where they are, but I'll find the people who are fighting this, and I'll join them.'"

Ms. Riffaud connected with the Resistance in Grenoble, France, at a sanitarium, where she was being treated for tuberculosis. She had contracted the disease while studying midwifery in Paris.

She enlisted with the *Francs-Tireurs et Partisans*, the guerrillas organized by the Communist Party to sabotage the German occupiers. She took the nom de guerre Rainer, adopted from the Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke.

In 1944, Ms. Riffaud volunteered for a mission to kill



a

Nazi soldier. Retaliating for a German massacre of 643 villagers at Oradour-sur-Glane, a place she knew well from childhood, she bicycled along the Seine River carrying a stolen pistol. When she came upon a German soldier gazing across the river at the Tuileries gardens, she stopped and shot him twice in the head. "He fell like a sack of wheat," she later wrote.

She was captured by a French collaborator, locked in a Gestapo jail, tortured and scheduled for execution. As she was being transported by train to the Ravensbrück concentration camp, she managed to escape, only to be seized again. But this time she was apparently freed in a prisoner exchange. Until then, her parents had thought she was dead. When news of that episode spread, she was lionized as "the girl who saved Paris."

"Hundreds of young women like me were involved," Ms. Riffaud recalled. "We were the messengers, the intelligence gatherers, the repairers of the web. When men fell or were captured, we got the news through, pulled the nets tight again. We carried documents, leaflets, sometimes arms."

Ms. Riffaud's greatest wartime escapade was the capture of a Wehrmacht train in 1944. She and three comrades lobbed fireworks and grenades at the train from a bridge over the tracks, forcing the Germans to retreat into a tunnel. The four of them then persuaded

a retired engineer to detach the locomotive, leaving the Germans trapped in the tunnel. Eighty Wehrmacht soldiers surrendered to her.

After the war, Ms. Riffaud overcame depression induced by “survivor guilt,” Keren Chiaroni wrote in *Resistance Heroism and the End of Empire: The Life and Times of Madeleine Riffaud* (2017). Ms. Riffaud married and became a poet and a journalist. As a reporter and a committed opponent of capitalism and colonialism, she covered the insurgencies against French colonialism in Algeria and Vietnam for *L’Humanité*, the French Communist newspaper, and wrote several books.

Marie-Madeleine Armande Riffaud was born in Arvillers, near Amiens, on Aug. 23, 1924, the daughter of Jean Émile and Gabrielle (Boissin) Riffaud. Her father, who had been wounded in World War I, was a pacifist. Both her parents were schoolteachers, and she assumed that she would become a teacher, too. Madeleine was 15 when the war hit home, finding herself among refugees being strafed by the Luftwaffe as they fled the Somme for the unoccupied southwest. In the Resistance, she rose to the rank of lieutenant. After the liberation of Paris, in 1944, she wanted to keep fighting but was deemed too young to join the French Army.

“I was a minor, I didn’t have my parents’ consent,” she said, “and I was a girl!”

In 1945, she married Pierre Daix, a critic and Communist intellectual who had been imprisoned in a concentration camp. They separated two years later, and their daughter, Fabienne, was raised by his parents before she died of tuberculosis. Ms. Riffaud has no known immediate survivors.

In Paris, she met the Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh and mingled with fellow poets. She met Pablo Picasso, who in 1945 drew her portrait in charcoal in Paris for her first book, “The Clenched Fist” (1945), a collection of poems written while she was imprisoned. In 1994, she published a memoir, “My Name Was Rainer.” Ms. Riffaud was nearly blinded in a vehicular accident, for which she blamed the French nationalists in Algeria, where she worked as a correspondent during the 1950s and early ’60s. She later spent seven years em-



A charcoal sketch of Ms. Riffaud made by Pablo Picasso in 1945. The artist, a biographer of Ms. Riffaud wrote, “drew the heavy eyelids of a woman who couldn’t forget” what she had been through in the war.

bedded as a loyal chronicler with the South Vietnamese Communist insurgents, the Vietcong, and began a five-decade relationship with the Vietnamese poet Nguyen Dinh Thi. He died in 2003.

By the 1970s, when the Communists frowned upon relationships between Vietnamese and foreigners, she had returned to Paris. After working as a nursing assistant in Paris, she wrote *Night Linen* (1974), a non-fiction book that exposed the drudge work and poor pay of hospital workers. Ms. Riffaud played down her acclaim as a hero of the liberation of Paris. “I refuse to be a symbol,” she wrote. “I was just a young girl caught up in history.” “The essential was not to give in,” she once said. “When you resisted, you were already a victor. You had already won.”

In her book about Ms. Riffaud, Keren Chiaroni described how the young woman in that charcoal Picasso portrait had evolved. Continued on next page . . .

“He saw a woman who was still a girl and yet who did not laugh or sparkle like a girl, for she was living with the shadow of what she had so recently experienced in the cells of the Gestapo,” Ms. Chiaroni wrote. “Picasso drew the heavy eyelids of a woman who couldn’t forget.”

Seventy years later, she observed, Ms. Riffaud had grown into a “passionate, vital person” who had “chosen to confront some of the political and social dragons of her day with effrontery and courage.”

“In this respect,” Ms. Chiaroni wrote, “she has grown into a very different person from the stunned, withdrawn young woman Picasso drew in 1945.”

*Sam Roberts, The Times. Nov 23, 2024*

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## Past Presidents of Fort York Branch 165

**COLONEL ROBERT HARVEY HILBORN**  
L.V.O., M.B.E., C.D.

**B**ob was born and educated in Waterloo County and spent most of his working life in Toronto where he contributed to many business, community and military activities. He was President of Fort York Branch 165 in 1970. Bob became President of Harry Price, Hilborn Insurance Limited and Senior Vice-President and Director of Marsh & McLennan Limited. He was Past President of the Toronto Board of Trade, The Empire Club of Canada, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Canada, The National Association of Surety Bond Producers (U.S.A.), Governor, Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, and Honorary Director, Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. He was Director General of the Queen's 1984 Visit to Ontario and was Canadian Equerry to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, 1965, 1974, 1979, 1981 and 1985. He was invested by Her Majesty as a Member of the Royal Victorian Order.

Bob's military career began in 1937 as a Lieutenant with The Highland Light Infantry of Canada with service in Northwest Europe and Italy, completing his war service as Brigade Major, 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade.

Hilborn, a staff officer, would command the Toronto Scottish Regiment in 1960 and would later serve as

Honorary Lt Col. and Honorary Colonel. As a Captain (A/Major) during the war Colonel Hilborn was awarded the MBE. He was Honorary Colonel of the Regiment from 1971-1977.

Bob died in his 89th year, at the Guelph General Hospital in February, 2007.

**Terry Sleightholm**

