Victory in Europe

60th anniversary commemorative edition

CANADIAN PRESS

JOYOUS: Dutch civilians celebrate their liberation by the Canadian Army in Utrecht, Netherlands, on May 7, 1945.

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VICTORY in Europe

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INDEX

War's scale hard to comprehend

When Second World War's living history is gone, we risk forgetting its devastation

HALIFAX

By Stephen Bornais – The Daily News

The Second World War began at a radio station on the Polish-German border and ended on a battleship in Tokyo Bay.

In between, western and eastern civilization waged war on a scale never seen before, or, thankfully, since.

The scale of the war is almost impossible to comprehend today. It was fought in sophisticated cities and tropical paradises, arctic wastelands and searing deserts.

People were killed by the tens of millions. Russia alone might have suffered 20 million dead. Men, women and children were consumed in an orgy of global violence that lasted for six years.

And while war has never been pretty, the Second World War killed people in new, even more gruesome ways.

Human beings died in gas chambers and atomic blasts. People roasted to death in firestorms so intense the pavement melted.

Today, we mark the 60th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, the day when the war to defeat Nazi Germany finally ended.

VE-Day silenced the guns in Europe, but it didn't end the killing.

The war continued to rage in the Pacific for another four months, ending only after 100,000 people were vapourized in Japan.

For Canada, the war began in 1939 when, in a final nod to our colonial past, we joined Great Britain in declaring war on Germany for invading Poland.

Prime Minister MacKenzie King could not have known the enormous commitment that would be required of the country.

Graves scattered

By the time of final victory in 1945, about 42,000 Canadians would be dead, their graves scattered across the globe.

Canadians died fighting in Asia, Africa and Europe. They died on the oceans, some barely outside Halifax Harbour. And more died in the air, most of them young men just out of their teens.

1945 is now as far in the past as 2065 is in the future. But can you think of anything going on right now that will have as much influence on events in 2065 as the war still does for us today?

Japan and China are embroiled in a nasty dispute, the pretext of which is Japan's failure to properly atone for its wartime actions in China.

Japanese schoolchildren learn almost nothing about the country's atrocities, which occurred far away from western observers during the country's war against China in the late 1930s.

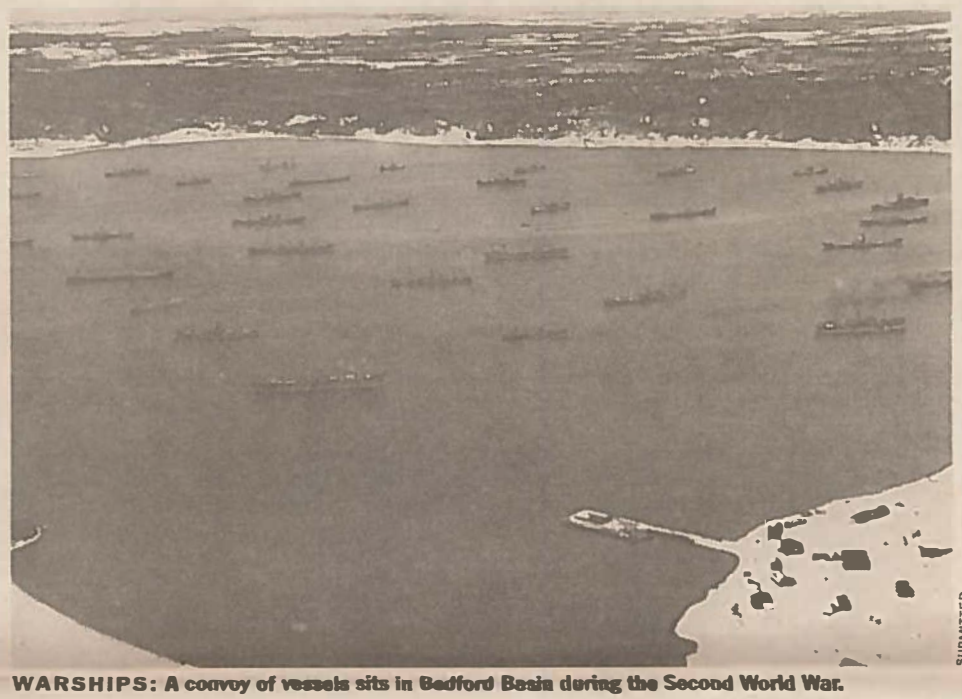
Contrast this to Canada, and our exhaustive examination of the interment of Japanese-Canadians.

A recent German film that some say 'humanizes' Adolf Hitler is still considered controversial, 60 years after the onetime Austrian vagabond killed himself in his Berlin bunker.

And let's not forget the row Prince Harry set off when he showed up at a costume party dressed like a German officer, complete with Nazi armband.

Harry later characterized his choice of costume as a "lack of judgment."

Expect more of this casual attitude toward the war in the coming years.



SUBMITTED

WARSHIPS: A convoy of vessels sits in Bedford Basin during the Second World War.

Learn from carnage

Anyone with any memory of the war is well beyond 60. The youngest veteran, at least for Canada, is 78. Most are in their 80s, and every year there are fewer.

Within the next 10 years, much of the living history of this war will be gone, and that is a danger.

Holocaust deniers spout their nonsense despite the eyewitness accounts of hundreds of thousands of survivors, court testimony from camp guards and mountains of official Nazi documentation.

How much easier will the deniers have it when the last witness dies?

We need to remember and to learn from that carnage. Only then can we ensure it never happens again.

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Special Advertising Feature

HMFRC helping families cope

By Deborah Rent
Special Feature Writer

Being a spouse or family member of someone in the military can present many unique challenges. This time of year, in particular, brings with it a bit of apprehension as it is the moving and posting season. For those who share the distinctive experience of the military life there is the Halifax Military Family Resource Centre (HMFRC).

HMFRC is a charitable organization dedicated to providing meaningful and rewarding programs and services to Canadian Forces family members. It is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors made up of at least 51 per cent military spouses.

"That's a really important component. What we do is part of our community development and we want the programs to be coordinated and initiated by the people who will be using our services — military families, " says Tara Bayne, Information and Referral Coordinator with HMFRC. "They know intimately the unique demands of the military lifestyle."

Since it is a national initiative HMFRC works with other military family resource centers across the country, helping your family get through the chaos of a move. They will help you find out about the new Base or city where you're posted. They will help you find the answers you need to feel more secure about bringing your family to a new area, whether its information about schools, daycare or jobs.

Another big part of what the HMFRC does is Deployment Services, which essentially helps families stay connected throughout a work related separation.

"In Halifax we have a large military population, which means there are frequent deployments which take military members away from home, and away from their families," explains Bayne. "We have workshops and social groups, briefing and information sessions throughout deployment, communication support as well as a number of other many other services people can benefit from, before, during and after deployment."

Childcare is an important part of this program.

The HMFRC welcome program is available to help people who are being posted in Halifax for the first time, and with Military Family Resource Centers across the country, you're ensured some level of assistance where ever you may be posted.

HMFRC also provides many other programs and services for military families including child and youth services, adult programming, parenting, prevention intervention, as well as Emergency Childcare Services and respite care.

A high quality daycare for military families is also available at the HMFRC.

The HMFRC is located in Windsor Park, Halifax. For 24 hour service, seven days a week call locally 427–7788 or toll free 1-888-753-8827 or visit www.halifaxmfrc.ca.

VICTORY in Europe

THE VETERANS

Suicide squad found mines before assault

Sappers found 'truckloads' of mines on Juno Beach

HALIFAX

By Chris Lambie – The Daily News

They were known simply as the suicide squad.

Raymond Williams, a Bedford bricklayer who now lives in Sackville, spent the Second World War looking for landmines with the 5th Field Company of the Royal Canadian Assault Engineers. His first taste of battle came on D-Day, when a few boatloads of scared young Canadians charged a section of French shoreline dubbed Juno Beach.

"We landed at the break of day," Williams said. "The engineers went in first to clear up mines."

On June 6, 1944, he was part of the greatest seaborne assault in history.

"You just kept going," Williams said. "If you stopped, you were dead."

With a rifle slung over one shoulder and a metal detector over the other, Williams tumbled out of a landing craft into water that was up to his neck.

They found "truckloads" of mines on the beach.

The trick was to dig the dirt from around the mine, then delicately remove the detonator. "We could clear one in a second or two, once we knew where it was," Williams said.

But the system wasn't foolproof on Juno Beach.

"We didn't get them all," he said.

'Wide-open target'

As the assault engineers struggled to remove mines, underwater obstacles and barbed wire, German troops shot at them from the shelter of pillboxes, trenches and gun emplacements.

"They were firing on you from the very minute you started going in," said Williams, now 86. There was no way to protect themselves. "You were just a wide-open target."

Williams was one of about 120 assault engineers in the first wave.

"We probably lost a third of what we had there in the first half-hour," Williams said. "After that, our job was done and we could ease off a little bit. Then we started working inland."

After the Normandy invasion, Williams made his way through France, Belgium and into Holland. His company — all tradesmen in their civilian lives — built hundreds of bridges and cleared countless mines to ease the way for Allied troops.

The biggest threat was German shelling. "There was hardly a day went by that there wasn't one or two of your buddies gone," Williams said.

SUBMITTED

McALONEY BRIDGE: Veteran Raymond Williams (right) and his company were building a bridge in Germany on VE-Day. They named it after a fallen comrade.

He was involved in the evacuation of 2,400 paratroopers after the failed raid on Arnhem, Holland, where more than 1,200 British soldiers were killed and nearly 3,000 taken prisoner.

"We went in to bring them out with small assault boats that carried 25 people," Williams said.

"You got 30 or 40 on there, and you had to push some of them off, or you'd sink. They were standing on top of one another."

The small, defenceless boats, operated by two engineers, shuttled back and forth across the Rhine until daybreak. The German fire kept up the whole time, "just like rain," he said.

"These guys were all half shot to pieces anyway, and getting them out of there was the great thing in your mind, in one way, but it was a dangerous job," Williams said. "It was a bad night."

'We knew right away'

Williams, who returned to The Netherlands this month with a delegation of Canadian veterans, was building a bridge over the Ems River in Hazelune, Germany, on May 8, 1945, when his company found out the war was finally over.

"We knew right away, because we had the radio trucks there," he said.

After the announcement, they kept working on the bridge. They named it after Merton McAloney, a sapper from Parrsboro, Cumberland Co., who had been killed by a bomb blast.

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THE REPORTER

HENRY KNOCKWOOD: "There's no hate in my heart now. I've seen the light."

Veteran still carries bittersweet memories

HALIFAX

By Carl Fleming – The Daily News

As he approached the shores of Juno Beach, the knot in Pte. Henry Knockwood's stomach began to tighten.

It was June, 1944, not long after D-Day, and the 20-year-old Mi'kmaq from Millbrook, Colchester Co., was about to land in France with other members of the Canadian army.

"Our orders were simple: when somebody falls in front of you, you walk over them," says Knockwood, who had enlisted two years earlier. "What scared me was when I seen our own men floating in the water. It grabbed me by the throat and shook me.

"There was a lot of confusion. People going here and there. I was kind of scared inside, but I pretended that I wasn't."

Canadian troops rolled through France all summer, and by early September they were in Belgium.

"What surprised me was how the Jerries (Germans) retreated so fast," said Knockwood. "In some places there was still food on a table where they ate. Swastikas on the wall."

Wounded

Eventually the advance began to slow. During bitter fighting at the Ghent Canal in Belgium, Knockwood was wounded in the leg by bomb shrapnel.

"That's where they really fought. The Germans were good soldiers. They were just told what to do and they done it. We were under fire a lot of the time, but you don't talk about (friends getting killed). You only talk about the good times. The hard times, you forget.

"There's no hate in my heart now. I've seen the light."

During the march through Holland, German resistance was spotty.

"Some places they fought, and other places they didn't. There were a lot of prisoners, so many that we *couldn't count them. They were* yelling, *'Deutchland kaput.'*

"The Dutch people were very, very nice to us. We were liberators. A lot of women kissed me, and I kissed them right back. For the first time, I felt like a soldier. Here in Canada they didn't like the Indians too well."

Knockwood was in Amsterdam when V-E Day was announced on May 8, 1945.

"Everybody was running to and fro. They were saying the war was over. (British) General (Bernard) Montgomery broadcast it. I kind of sensed it was coming."

'I missed the comradeship'

After serving a stint in occupied Germany, Knockwood returned to Nova Scotia on the *Isle de France* (the same troop ship he'd sailed to England on three years earlier) and left the military. He "hit the bottle" for a time, and a first marriage didn't work out.

"It took me a long time to get used to civilian life. I missed the comradship. I tried to go back (to the military), but I was too old."

Knockwood worked at several jobs over the next three decades, remarried in 1983 and, in his early 60s, fathered two children.

"If it was wasn't for them, I think I'd be pushing up daisies now. I'm a lucky man."

The family moved to Troy, near Port Hawkesbury, a couple of years ago. Now 81 and confined to a wheelchair, Knockwood considers the war a defining time in his life.

"World War II seems just like yesterday to me. But if you asked me about last week, I couldn't tell you. I can't believe it is 60 years (since VE-Day). Time flies so fast."

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VICTORY in Europe

THE VETERANS

CANADA'S CASUALTIES

Fully 10 per cent of Canada's population, which in 1939 was about 11 million, enlisted to serve in the Second World War. The price of victory was high:

- **Number of Canadians who served:** 1.1 million.
- **Number killed:** 42,042, of which approximately 23,000 were in the army, 17,000 in the air force, 2,000 in the navy. Another 1,600 in the merchant navy, then considered civilians, were killed, and over 700 Newfoundlanders also died. Many of these soldiers are buried in Canadian war cemeteries around the world.

- **Number wounded:** 54,414. Thousands of others were physically impaired or psychologically scarred for life.
- **Prisoners of war:** 9,036.

— Canadian War Museum, Canadian Press

Amid the horror, there were lighter moments

Dewtie never thought he'd live to tell war stories

HALIFAX
By Cathy Nicoll – The Daily News

Seymore Dewtie was somewhere in France, travelling in a truck with 20 other soldiers on May 8, 1945, when he heard the news: the war in Europe was over.

It was big news, but the battle-weary men had little time to celebrate.

"We were a pretty happy bunch of guys," Dewtie remembers. "We said, 'Hip hip hooray!' And kept on going."

He was on his way back to England from Germany.

Dewtie was a battle-hardened veteran of several major engagements, including the Falaise Gap and Quesnay Wood in France, and the Scheldt Estuary, which opened the port of Antwerp, Belgium, and led to the liberation of Holland.

Dewtie was a 19-year-old Pictou County farm boy in July 1940 when he joined the Canadian army and became an infantryman with the Pictou Highlanders.

Dewtie, 84, who has lived in Dartmouth since the end of the war, returned to the Netherlands last week to take part in the festivities celebrating the 60th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day.

On June 13, 1944, he shipped out to England. From there, he went to France, landing at an artificial port constructed in Normandy by the Allies.

'Beyond imagination'

"When we landed in France, I saw something I never thought I'd see again in my life: vehicles by the thousands," Dewtie said. "There was a field full of supplies. It was beyond imagination."

He was attached to the North Shore Regiment of Ontario, and it immediately headed to Caen, 223 kilometres from Paris and only 14 kilometres from the sea, located between two rivers, the Orne and the Odon.

His battalion of about 625 front-line soldiers first went into battle at Quesnay Wood, which rose above the main road from Caen to Falaise, in August 1944.

"That's where we lost a lot of men to American bombers," Dewtie said.

American Flying Fortresses accidently dropped some of their bombs on Canadian and Polish troops, killing or wounding 300 men.

"It was supposed to be a walk-in and take over, but it didn't turn out that way. We were driven back," Dewtie says.

"We were supposed to get support from heavy machine guns, but I don't know where the hell they were. Of 26 men, 13 were carried out, some of them dead."

DARRELL OAKE

SEYMORE DEWTIE: Pictou farm boy fought at Falaise Gap and the Scheldt Estuary.

That was one day Dewtie didn't expect to live through.

Another was the battle to open the Falaise Gap.

"The day after the Falaise Gap was the most horrible day I spent over there. There was a slaughter (of Germans), and the stink of dead horses and dead men," Dewtie said.

He remembers that the engagement at the Scheldt Estuary was a long drawn-out battle. His battalion stayed in Belgium until November 1944, and ended up fighting through the Hochwald forest in Germany.

There were some lighter moments, too, Dewtie remembered.

"One of the boys got a parcel from home: a quart of whisky. He hollered to his buddies, waving it in the air, 'Hey, look what I got!' The bottle slipped out of his hand, and hit a rock," he said, with a laugh.

'About 25 Germans'

On another occasion, just after the battle at Falaise Gap, one of the soldiers went into the bushes to relieve himself and got a major scare.

"He came back out, with his pants half up and half down, screaming: 'Give me a gun! Give me a gun!' There were about 25 Germans coming behind him waving white flags. They wanted out of the war," Dewtie said.

Sixty years later, Dewtie says he joined the army because he wanted "to put Hitler out of business. Somebody had to stop him."

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VICTORY in Europe

LIBERATION OF HOLLAND

CANADIAN PRESS

FACE FROM THE PAST: Arthur Sager holds up a painting of himself when he was an RCAF squadron leader during the war.

Dutch don't forget

Maple Leafs adorn houses as Canadians welcomed for anniversary

By Michelle MacAfee – The Canadian Press

Canadian pilot Arthur Sager's enduring bond with the Netherlands began high above the skies in 1943 during several intense Spitfire missions launched from England, as the beleaguered and hungry Dutch below struggled under German occupation.

"I got to know the country from above very well," said Sager, a squadron leader with the Royal Canadian Air Force, who lives in Victoria.

Now, 60 years after the Allies liberated the Netherlands on May 5, 1945, paving the way for the German surrender two days later that brought the Second World War to a close in Europe, Sager is making his eighth trip back to the country and people he loves.

While the horror of war will be inescapable for Sager and 1,300 fellow veterans as they return to Holland to take part in a week of commemorative ceremonies, his focus will be on the grateful, vibrant, free country opening its arms to its liberators.

"I won't look on it sadly at all," Sager, 88, said on the eve of the trip. "I look on it as a celebration and one I'm delighted to participate in and remember all my fellow pilots who didn't come through."

Gerry van't Holt will be among the hundreds of thousands of Dutch welcoming Sager and his comrades.

Van't Holt's enduring bond with Canada began when, as a five-year-old boy, he watched the first Canadian tanks roll into his newly liberated town of Hardenberg on April 7, 1945.

One of his only clear memories of that day is of a Canadian soldier giving him his first piece of chocolate.

"I kept it in my hand, but it got warm and it melted, so the stuff was dripping through my fingers," van't Holt said in an interview from Holten, which hosted a remembrance ceremony Wednesday for the 1,355 Canadians buried in the war cemetery.

"So the Canadian soldier said to me, 'You have to lick!' My whole hand was brown."

As a teacher, principal and 40-year volunteer with a local foundation honouring Canadian veterans, van't Holt has dedicated much of his life to keeping the memory of Canada's sacrifice alive for younger generations.

He has hosted veterans and relatives of dead soldiers in his home, organized numerous remembrance celebrations, and helped students write poems and lay flowers and light candles at every Canadian grave in town.

> "You would see more Maple Leafs in the street here than in Canada." Gerry van't Holt

Van't Holt says his city is abuzz with anticipation of the veterans' visit.

"Everywhere you look you see the Canadian flag, the Maple Leaf and the words "thank you," said van't Holt.

"You would see more Maple Leafs in the street here than in Canada."

The Nazis occupied the Netherlands for five long years.

Canadian units appeared in October 1944 as part of the Allies' efforts to open the Belgian port of Antwerp by clearing Dutch and Belgian territory on either side.

By February, the Canadians helped push German forces back past the Rhine River, allowing the First Canadian Army to clear the rest of the Netherlands.

In all, more than 100,000 Canadian troops swept through to help free the country from Nazi rule. More than 7,600 were killed.

Canadians played significant roles in campaigns elsewhere in Europe, such as France and Italy, but they endeared themselves to the Dutch throughout the liberation and in the weeks after VE-Day by helping clear minefields, build bridges and even help work the fields.

Far from the battlefields, Canada also helped protect the Dutch monarchy. With the safety of Queen Wilhemina's refuge in England in question in 1942, Crown Princess Juliana fled to make Canada her wartime home.

On Jan. 19, 1943, her daughter Princess Margriet was born at Ottawa Civic Hospital, after the room was declared Dutch territory.

Every year since then, the Dutch have given Canadians thousands of tulip bulbs that decorate Ottawa each spring.

VICTORY NICKEL

Though the V for Victory sign became synonymous with Allied hopes of victory over the Axis countries, Canada was the only country to use the V on its coinage during the Second World War. In addition to the 1945 set, the Royal Canadian Mint issued V for Victory five-cent coins in 1943 and 1944.

PAUL DARROW

VICTORY in Europe

Reporters covering surrender couldn't believe the story

By The Canadian Press

No matter how well her career went, CP war correspondent Margaret Ecker knew that she would never write a bigger story than the one she did May 7, 1945, from a cramped farmhouse in France.

Ecker was the only woman reporter at the formal surrender of the German military to Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower at his farmhouse headquarters in Reims.

"What's that child doing here?" Eisenhower reportedly asked.

In a later radio interview, Ecker scoffed at the "only woman" angle, making it clear her sex was really the last thing on her mind as she watched the historic meeting.

That day 17 war correspondents, including Ecker, were told by Allied military brass they were going on an "important mission."

"We only found out how important it was when after we got to Riems," she said later.

Ecker had started at CP in Ottawa and joined the wartime staff in London in 1942. She followed the Canadian troops onto the continent after D-Day.

Her specialty was the medical corps; she visited base hospitals and wrote about nurses and their patients as well as features from the air-force fields. But none of those stories prepared her for the French farmhouse.

"It was probably the most impressive thing I've ever seen," Ecker said. "The scene itself was unbelievably mundane after years of war and after the tenseness of the past 24 hours.

"I and 16 other correspondents were crowded together, peering over each other's shoulders. We found it awfully hard to believe that that ordinary piece of paper passing from hand to hand was really the surrender, and the end of a war that had devastated our generation."

She recalled that German army chief Col.-Gen. Gustaf Jodl's "soft pink hands shook so much he could hardly write." When he rose to make a plea for generosity for the German people, "his fingertips, resting on the conference table, trembled noticeably all the time."

She said it was hard to get the scene into words. "There was so much emotion connected with it."

Ecker left CP shortly after the war ended to join her husband in freelance writing, but she continued to write for CP from Europe, South America and the South Pacific. She died suddenly in 1965, while visiting her daughter in Madrid.

ECKER'S STORY: MAY 7, 1945

REIMS, FRANCE

By Margaret Ecker – The Canadian Press

Without ceremony, without drama in today's predawn hours, Col.-Gen. Gustaf Jodl, newly created chief of staff of the German army, and Gen. Admiral Hans George von Friedeburg, commander-in-chief of the German navy, grimly scrawled their signatures to documents of unconditional surrender.

I watched the Germans sign the death warrant of the Third Reich in the oppressively hot room of Allied Supreme Headquarters as they sat on cheap deal chairs at a black-topped ordinary table.

The Germans tersely fulfilled their part of the signing ceremony and departed with bows and clickings of heels. When they had left the room, Gen. Eisenhower broke into his famous grin and exchanged a joke through an interpreter with the Russian commander. Then he turned to the other officers, correspondents and photographers pushing into the tiny room and said:

"I'm glad to get rid of those damn Germans!"

After the signing, while we chatted with high-ranking officers in the hope of obtaining bits of information, I turned to see the Supreme Commander alone in the next room at his desk, writing what appeared to be a letter. A few minutes later, he came back to the war-room and put on record his first statement following the surrender.

Looking steadfastly and unselfconsciously into the microphones and cameras, he said:

"In January, 1943, the late President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill met in Casablanca where they pronounced a formula of unconditional surrender for the Axis powers in Europe.

"That formula has been fulfilled and the Allied forces which invaded the Continent of Europe June 6, 1944, by land with the help of our great Russian Allies have destroyed Germany on land, on sea and in the air....

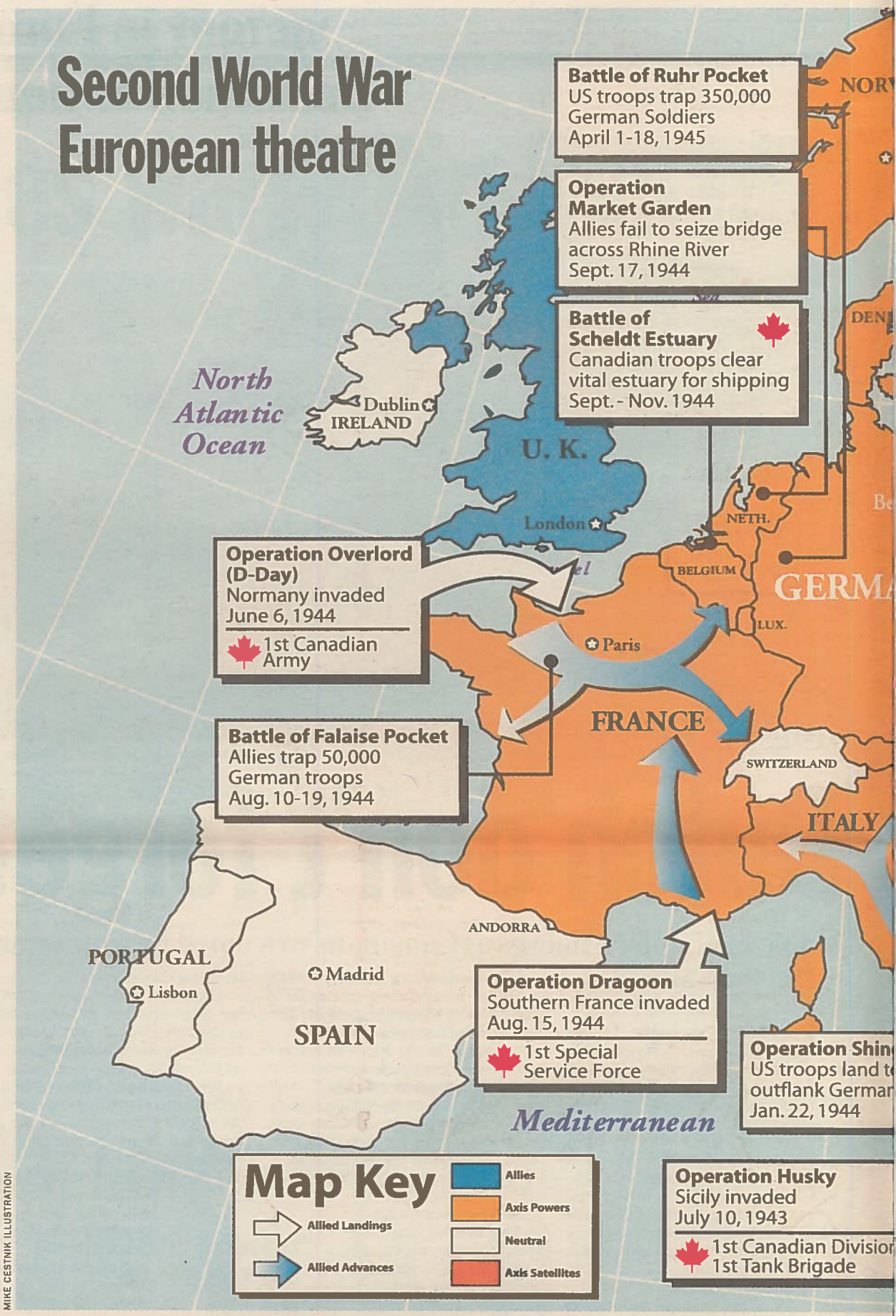
"This unconditional surrender has been achieved by teamwork, not only throughout the Allies, but by every individual participating in the attack. I personally owe a debt, which I can never repay, to every subordinate in this command. They also are owed a debt of gratitude by all citizens of all free nations."

It was sunrise when it finally was over and when we had experienced probably the most historic moment of our lives.

In the chill morning day, the first day of peace, our transport plane lifted us off Reims airfield, bound for Paris, where we would try to write a story for which no words seemed appropriate.

As the plane roared into the sky, made pink by the sunrise, pearly bits of mist clung to the lovely French countryside, giving the horizon for which we were heading an unreal, ethereal quality.

Peace was dawning, at least in this part of the world.



THE HUMAN COST OF WAR

Estimated combined military and civilian deaths in the Second World War. Even 60 years later, estimates from some countries vary widely.

MORE THAN ONE MILLION DEAD

- **Soviet Union:** 12.75-27 million
- **Poland:** 6 million
- **Germany (includes Austria):** 3.75-7 million
- **China:** 2.5 million to 20 million
- **Japan:** 2 million to 3.2 million
- **Yugoslavia:** 1 million to 1.55 million

100,000-999,000 DEAD

- **France:** 600,000
- **Romania:** 500,000 to 700,000
- **Hungary:** 400,000 to 750,000
- **United Kingdom:** 400,000 to 495,000
- **Czechoslovakia:** 350,000
- **Italy:** 300,000-530,000
- **United States:** 300,000
- **Netherlands:** 200,000
- **Philippines:** 118,000
- **Greece:** 100,000
- **Belgium:** 100,000

11,000-100,000 DEAD

- **Finland:** 90,000
- **India:** 50,000
- **Canada:** 42,042
- **Australia:** 29,000
- **British Far East colonies:** 21,000
- **Albania:** 20,000
- **Bulgaria:** 20,000
- **New Zealand:** 12,000

10,000 AND FEWER DEAD

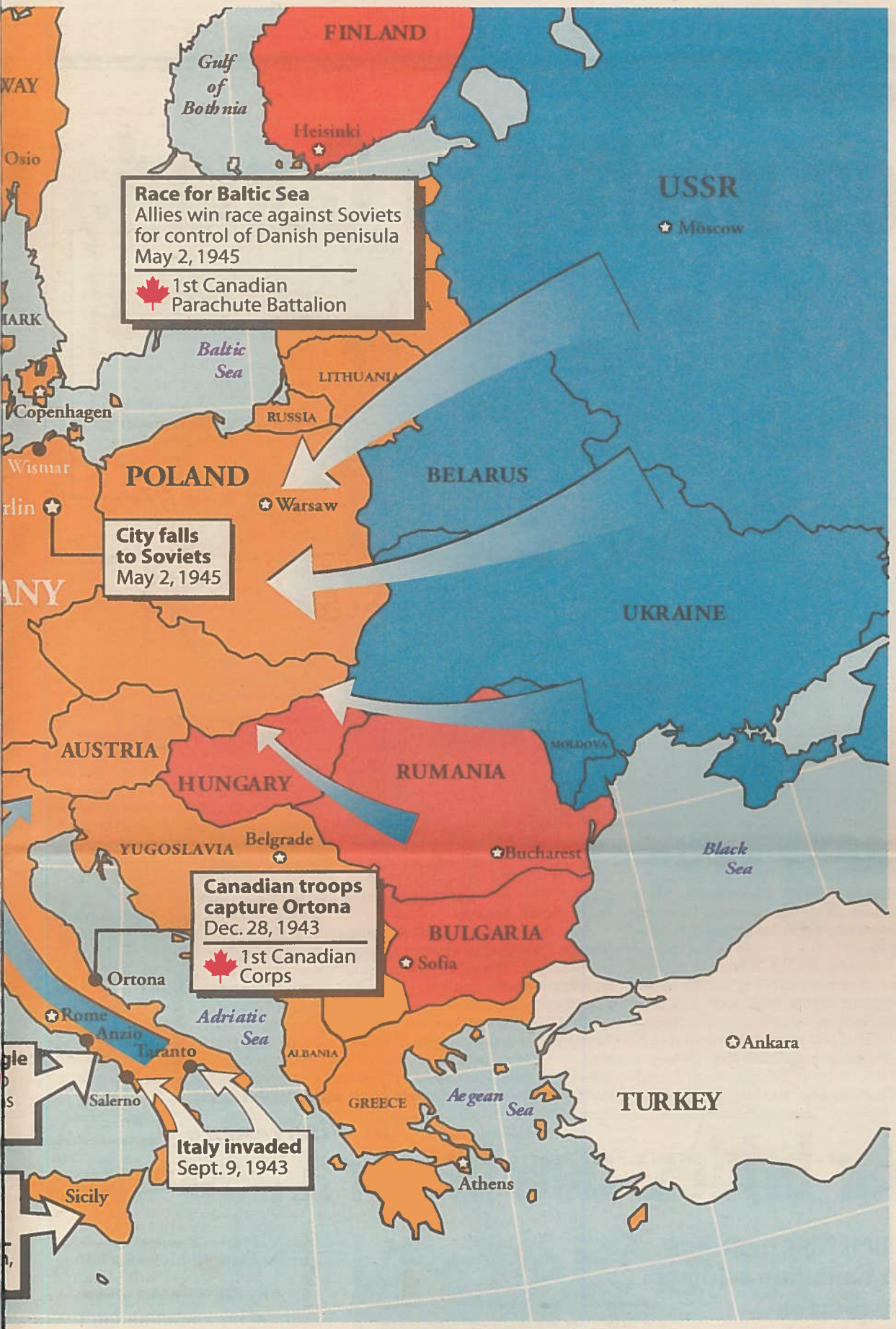
- **Norway:** 10,000
- **South Africa:** 9,000
- **Luxembourg:** 7,000
- **Ethiopia:** 5,000
- **Mongolia:** 3,000
- **Denmark:** 3,800-7,000
- **Brazil:** 1,200-1,800

COMBINED TOTAL

31 million to 69 million

— *Canadian Press*

VICTORY in Europe



CHRONOLOGY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 1939-45

1939

- **Sept. 1:** Germany invades Poland.
- **Sept. 3:** Britain declares war on Germany.
- **Sept. 10:** Canada and France declare war on Germany.

1940

- **June 10:** Italy joins Germany, attacks France; Canada declares war on Italy.
- **June 25:** France surrenders.
- **June-September:** Battle of Britain air war.

1941

- **June 22:** Germany invades Soviet Union.
- **Nov. 16:** Two Canadian battalions (1,975 soldiers) arrive in Hong Kong; 557 would later be killed or die as PoWs after Hong Kong falls to Japan.
- **Dec. 7:** Japan attacks the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, bringing both countries into the war.
- **Dec. 8:** Japan attacks Hong Kong.
- **Dec. 25:** Hong Kong surrenders.

HITLER

1942

- **June 4:** Americans sink four Japanese aircraft carriers at Battle of Midway, halt Japanese offensive.
- **Aug. 7:** Americans land on Guadalcanal, beginning three-year island-hopping offensive against Japan.
- **Aug. 19:** About 5,000 Canadians attack French port of Dieppe; more than 3,000 killed, wounded or taken prisoner by Germans.

1943

- **Feb. 2:** Last Germans surrender at Stalingrad.
- **May 13:** Last remnants of German-Italian armies in North Africa surrender.
- **Sept. 24:** U.S. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed to lead Allied invasion of Europe from the west.

1944

- **June 4:** Allied armies enter Rome.
- **June 6:** D-Day, Allies land in Normandy, France.
- **July 20:** German dissidents attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler with a bomb.
- **Aug. 24:** Paris liberated from Germans.
- **Sept. 1:** Canadians capture coastal town of Dieppe, France.
- **Nov. 30:** Canadians cross German border.

1945

CHURCHILL

- **Feb. 4:** Allied leaders Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt and Josef Stalin meet at Yalta, discuss postwar plans.
- **Feb. 8:** Canadians spearhead assault on Rhineland.
- **Feb. 13-14:** British and Canadian planes bomb Dresden, Germany; tens of thousands killed in firestorms.
- **March 23:** 1st Canadian Army crosses Rhine, begins to liberate much of the Netherlands.
- **April 12:** Roosevelt dies, Harry S. Truman sworn in as U.S. president.
- **April 28:** Italian partisans execute Italian leader Benito Mussolini.
- **April 30:** Hitler commits suicide.
- **May 7:** German army, navy in Europe surrender.
- **May 8:** Victory in Europe (VE-Day) officially marked.
- **Aug.6:** Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan.
- **Aug.9:** Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan.
- **Aug.15:** Japan surrenders, though formal ceremonies don't take place until Sept. 2 and Sept. 9 (with China).

SECOND WORLD WAR FACTS

- **Begins:** Sept. 1, 1939, after Germany invades Poland.
- **Ends:** In Europe, May 7, 1945, with formal German surrender; in Asia, after formal Japanese surrenders of Sept. 2, 1945, and Sept. 9 (to China).
- **Countries at war:** By 1945, at least 26.
- **People at war:** About 100 million men and women in uniform.
- **Death toll:** As high as 70 million, depending largely on figures accepted for civilian casualties.
- **Main combatants:** Germany, Italy and Japan were key Axis powers. Germany was also loosely allied with several other European countries. Allied powers included Britain and Commonwealth, U.S., Soviet Union and France, along with many smaller countries.
- **War zones:** From steamy islands of South Pacific to Arctic seas above Norway; from Canada's coastal waters to Volga River in Russia.
- **Aftermath:** United Nations formed; millions of "displaced persons" roam Europe; Nazi death camps documented; war crimes trials held at Nuremberg, senior surviving Nazis condemned; Marshall Plan helps rebuild European economies, post-war economic booms in U.S. and Canada; "baby-boom" provides demographic bulge.

VICTORY in Europe

THE HOME FRONT

Anxious families waited in Canada

Those left behind endured hardship, suspense, sorrow

By Michelle MacAfee
The Canadian Press

In the early spring of 1945, with confidence mounting that victory in Europe would soon be at hand, Pte. Edgar Hallen's letters home were a lifeline to his fearful family back on the farm in Neepawa, Man.

The 21-year-old soldier with the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion was part of the Allies' push into Germany, but he still found time to write during almost a year on the front.

Sixty years later, on the eve of the anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe, one brother, Dick Hallen, still remembers the optimism of his last dispatch.

"He said the war was over and he was looking forward to getting back," Hallen, 77, said in an interview from his home in Neepawa.

"And of course we were looking forward to getting him back, so we figured, 'Well, that's settled.'"

But as elated Canadians from coast to coast marked the Allied victory in Europe on May 7 with spontaneous parades, church services and raucous parties, what Hallen didn't yet know was that his beloved big brother had become one of the last casualties of a war that had dragged on for 5½ years and claimed the lives of more than 42,000 Canadians.

The telegram notifying the family of Hallen's death on May 7 did not arrive until several days after the jubilant VE-Day celebrations. He died on the ground just a few weeks after taking part in the last major airborne operation of the war — the crossing of the Rhine, Germany's historic river barrier.

"It was so disheartening that it was the last day, even more painful in a way," said Hallen.

The Hallen family's anxiety, hopes and prayers on the homefront during the final few months of the bloodiest war in history were echoed in similar fashion in small towns and big cities across the country.

Eva Mackay of Winnipeg still remembers her already heavy heart sinking further with every newspaper update of the dead and missing.

"You felt it every time you saw the list and realized, 'Oh, there's a boy I went to school with,'" said Mackay, who worked as a nurse while her beau, flying officer Ross Wright, flew with the 422 Squadron in the North Atlantic.

For three weeks in early 1944, Wright was also on the list of presumed dead. "It was shocking," said Mackay. "It was always a fear he may not come home."

But then she got a letter from a British hospital telling her Wright was OK. He returned home in February 1945, proposed that night, and the couple was married in April.

CANADIAN PRESS

EVA MACKAY: For three weeks, her boyfriend, flying officer Ross Wright, was presumed dead. He came home and proposed.

Like many women keeping the homefires burning, Mackay kept busy while Wright was away. She prepared care packages of cigarettes, pork chops preserved in lard and some of the many socks, scarves and tuques she "knit until they were coming out of my ears."

Rationing of butter and sugar often forced some culinary creativity, but seemed to affect rural areas more than the cities.

"It was anxious times, but it was wonderful to think the war might be over," said Mackay, now a twice-widowed 90-year-old still living in her own apartment.

On the Prairies, war developments were followed through scratchy radio reports, newspaper articles and personal letters often "censored like a venetian blind."

Others got a closer look, however, as German U-boats lurked in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, blowing up Canadian vessels and killing hundreds. Quebecers retrieved dead sailors who had washed ashore, while Maritimers routinely saw torpedoed ships glowing in the distance.

A possible invasion by Germany or Japan, or both, was never far from many people's minds.

As newlyweds, Mackay and Wright found themselves caught up in the celebrations in downtown Winnipeg on May 7 and focused on their peacetime future.

"There were so many people on Portage Avenue you could hardly breathe," said Mackay.

"There were parades of every kind, everyone was cheering and the flags were waving.

"Everyone was just so happy it was all over."

War brides: new life in a new land

Women cast their lots with Canadian soldiers

FREDERICTON

By Chris Morris – The Canadian Press

It has been many years since Dutch war bride Olga Rains first saw the Canadian coastline, but she can still recall her feelings of wonder and excitement at the prospect of beginning a new life in a new country with the man she loved.

Standing on the deck of the *Queen Mary* as the stately ocean liner pulled into Halifax Harbour, Rains and other Dutch war brides travelling with her stared in amazement at a place completely different from the war-ravaged Netherlands they had left behind.

"I thought everything was so big," Rains says, remembering the warm August day in 1946 when she arrived in Canada.

"My country is so small. But in Canada, even the coastline was huge. It was so different. The houses were wooden and there was so much space. Holland was run down, it was bombed. I was willing to take a chance on this new place."

CANADIAN PRESS

NEW LIFE: Dutch war brides arrive in Halifax Harbour in November 1946.

Rains, then 20, made her way to Ontario where she and her husband, Lloyd, would settle and raise a family.

Maria Ouellette, 82, who lives in Bathurst, N.B., says she was torn by feelings of loneliness and apprehension as she arrived in Canada, also in 1946.

"I often look back and wonder at how I did this, to come way over here?" says Ouellette, whose husband, John, died 26 years ago.

"But, you know, love does things."

It has been a long time, roughly 60 years, since scores of young women from the Netherlands set off for an adventure in love and life in Canada.

They were the Dutch war brides — women who cast their lots with the young Canadian soldiers who freed their country from Nazi occupation.

Nearly 44,000 war brides came to Canada from Europe between 1942 and 1948, along with 21,000 children. Most of the brides were British, but almost 2,000 were from the Netherlands where a five-year occupation by German soldiers ended on May 5, 1945, just three days before Germany formally surrendered to the Allies in Europe.

VICTORY in Europe

END OF THE WAR

CANADIAN PRESS

IT'S OVER: Armed German troops enter the barracks area from the outskirts of town, after the ceasefire announcement in Aurich, Germany, on May 5, 1945.

'It was just a blessed relief'

No joy on the front, even at news of war's end

By John Ward – The Canadian Press

Sixty years ago, Art Meyer, an infantryman with the Royal Regiment of Canada, was looking forward to a coveted leave in Paris, a respite from the horrors of the front line in northeast Germany.

An officer appeared to tell him his leave was off. Meyer cursed and asked why.

"Because the war is over," came the unexpected reply.

"I said, 'Well, that's a good enough reason," Meyer remembers.

So the war ended for one young man from Toronto. Like so many others, he felt no exultation, just a realization that he was alive when so many were dead.

Hours before surrender

Death had been a companion to the end. Soldiers died just hours before the surrender. Flak guns and accidents killed airmen. *HMCS Esquimalt,* the last Canadian warship lost, had been sunk off Halifax just three weeks earlier.

But it was over.

Regimental diaries make it clear there were no cheers and few visible signs of emotion.

"It was just a blessed relief," says Victor Bulger, who was a 23-year-old artillery sergeant. "We all breathed a heavy sigh of relief."

The war in Europe ended with a handful of sullen, stone-faced German generals signing the surrender of their troops, but it had been visibly running down for days.

Bulger, who was in Holland after having fought in Italy earlier in the war, noticed that his guns were firing less and less as the days wore on.

"When we were in Italy, we shot at anything," he says. "Towards the end of the war, it appeared that they didn't want to make any more damage than they had to."

During the last month of the war, it was clear the Nazis were tottering. British and Canadian troops were in the Netherlands and northeast Germany, the Americans had linked up with the Russians to slice Germany in half and were pressing into what was then Czechoslovakia. The Russian Red Army, after spilling torrents of blood, had seized Berlin.

Adolf Hitler, the Nazi dictator who had begun the nightmare in Europe in 1939, had died by his own hand in a bunker in Berlin, his body torched by his servants.

But the surrender brought no joy on the front line, says Arthur Pidgeon, who was a private in the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, the Hasty Pees.

'Poor, bloody infantry'

"There is no joy in anything in war," says Pidgeon, whose only brother had died with the Canadian Scottish the previous August. "Especially for the infantry. If you're infantry, you're here today and gone tomorrow. It's the roughest job. The poor, bloody infantry they called us."

They are in their 80s now, these men and others who stand on Remembrance Day in their Legion blazers and medals, with stooped shoulders and rheumy eyes. They deny being heroes. The heroes, they say, are the men who never came home.

Artist can't forget images of concentration camp

Colville sketched what he saw at Bergen-Belsen

HALIFAX

By Marilyn Smulders – The Daily News

As the Second World War trudged toward its dying days, Alex Colville had seen more than his share of death. But nothing he had experienced as a Canadian war artist in Europe would prepare him for what he saw at Bergen-Belsen shortly after its liberation by British forces.

A concentration camp in Northwestern Germany, Bergen-Belsen was the final destination for thousands for European Jews.

They died from hunger and epidemics of typhus, typhoid fever and dysentery that swept quickly through the overcrowded camp.

Only weeks before Colville rumbled through the entrance in a jeep — flea powder sprinkled liberally in his beret — a young girl by the name of Anne Frank had succumbed to typhus.

FILE

ALEX COLVILLE: "I don't think we will ever stop having war."

"We didn't know anything about this — who did?" said Colville, 84, one of Canada's pre-eminent artists.

"The scale of the thing was enormous. There were pits with five-, six-, 7,000 corpses in them. People were so sick that more than 300 were still dying every day."

Then 24 years old, Colville set to record what he was seeing by making watercolour sketches.

Now in the collection of the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, *Bodies in a Grave, Belsen* is one of Colville's most disturbing paintings: naked, wasted bodies with every rib sticking out and legs like twigs are arranged, one on top of the other in a nightmarish tableau. One of the men is lying as if he's curled up for a nap; his shaved head rests on bony hands.

Colville's lines for a dashed-off sketch, on which the painting is based, are wobbly and agitated.

He stresses, though, he was able to distance himself from what he was seeing.

"It's very hard to explain, but for me it was not a traumatic experience," says Colville, on the phone from his Wolfville home.

"The person who reports is essentially out of it. You feel a twinge of sympathy, but if you give in to that, you'd collapse."

It isn't the images of skeletal bodies that stay with him, 60 years later. But he is haunted by the memory of seeing a dead inmate carried out of the barracks.

"What I remember most vividly, is standing there — it was quite nice weather — and looking between these huts as the medical people carried out dead bodies on stretchers.

"One was a young woman. She was naked, on a grey, wool blanket, and they set her on the ground. She was in her late teens, I would think. She was not emaciated. She was beautiful. It was so terrible to see her there, as if asleep. But no, dead."

Colville spent only three days at Bergen-Belsen. Tom Smart, *the curator of the exhibition Alex Colville: Return and the au*thor of the accompanying book, speculates that Colville has been working the trauma of those three days ever since; it explains the bristling tension in his work, an attempt to find order in chaos.

Some of his signature works illustrate that troubling sense that something bad is about to happen: the horse will crash into the train; the coyote prowling through the alders will be discovered; the nude woman on the landing will fire the gun.

While Colville doesn't disagree with Smart's thesis — "I guess I'm like a dog gnawing on an old bone" — he says his dark, existential view of life is shared by others of his generation who experienced the war.

"I don't think we will ever stop having war," he says. "This may be a dark view, but I think it's a realistic view of the human experience."

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VICTORY in Europe

HALIFAX RIOTS

Celebrations turn to mayhem

Fuelled by liquor and victory, sailors take revenge on downtown merchants

HALIFAX

By Stephen Kimber
Special to The Daily News

The surprise, looking back 60 years, is not that Halifax's celebration of the Allied victory in Europe ended in such a wild, two-day orgy of lawlessness, looting and licentiousness that one writer would later compare the VE-Day riots to the worst "revelries of the Roman Empire." The surprise is that anyone believed it could have ended any other way.

BILL MONT COLLECTION

SMASHED: Counters at the Barrington Street Zellers store lie buried in rubble after the riots.

Tensions had been building for six years as war transformed Halifax from a small, down-at-the-heels, conservative backwater into what a British admiral called the "most important port in the world," the western terminus for the vital North Atlantic convoys to England.

By 1945, Halifax had become a bustling, overcrowded, underserviced, cosmopolitan, parochial, buttoned-down, wild-and-woolly port city seething with faces, frustrations and resentment.

During the war, Halifax's population doubled; its facilities did not. Landlords charged top rents for what amounted to closets. Merchants would take one look at a man in uniform and jack up their prices. There were blocks-long lineups to get into the city's few restaurants, several-hour waits outside movie theatres.

Even the line for Halifax's best known whorehouse began to assemble before noon each day and didn't disappear until close to sunrise the next.

There was no legal place anyone could go to buy a drink, but there were dozens of illegal ones.

For their part, locals claimed there was never anything for them to buy on store shelves anymore because ungrateful come-from-aways had bought it all, or the military had commandeered it to supply a departing convoy.

Though that is perhaps too bleak a picture — there were honourable landlords, friendly merchants and plenty of locals eager to make the visitors welcome, not to forget plenty among the hundreds of thousands of soldiers, sailors and airmen who passed through who were grateful for the hospitality — the reality is that there were rumblings from early on in the war that Halifax ("Slackers," as the sailors called it) would get "what was coming" when the war finally ended.

PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

ILL-GOTTEN BOOZE: Servicemen chug from bottles in front of Government House on Barrington Street. After Halifax officials shut liquor commissions, stores and restaurants for VE-Day, sailors broke into them in search of alcohol and other booty.

Fear, in fact, dominated planning for the celebration of the Allied victory. Organizers decided that on VE-Day tram service would stop for the day, to discourage sailors from going downtown.

Liquor commission outlets, restaurants, retailers and movie theatres all decided to shut and shutter their premises, ostensibly to prevent trouble.

Admiral Leonard Murray, who didn't like — or care to understand the concerns of — civic officials, believed his sailors had won the peace and deserved their chance to celebrate. Late on the afternoon of May 7, 1945, the day Germany surrendered, he freed more than 9,000 of his men for the night with the mild admonition that their celebration "be joyful without being destructive or distasteful."

By midnight, downtown Halifax was filled to bursting with more than 12,000 celebrants who had no place to eat, drink or relax. They rioted instead, setting ablaze tramcars and a police paddy wagon, smashing windows, looting liquor stores and denuding shops of merchandise. On Barrington Street, there was so much broken glass in the street it spilled over the top of the curb. One reporter who wandered through the downtown devastation the next morning compared it to "London after a blitz."

PAC

GRABBED: A looter carries suits from a Gottingen Street store.

The riots might have ended that morning as hungover sailors and civilians, many clutching their ill-gotten booty, stumbled home to sleep off their night before.

But Admiral Murray, assuming the newspapers were again trying to blame his sailors for the sins of civilians and convinced few of his men actually participated in the riots, unleashed another 9,500 sailors on the city at noon.

By the time the mayhem ended later that day — after the admiral and mayor drove through town in a sound truck ordering everyone to return to their homes and barracks, and imposing a curfew on the city — Halifax was suffering a hangover of its own.

There were three men dead, 363 arrested and 571 business pillaged. Sixty-five thousand quarts of liquor, 8,000 cases of beer and 1,500 cases of wine had been "liberated" from liquor commission shelves. The total price tag: more than $5 million, including the cost of replacing 2,624 sheets of plate glass.

A hastily convened royal commission blamed the riots entirely on the admiral, though the truth is there was plenty of blame for everyone.

Many outside the city, in fact, blamed Haligonians themselves. As one letter-to-the-editor writer noted, "I personally think the downtown merchants got exactly what they deserved, and it's too bad that others who deserved it were missed."

Perhaps the most unfortunate long-term consequence of the riots was that embarrassment at the way the war ended has kept us from recognizing and celebrating our city's vital and very real role in winning that war for far too long.

Hopefully, that's history now, too.

Journalism professor and Daily News columnist Stephen Kimber is the author of five non-fiction books, including Sailors, Slackers and Blind Pigs: Halifax at War, which is published by Doubleday Canada. His first novel will be published by Harper Collins in spring 2006.

HALIFAX RIOTS

Sailors 'going along Barrington Street, breaking the windows'

Teen went to the VE-Day riots, but all he got was a bottle of pop

HALIFAX
By Cathy Nicoll
The Daily News

Bill Mont jumped on his prized bicycle and pedalled dowtown from his south-end Halifax home on May 8, 1945.

The 15-year old expected to see a big parade celebrating victory in Europe. Instead, he was swept up in the infamous VE-Day riot.

"I was working with the railway, and they must have given us the day off, because I went up to see the parade," Mont, 75, remembers.

He started to watch the parade, but a large man climbed on his nearby bicycle to get a better view of Keith's Brewery, where sailors were trying to break in.

Mont said he was afraid his bicycle would be broken, so he took it home. He lived near Point Pleasant Park, where the container pier is now.

Later, he walked back downtown.

"Sailors were going along Barrington Street, breaking the windows in the stores. There was a bunch of us kids — teenagers — and other civilians, trailing along behind them," he said.

BILL MONT

At first, Mont said, it did not appear the sailors were stealing merchandise from the stores.

When the sailors went to the locked liquor store on Hollis Street, near Bishop Street, they asked the slight teen to go in through the small window over the door, and bring out booze for them.

"So in I go, and I had to keep passing out liquor, passing out liquor," Mont said.

The crowd next went to Fader's Pharmacy on Hollis Street.

PAC

AFTERMATH: A sidewalk outside Fader's Pharmacy on Hollis Street in Halifax — where a young Bill Mont did his only successful looting — is covered in broken glass after the VE Day riots.

"I was thirsty after all that work. They used to keep pop in coolers full of ice. I'll never forget this: I got a bottle of Iron Brew and drank that, and on my way I go," Mont said.

Further along the street, the sailors had dragged out racks of clothing from a store.

"So I go away with this great big bunch of suits, and I think, 'I'm finally getting something,'" he said.

Stopped by police

But at the end of Barrington Street, Mont was stopped by a police officer who relieved him of his booty, took his name and address, and sent him home.

"All I got I was the bottle of pop in my gut," Mont said. "That was it."

The Germans had offered unconditional surrender on May 7, and the riot had begun that night because liquor stores and restaurants had closed so everyone could enjoy the official celebration.

That led to thousands of sailors and soldiers, along with many civilians, to "liberate" liquor and beer.

Vandalism and looting followed, both in Halifax and Dartmouth. In total 571 businesses were damaged; 297 shops were looted.

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RIOT FACTS

- **Rioters:** More than 12,000. Mostly sailors but also army and air force personnel, and civilians.
- **Businesses hit:** 571 damaged of which 297 were looted.
- **Windows smashed:** 2,624 panes.
- **Bottles of alcohol looted:** 90,831 beer; 56,556 liquor; 14,700 wine.
- **Charged:** 363, included 152 who faced drunkenness offences.
- **Police available:** 156 Naval Shore Patrol; 169 Army Provost Corps; 74 Air Force Police; 86 city police; 43 RCMP.

PAC

BEST SHOW IN TOWN: Civilians, servicemen crowd Barrington Street.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE RIOTS

MONDAY, MAY 7, 1945

- **10:30 a.m.:** News of Germany's surrender broadcast; liquor stores close.
- **5:30 p.m.:** Officials declare Tuesday VE-Day.
- **9:05 p.m. to early Tuesday:** Sailors trash streetcar as shore patrol watches. Disturbances spread: streetcar set on fire, looting begins at liquor outlets and other stores.

TUESDAY, MAY 8, 1945

- **11:50 a.m.:** Officers discuss unrest with Admiral Leonard Murray. He takes no action because "the men were entitled to a VE-Day celebration."
- **1 p.m. to 4 p.m.:** Looting resumes downtown.
- **5:45 p.m.:** 330 men, some with axe handles, dispatched to break up crowds in city's south end.
- **6:45 p.m.:** Followed by nine trucks, mayor and admiralty board sound truck to announce 8 p.m. curfew.
- **7 p.m.:** Officers from two warships dispatched to remove last sailors from streets.
- **9 p.m.:** Rioting stops.
- **10 p.m:** Troops arrive from Debert, Colchester Co.

— Canadian Press

Meanwhile, other cities sang, danced and prayed

By The Canadian Press

While angry riots shook Halifax on VE-Day, the mood in other Canadian cities was decidedly more upbeat.

While many people sang and danced in the streets, others went to church and quietly prayed in thanksgiving.

In Ottawa, the news brought out a large, cheerful throng armed with flags and good intentions.

They marched up and down streets thick with paper thrown from the office windows.

Similar scenes unfolded in Toronto, where the intersection of Yonge and Queen was jammed by thousands of cheering people.

Stores and offices closed for the day, but the liquor stores stayed open. As night fell, bonfires illuminated city parks.

In Quebec, a Canadian Press report described the ecstatic crowds in "gay, crazy Montreal," while in Quebec City there was an open-air thanksgiving mass.

Thousands spilled into the streets of Calgary, while the Winnipeg Free Press screamed the news in a simple but effective headline: Nazis Quit.

In Vancouver, the early morning stillness was pierced by the sound of air-raid sirens signalling the good news.