

Fort York News

Fort York Branch 165 Royal Canadian Legion



Toronto VE Day

May  2025

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

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

Future Events

Garden Party, Rosedale, May 22



Newsletter Staff

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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 2025

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
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
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

Welcome to Fort York Branch 165 Our Newest Members

We are delighted that so many of our new members are residents at Sunnybrook's Veterans Care Centre.



Priv Morris Adams
Priv Durwin Dingle
Col Bill Jensen
Asir Karabag
Brigit O'Regan
Ronald N. Paquin
LWren Brenda Reid
Priv Bertram Shinwell
BGen Chris Snider

Returning Home To Canada 1945

After the joy of being reunited with their loved ones, men had to learn a new intimacy with their spouses, bonding with children they had not seen in years. Some relationships made fragile by distance and the passing of years could not be mended. Couples separated. In addition, many came home with a British or Dutch wife, with a couple of kids, who had to adapt to a foreign, sometimes hostile, environment. It is estimated that 41,351 war brides were brought to Canada by servicemen, together with 19,737 children.

Fortunately, most Canadian soldiers found favourable conditions for their reinsertion into civilian life. Demobilization of the men and women serving in the Army, Navy or Air Force had been in preparation for a long time. As soon as they were back, they were granted a 30-day leave and then returned to civilian life. The Department of Veteran Affairs, created in 1944, gave them \$100 to buy civilian clothes, plus \$7.50 per month of service and \$0.25 per day overseas, plus one week salary extra for each six-month period overseas. In addition, since regular deductions had been made on their pay for government bonds, some came back to significant savings.

Many government programs were created to help reinserting veterans. Agricultural lands or mortgages were offered to those who decided to settle on a farm, and loans to those who wanted to start a business. There were rehabilitation programs for the wounded or the psychologically traumatized. Finding a new job was made easier through technical and professional training. Veterans who wanted to undertake or complete university studies were welcome in colleges and universities.

Soldiers who enlisted in 1939 left a country still very much affected by the Depression. When they returned, they found a welfare state with a solid social security net: unemployment insurance, child allowances and an improved pension plan for the elderly or the handicapped.

Past Presidents of Fort York Branch 165

Battalion Commander

LCol Thomas Pope Gilday, DSO, ED, MID, LLD

Tom Gilday was president of Fort York Branch 165 in 1979. He was born in Montreal and took Business Administration at Sir George Williams College. Son of a surgeon father and a mother whose father was Senator Rufus Pope, Tom's grandfather, the Hon. John Henry Pope, PC, was Minister of Railways in 1885 under P.M. Sir John A. MacDonald.

Tom joined the Canadian Grenadier Guards Militia in 1932 and signed up for active duty in 1940. He became an original member of the joint American-Canadian Unit, the First Special Service Force, also known as the "Devil's Brigade". Tom was the Battalion Commander of the First Battalion, Third Regiment and saw action in Italy at Monte La DiFensa, Mount Mavo, where where he was awarded the DSO for gallantry in action. He spent 98 days at the Anzio bridgehead and led his Battalion into Rome. They were the first troops to enter that city. Three days after the Germans retreated, Tom was granted an audience with Pope Pius x11. An Orangeman at heart, Tom si=aid he heard his grandfather, Grandmaster of the Orange Lodge of Quebec, roll over in his grave as he kissed the Pope's ring!

After Italy, Tom transferred to the Scheldt area commanding the Regina Rifles and returned home to Canada in February, 1946 following his command of the Amsterdam Leave Centre. He resumed his insurance adjusting business in Sudbury and commanded the 58th L.A.A. Regiment (RCA)

In 1970 Tom moved to Toronto and was Governor of the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires and Honorary President of RCMI. A sportsman, he was a Canadian champion paddler, and took up sea kayaking off of Vancouver at age 80. He hunted and fished but never shot a deer or caught a fish as he had "seen too much death in WW II".

He kept in touch with his men after the war as they were brothers-in-arms and part of his extended family.. Tom was a quiet man with a well-honed sense of humour but was never afraid to speak out.

He always told his children to "lead and not follow",

help others less fortunate to follow their instincts, be a Canadian, enjoy the great outdoors, keep in shape and enjoy life to the end.

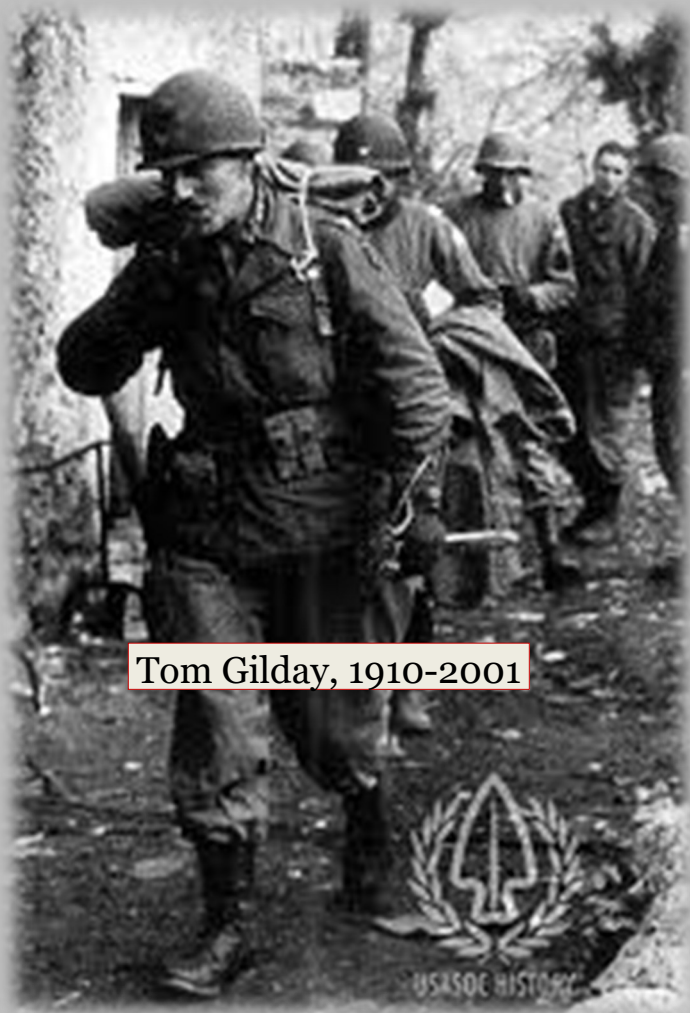
Tom Gilday died as close to the great outdoors as was possible -- under the trees on the grounds of Toronto's Sunnybrook Hospital.

What a role model! I wish that I had an opportunity to know him.



In the words of Shakespeare:

*"the elements
so mixed ...
that Nature
might stand up
and say to all
the world,
"This was a
man."*

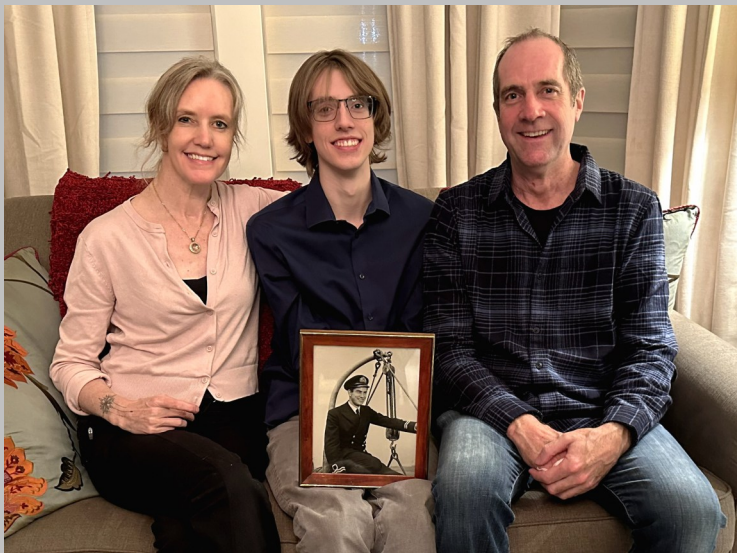


Tom Gilday, 1910-2001

Fort York 165 Bursary

In 2024, Fort York Branch 165 agreed to donate financial assistance to the grandson of a Royal Canadian Navy engineer, veteran, Lt Murray Maynard. That grandson is student Bruce Maynard. The assistance is in the form of a \$3,000 bursary so that Bruce can attend university.

Bruce's grandfather served on destroyer HMCS Gatineau and the frigate HMCS Kokanee, both of which saw service in the North Atlantic in WW II. He received a Mentioned In Dispatches (MID) for bravery after a ship collision and was honourably released as LCdr on April 17, 1969.



Bruce and his Parents



LCdr Murray Maynard



Canadians in Europe 1945

1945 began with a bang!

On New Year's Day, the *Luftwaffe* mounted Operation *Bodenplatte*, a massive attack on Allied airfields in Belgium and the Netherlands. Almost 1,000 aircraft had been secretly concentrated for the attack that had initially been planned for the same day as the launch of the *Wehrmacht's* (Germany's army) surprise offensive through the Ardennes. Bad weather had delayed *Bodenplatte* for two weeks, but the air-base raids caught the Allied air forces napping. More than 400 aircraft were destroyed or damaged, most on the ground, including many RCAF Typhoons and Spitfires. But the raid was also a disaster for the Germans, who lost some 250 aircraft and more than 200 pilots. The Allied losses could be replaced quickly; the German losses could never be made up at this late stage of the war.

The Battle of the Bulge, launched by the Nazis on Dec. 16, 1944, just two weeks earlier, had given the Allies a fright, but once the skies cleared, the Allies' tactical and ground forces had checked the Germans and began to push them back. The losses in men and tanks sustained by the Germans could now not be made up, and the Allies were poised to enter Germany. The Soviet Red Army was simultaneously approaching the German border in the east. Russian losses were huge, but the Red Army could keep its ranks full; the Germans could not, although young boys and old men were being thrown into the lines. The Nazis would fight hard to defend the soil of the Third Reich, but the endgame was at hand.

Fighting with Germany was fierce but II Canadian Corps was ordered to liberate the Netherlands, reaching Apeldoorn and then moving northeast while I Canadian Corps was ordered to take Arnhem and cross into the Rhineland.

In April 1945, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt died in office knowing that the Allies were succeeding in the war. Canadians started operations to feed the starving people of the Netherlands as the Soviets closed in on Berlin.

To destroy the German army the Allies needed to keep attacking; there could be no rest. For the invasion of Germany in February 1945, General Harry

Crerar's First Canadian Army was the largest formation ever under the control of a single Canadian commander – nearly half a million Canadian and British soldiers. This powerful force was required as Hitler's forces now fought to defend their homeland. Previously, the Germans had been struggling to hold conquered territory in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Now they were defending their own homes and families. .

The first phase of the battle was led by the British divisions under Canadian command. The 2nd Canadian Corps soon joined the fight. The battlefield they faced was cold, wet, and muddy and it seemed their enemy possessed an almost unlimited amount of artillery ammunition. The second phase, known as Operation Blockbuster, saw the First Canadian Army take over the primary fight. Infantry, artillery, and tanks worked closely together to accomplish their task.

By 1 March, the Canadians had advanced five kilometres and prepared to attack the Hochwald Gap, an open railway corridor through a heavily forested area. They would be led by the tanks of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division. Casualties were heavy as the Germans received steady reinforcements and refused to give up any territory.

The fighting in the Hochwald continued until the morning of 2 March when suddenly the enemy disappeared. The Germans had pulled back across the Rhine River as a result of American progress to the south. They had no choice for otherwise they would have been surrounded and completely destroyed.

The final phase in the Battle of the Rhineland was Operations Plunder and Varsity, an assault crossing of the Rhine River combined with a major drop of airborne and parachute troops on the far side. The Canadians were front and centre in both operations. On 23 March, Operation Plunder was launched, with units of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division following British regiments across the Rhine. The 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade faced tough fighting once across the river. Varsity, the last major Anglo-American airborne offensive of the war, took place on 24 March.

The initial drops by the 17th US Airborne Division and the 6th British Airborne Division (including the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion) were initially unopposed, but the German anti-aircraft defences soon found their range and the Allies sustained heavy casualties during the follow-on drops.

Within a few days, the Germans began retreating and the battle was over by the end of March. Overall, First Canadian Army endured 15,634 killed, wounded, or missing during the Rhineland operations. The casualty count included 5,304 Canadians during just February and March. Of these, 1,617 are buried in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands.

On May 8th, 1945, crowds of civilians and soldiers, shouting and dancing in the streets, gathered to celebrate V-E Day. In London, in Paris, throughout liberated Europe, parades, and speeches, hugging and rejoicing marked that special day. Canada also celebrated as people danced in the streets. In Ottawa people celebrated; in Toronto tickertape flowed from up high; people gathered on Parliament Hill. Every city, every community found its own way to celebrate the return

of peace and of those who served overseas. In Halifax where bars had been closed for the day, sailors raided downtown beer and alcohol outlets. The party turned into a riot...

In the Netherlands and in Germany, Canadian soldiers celebrated as well, but in a more reserved manner. They had been fighting for months, for years even. A few days ago, they were still under enemy fire. The end of war seemed somewhat unreal; despite their joy, victory had a bittersweet taste.



Infantrymen of the North Shore Regiment boarding an Alligator amphibious vehicle during Operation VERITABLE near Nijmegen, Netherlands, 8 February 1945.

Before troops could be demobilized, there were still two tasks to be taken care of: the security of occupied territories and the war in the Pacific.

Under the command of Major-General Christopher Vokes, Canadian occupation forces set up their HQ in Bad Zwischenahn, Germany. In July 1945, they counted 568 officers and 15,477 troops of other ranks. Their role was not to rule over defeated Germany but to ensure law and order. They also had to build a relationship with the German population, help displaced people in their attempts to locate relatives or return to their homes. With winter approaching, they stocked up on firewood, as there was no coal available any more. Their duty done, occupation troops were sent back home in the spring of 1946. A similar situation occurred on a grander scale for Canadian soldiers at the Rhine River bridgeheads in WW I.

War in Europe ended on May 8th, 1945, but it went on in the Pacific. Canada planned to dispatch an infantry division to fight against Japan. Some 1,024 officers and 20,829 other ranks joined the Canadian Army's Pacific Force (6th Infantry Division) under Major-General B.M. Hoffmeister. The men who volunteered but were still in Europe were brought back as a priority; they got a 30-day leave and were told to show up at one of nine training centers in Canada. Since the Pacific Force had to operate jointly with US forces, it changed its structure to be regiment-based, rather than brigade-based. But luckily Canadians did not fight in the Pacific, as Japan surrendered on August 14th, 1945.

Meanwhile, there were 280,000 Canadian soldiers in Great Britain and throughout Europe who had to be brought back home, not to mention the airmen. To move such a huge number of men and women in a few weeks was not feasible, as there was no transportation available for so many people. A scoring system based on seniority was devised to determine a priority order for repatriation, and married men were shipped back home before bachelors.

To keep up morale and prepare the return to civilian life, activities were organized for troops waiting for their demobilization orders. Courses were set up on academic, technical and professional subjects, as well as a Canadian civic education program. Sports and

cultural activities were also available. The repatriation of troops stationed in the Netherlands went on until the fall of 1945, but there remained many airmen and soldiers in Britain as well, who were still waiting for a place on a ship for Canada. The last ones left in 1946.

Veterans on the GO!

Veterans and active members of the Canadian Armed Forces can ride GO Transit **for free** starting March 1, 2025. This includes regular and reserve force members.

You just need to make sure you have your Veteran's Service Card or a Canadian Military Service ID whenever you are travelling on GO Transit to qualify for free travel. . . . even when using your PRESTO card for fare inspection.

PRESTO users can get a new fare type set on your PRESTO card and take advantage of the One Fare Program which allows free transfers between GO Transit and most [local transit agencies](#).

If you have any existing fare types on your physical PRESTO card for other transit agencies, be aware only one fare type can be set to the physical PRESTO card.

If you need more than one fare type on your PRESTO card you should add your PRESTO card to [Google Wallet](#) or [Apple Wallet](#) to allow for multiple Transit Agency specific fare types on a single card.

To receive the free One Fare transfer, you must tap on and off GO Transit and tap on at connecting transit agencies. If you have a default trip set up, the free One Fare transfer will be applied automatically when you tap on your connecting trip, and you won't need to tap off on GO Transit. Setting up a default trip helps ensure you do not miss tapping off.

Visit a station ambassador at Union Station or another staffed GO station to set up the new fare type on your PRESTO card. [Check the staffed hours for your station](#).





London, UK

Monday 5 May, 2025

* To ensure the commemorations act as a point of remembrance of the millions who lost their lives in the conflict as well as a celebration of peace, the commemorations will begin in Whitehall. The Cenotaph, the nation's focal point of remembrance, will be dressed in Union Flags for the duration of the four day commemorations, echoing the 1920 unveiling of the monument to the fallen. From Monday 5 May, it will provide a focal point for the commemorations and a place to pay silent tribute to all those who died, both at home and abroad, during the Second World War.

* To honour and remember those who fell during the Second World War, there will be a Military procession from Whitehall to Buckingham Palace followed by a flypast of current and historic military aircraft including the famous Red Arrows.

* The VE Day 80 commemorations will continue with a street party on HMS Belfast. HMS Belfast fired some of the opening shots on D Day in 1944 and protected Arctic convoys during the Second World War and is the most significant surviving Second World War warship.

* Street parties, barbecues and community get-togethers, supported by ideas and inspiration from The Together Coalition and The Big Lunch, will be held by communities across the country, echoing the celebrations 80 years ago as the population welcomed the end of the war.

Tuesday 6 May

* An installation of ceramic poppies will return to the Tower of London to mark the anniversary. Nearly 30,000 of the original poppies from the 2014 display at the Tower, which commemorated the centenary of the First World War, will be displayed in a new installation within the walls of the fortress. This poppies installation will resemble a 'wound' at the heart of the Tower, which was itself bombed during the Blitz and still bears some of those scars today. It will mark and reflect on the sacrifices made by so many during the Second World War.

- Historic landmarks across the UK will be lit up this evening.

Wednesday 7 May

- On the evening of the 7th May 1945, a newsflash announced that the following day would be Victory in Europe Day. To commemorate this important moment in the nation's history, the Parliament Choir will host a Victory in Europe Day Anniversary Concert in the famous Westminster Hall at the Palace of Westminster, eighty years to the day that victory was declared.

Thursday 8 May

* A service will take place at Westminster Abbey that will be both an act of shared remembrance and a celebration of the end of the war. It will be a moment to give thanks and to honour a generation that showed extraordinary courage and resilience.

- The events will conclude with a concert at the historic Horseguards Parade to finish the VE Day 80 commemorations in a celebratory tone, echoing how the nation reacted to the news 80 years before. With more than 10,000 members of the public in attendance, the concert will feature stars of stage and screen and military musicians and tell the story of victory and the legacy of the Second World War in Europe.

Friday 15 August

* To mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the war in the Far East, a service will take place at the National Memorial Arboretum. In partnership with the government, the Royal British Legion will lead the nation in honouring and remembering those who fought and died during the War in the Far East.





March Dinner at RCMCI

