



# The River Round Up

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## Friendly Fire



Wayne Pottie, George J. Landry, Raymond Doary & Donnie Pottie

Tangible images and expressions of Remembrance have been many and varied throughout the years. This past July Raymond Doary, George J. Landry along with my brother Wayne and I had the distinct honour of experiencing how Remembrance is observed by the peoples of an occupied country notably the town of St. Georges Des Groseilliers, France. Sometime in the early summer of 2010, I was contacted by Shirley Stone of Picton, ON. Shirley, a well known genealogist and military researcher as well as author of *SIX MEN ON A NICKLE*, had been invited to assist in locating and contacting the families or next of kin of fifteen Canadian soldiers who died in what was referred to at that time as “*Friendly Fire*”. The following will hopefully describe the demonstration of immeasurable gratitude, respect, honour and emotional kindness bestowed upon wounded and dying Canadian soldiers, in particular one of River Bourgeois’ bravest, **Cpl. Mark John Sampson**, the son of Paul & Isabella Sampson on July 11, 1944. Inquiries into the events of that day have been under way for some time now through the efforts of many

interested locals led by St. Georges’ Stephane Robine. The culmination of their efforts and expressions from the heart of the people of St Georges awaited our arrival, all thirty plus of us. Our party of four arrived four hours late, unfortunately, George can explain that one. There to greet us were: Mayor Guy Lange; Chantal, his wife, along with Nellie, Chantal’s sister in law. As Guy and Chantal’s guests, their kindness along with Nellie and Rogier for our week long stay would require another article. The resulting dedication ceremony was held to coincide with this year’s Canada Day celebrations. Sixty eight years have passed and the elders who were present that day speak, with great emotion, as though it happened yesterday. With tears in her eyes we heard from one lady who, as a young girl of fourteen, held a wounded soldier in her arms only to watch him die. Jacque Vico, a member of the Resistance, spoke at the Abbaye of the murders that had taken place there and the bodies that were later uncovered. Sadly Jacque passed away a month later. A tour of all the different areas leading up to this incident was provided along with commentary throughout. The soldier’s ages ranged from twenty one to thirty three. According to their attestation records they were miners, stevedores, farm & factory workers, clerks, lumberjacks, husbands and fathers. The day of enlistment altered their life course and that of so many more forever. On June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944, Canadians of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division of the 9<sup>th</sup> Armored Division landed on the Normandy shores of what we know today as Juno Beach. History tells us in paper, print, video and audio that the combat engagement was indescribable for many. Following the landing, with lesser resistance, the North Novas advanced as far as 11kms, far beyond all British and American forces, thus leaving them vulnerable without artillery support. Unfortunately, this led to many of them being captured as well as being executed following surrender. (Ref. *Abbaye D’Ardenne (Pte. Charles Doucette)*). In the days following, captives were then marched 220kms to a POW camp at Rennes France. On Sunday, June 11<sup>th</sup> at about 5pm

local time, as 250 Canadian prisoners made up of Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa, North Nova Scotia Highlanders, Royal Winnipeg Rifles and Sherbrooke Fusiliers are passing through St. Georges on the road from Caen to Mesleret, four Mustangs appear in the sky. One of the greatest tragedies of war unfolds. Mistaking the column of prisoners for German soldiers, three pilots strafed the column, one of the North Novas, Commander Learmont, waves his jacket as a sign that we are friendly. In the aftermath, ten soldiers die at St. Georges, thirty nine are wounded; five would die later as a result of their wounds and three residents Francois Maizeray, Lucetee Biolay & Camille Briand also die. Last Rites are administered by Pastor Paul Labutte. In the wake of this tragedy, medical attention for the wounded is immediate from Dr. Delasnerie with the aid of nursing sisters Emilie, Agnes & Marie-Antoine. The wounded are then transported in horse carts by Eugene Chedeville and his nephew Charles Gallier to the Flers hospital which has moved because of bomb damage. At this time, a German tank travelling on the road frightens the horses and as they rear up one of the wounded soldiers falls out. He is helped back on the cart by neighbours Mmes Foyer and Daucoin. The wounded are held until June 23<sup>rd</sup> when they are transported to Rennes. Those who are unhurt are taken to two barns at the Lecellier farm. Mme Lecellier begs permission to bring milk and food to the prisoners. Mmes Gauthier and Malherbe also provide food and other acts of kindness. During the confusion of the day, some of the soldiers succeed in escaping. Susanne Petit along with Mr. Tanguay, Mr. Roussel and his two sons feed, clothes and hide a soldier for fifteen days. The following day, Julien Guillaume, Emilien Villeroy and Mr Poulain bury the soldiers in the community cemetery. *"Claude Salles of La Chapelle-au-Moine, was 12 years old June 13, 1944. He remembers the proximity of Pont-Ramond with my parents' farm which has led to a close relationship between my family and the doctors at Flers hospital who were placed there after the bombing of Flers. My parents were informed of the conduct at the cemetery of the Chapelle-au-Moine where three Canadian soldiers died. After they had given us a bouquet of flowers, they had asked my brother Bernard and I, to accompany these liberators in this goodbye. We were aged respectively 12 and 13 years old. Despite the 68 years, I always have this clear picture in mind when the vehicle that is normally used to transport fodder ascends the path from the area and embarks on the road towards La Chapelle-au-Moine. The sight of three bodies, side by side, wrapped in a white cloth, lying in the cart drawn by a white horse profoundly hit me. I still see myself walking with my bouquet in hand, to Chapelle-au-Moine. During this journey, my eyes fell on the feet of the dead. Their Ranger boots had not been removed. I do not believe that there were*

*religious ceremonies"*. Flowers are placed on the graves of all ten which are then cared for by the people until the bodies are transferred to Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery in Cintheaux where they rest today. On June 14<sup>th</sup> the POWs arrive at Rennes and are shipped by cattle cars to Germany in early July along with American POWs. Fourteen would escape during the trip, two of whom were NNSH Vaness and Fairweather.



*The memorial plaque which was dedicated on July 1 in Saint Georges des Groschillers, France*

The following is a partial transcription of the celebrations. "Evidence of love and remembrance were particularly predominant on Sunday morning, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 in the street of The Canadians. Hundreds of people, celebrities and locals, were gathered in front of the monument in memory of the terrible blunder that occurred on 11 June 1944. Now, there is a second monument with the names of the fifteen Canadian soldiers. Their families were present at the ceremony. Music of the Republican Guard interpreted all the hymns (Canadian, French & British) and several serenades, while a delegate from the Embassy of Canada led the succession of the protocol. A participation which surprised and touched Mayor Guy Lange: *"I think for all of our Canadian friends here, this is the best testimony of our gratitude. Hopefully they will leave with the certainty that here in France we always think of those who have sacrificed their lives for our freedom."* So this "fatal mistake" is not forgotten, Caen Street became - *La Rue des Canadiens* in 1974 and a monument was erected eight years ago at the entrance to the town, not far from the oak that was there when the tragedy took place. Since Sunday, a plaque commemorates the names of fifteen volunteer fighters from North America *"who made the supreme sacrifice for us to live in peace."*

The inauguration was attended by about thirty descendants of seven soldiers, an impressive audience of representatives from civil and military people, musicians from the Republican Guard and veterans. School children laid flowers and each recited lines of poems for their part. We then presented the children with a Nova Scotia flag of their very own. In conclusion, Lieutenant Colonel

Marcel Cloutier (Defense Attaché at the Embassy of Canada) read a message from the Prime Minister of Canada. Stephen Harper has personally addressed his “congratulations to the mayor and the population of Saint-Georges-des Groseilliers for their dedication to preserving the memory of the fifteen soldiers who died tragically. This is for Canadians, a great consolation to know that the sacrifices of those who defended freedom against tyranny will never be forgotten in the towns and villages they released” For Mark, we placed soil from his home on his grave. From his grave, soil was mixed with sand from Juno Beach and is now placed at home. A cross, compliments of Maurice Landry, now stands next to Mark’s headstone. From our community, last year’s Remembrance Day flag was flown following the ceremony. And as a token of appreciation from the people of the River, in the future, a flag will be sent each year to the mayor of St Georges who will fly it on November 11<sup>th</sup> to coincide with our day of Remembrance. ALWAYS REMEMBERED NEVER FORGOTTEN-Our legacy, respectfully submitted by Don Pottie

## Edward Pottie-Benedict Sampson Our Soldiers



I (**Eddie**) joined the Army (Royal Canadian Horse Artillery) on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Sept. 1965 in Halifax, then went to Shilo, Manitoba for basic training which lasted until Dec. From there to basic Gunnery still in Shilo, then posted to Petawawa, ON on Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> 1965. The posting didn’t last long and on Feb. 11, 1966 I was posted back to Shilo to the Second Surface to Surface Missal Detachment (2SSM). That posting wasn’t for long either and on March 15, 1966 I was posted to the First Surface to Surface Missile Detachment in Hemer Germany (1SSM) - “The Honest John Missile”. I remained in Germany until July, 1970 when the Canadian Force moved south to Lahr in Southern Germany. On July 15, 1970 I was posted to 4 Royal Canadian Horse Artillery (4 RCHA) Petawawa and remained there with “Mike Battery”, Delta Battery and Kilo Batteries until July 15, 1975 and promoted to Bombardier (Corporal) for the non-Artillery. During that time I was also attached to the Ace Mobile Force and served in Ottawa during the FLQ. I also completed my Jump course in Rivers Manitoba and Advance Survey Courses in Gagetown,

NB. In July, 1974 I was posted back to Germany to 2 RCHA but this time to Lahr which is approx. 800km south of Hemer. I remained there until 1978 and was promoted to Sergeant. During that time I also attended the Seniors Qualifying Course in Kingston ON. I was posted to Gagetown, NB to the Artillery School and completed the one year advance Senior Artillery Course in 1979 and was promoted to Warrant Officer. After completing the advance course in 1980, I was posted to Halifax as the Regular Support Staff with the First Field Regiment and remained there until 1983. In Aug. 1983 I was posted back to 2RCHA Petawawa, ON where I remained with the Ace Mobile Force until 1986. During that time I also served with the Famous Fox Battery (F-Battery) and attended the Master Warrant Officers Course in Gagetown, NB at the artillery school. In July 1986, I was again posted back to Lahr, Germany this time to 1 RCHA and served with Charlie Battery and Z Battery as the Battery Sergeant Major. As a point of interest 1 RCHA had the long barrel Self Propelled 155mm Howitzer which could lob a shell weighting 98lbs a very great distance especially using charge eight (Red Bag). The concussion was so great that a person could not stand outside the howitzer without having your ears damaged. Guess that’s why I’m hard of hearing. In Aug 1990 I was posted back to Canada and this time to the Artillery School in Gagetown, NB as an instructor. Shortly after that the Armed Forces decided to reduce its force and the opportunity came for me to call it a day. So after 27 years of service, on the Sept. 10, 1992, I retired from the forces and returned to River Bourgeois where I remain today. However, on the 30 of September I received a call from the Artillery school, Gagetown, asking if I would go back to program an advanced course and so on Jan 2<sup>nd</sup> I went back to the Army for 6 months until end of August 1993. On Sept. 10, 1993, just after returning from Gagetown, I receive a call from a Mr. Billy Tanner asking if I would join the Corp of Commissionaires because he required people for security duties in Port Hawkesbury. Only a couple of weeks he said. That was 19 years ago and I’m still here. I am no longer a member of the Corp of Commissionaires after 15 years but now work as the Marine Facility Security Officer with NuStar in Port Hawkesbury and have been with this company for the past five years. The time has gone by very quickly but life is good. To all my Armed Forces Buddies “UBIQUE” “Good shooting” May the Patron Saint of the Artillery (Saint Barbara) keep you safe! Note: Eddie and wife Sue reside on the south side. Eddie has two daughters: Deanna & Denise, and three grand-daughters: Brea, Kayla & Isabella.

I (**Benedict**) joined the military in Halifax, NS on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1988 and went to basic training in Jan 1989 in Cornwallis, NS. After I graduated I went

for trades training in Borden, ON receiving top student in my QL3 Cook (culinary arts). After my trades training I was posted to Halifax to the *HMCS Margaree* where I spent the next 3 years traveling around the world. January 1991 we set sail for Kuwait for the Gulf War where we boarded cargo ships to ensure they were not carrying illegal guns or ammunition to the enemy. Shortly after our safe return *HMCS Margaree* was de-commissioned. My next posting was Cornwallis where I cooked for 2500 recruits per meal. I spent 2.5 years there and Cornwallis was then closed so once again I was sent back to Halifax to *HMCS Nipigon* where I sailed with fellow classmate and friend Wayne Burke from the Southside. I sailed on the Nipigon for another 3 years traveling all over. Once again the ship was decommissioned and I was then sent to CFB Gagetown where I spent the next ten years with 2 RCR doing two tours over in Bosnia, one tour in Africa & a short tour in Afghanistan. I also went to the ice storm in Quebec and the floods in Winnipeg. I was then posted to CFB Borden to CFSAL as a cook instructor for the next two years. Then was posted to Base Borden where I presently am running the Officers' mess as senior kitchen manager. I live in Angus, ON with my beautiful wife Gail and my 3 children David, Rose & Greg and my 3 three step children Nancy, Nicole & Brian.

*Eddie & Benedict we thank you for serving for our country.*

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## Births

**Digout/Malloy:** Alexa Grace 4lbs 15oz, was born on September 25<sup>th</sup> to Pamela & Christian of Edmonton. A sister for Katherine. Congratulations to the parents, grandparents David & Debbie Digout and Levenia & Pete Malloy, great grandmothers: Mary Cosman and Therese Digout.

**VanElsakker/Fougere:** Hubert Alan, 8lbs 8oz, born October 16<sup>th</sup> to Collette & Calvin of Victoria. Congratulations to the parents and grandparents Hubert & Marguerite Fougere.

**Hyland/Touesnard:** Lily Grace, 6lbs 12oz, was born on September 18<sup>th</sup> to Zachary and Sarah. Congratulations to the parents, grandparents: Gerard & Geraldine Touesnard, Angela & Michael Hyland, great grandparents Mary Ann Groom, Ann Touesnard, Albenie & Theresa Boudreau, great great grandparents; Cecilia MacCuish, Violet Chisholm and Marie Boucher.

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## Deaths

**Jenoe:** Gordenia, 58, of Toronto passed away on Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>. Our condolences to her sister Tina Coleman and her family.

**MacKinnon:** Angus, 65, of Port Hawkesbury passed away on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Our condolences to his son Jamie Elms of River Bourgeois.

**Mombourquette:** Mary, 79, of Barra Head passed away on October 11<sup>th</sup>. Our condolences to her husband Alex, her children and brothers: Leo & John MacNeil of RB and their families.

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## Bits and Bites

... **Congratulations** to Christine Pottie (daughter of Leonard & Cynthia) who made the "deans" list at University of PEI. Christine has been employed by RBCSS for the pass three summers as the Festival Co-ordinator. Great work!

... **Brunch-Sunday**, Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> 10:30 to 12:30 at the Tara Lynne Center. \$8 for adults, children \$4. Includes bacon, sausages, eggs, hash browns, fruit, pancakes, dessert and more.

... **Merchandise Bingo** Sunday, Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> 1:45pm at TLC. Sponsored by Catholic Woman's League.

... **Thank you...Merci** from Sr. Helen Burke for the awesome celebration of her 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of religious profession. God Bless You.

... **Operation Christmas Child:** Fill a shoebox for a child in a poor country. Boxes are available from the CWL members: Mary @ 535-2699 or Deirdre @ 535-2827. Return by November 18<sup>th</sup>.

... **Final 2012 Festival Report:** Revenue \$34,117.68 Expenses \$16,037.03=Net Profit \$18,080.65. Thanks everyone!

... **Congratulations** to Gilbert Boucher on being elected District 7 Councillor.

... **Seniors 45 Card** game every Sunday at 7pm.

... **Cribbage** every Monday at 7 pm, Seniors Bldg.

... **Seniors meeting** on Tues., Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>, 1:30pm.

... **CWL meeting** on Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> in the vestry at 7pm.

... **Seniors Mini Christmas bingo** will be held on Wed., Nov. 21st 1:30pm.

... **RBCSS meeting** on Wed., Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm.

... Anyone wishing to book the TLC should call Mike Fougere at 535-3308. People requiring use of the Funeral Home, call Marie & Conrad Fougere at 535-2621. Call Georgie or Harold Landry at 535-2939 to open the church for any special functions i.e. weddings, baptisms etc.

... The Round Up is available at Bucky's Garage, RB Post Office or East Coast Credit Union. The Round Up will cease publication after the December 2012 issue. Subscriptions are still available on a pro-rated basis. Please call Therese Pottie at 902-535-2740.

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