

Lest We Forget



As a young teen and a member of West Van's 525 Air Cadet Squadron, I served as part of the Honour Guard at many Remembrance Day Ceremonies at the Memorial Arch. I remember marching with Vets from the Boer War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. Since then, Peace Keeping Duties, Bosnia and Afghanistan have added to the list.

We have to honour those who left their homes and loved ones and, in too many cases, sacrificed their future to serve Canada.

One such young man was 24 year old Bill Millerd of West Vancouver. Here is some of his story.

William (Bill) Francis Millerd was born on May 3, 1918, the second youngest of his siblings, with two older brothers, Frank and James (Don) and older and younger sisters, Clare and Lenora. His father came from Ireland in 1908 and worked in the fishing industry establishing the Great Northern Cannery in West Vancouver in the 1930's.

In 1939 Bill enrolled at UBC. He was very active working for the school's

yearbook, rowing competitively for UBC and joined Phi Gamma Delta fraternity. He was also a member of the Canadian Officer Training Corps.

On May 29, 1940, as the evacuation of Dunkirk was underway, Bill applied to join the RCAF. Bill enlisted on June 26, 1940. He soon was promoted to Sergeant and received his air gunners badge.

He arrived in the United Kingdom on April 20, 1941. In September of that year Bill was selected for pilot training and recommended for commissioning as an officer.

On February 3, 1942, Bill was assigned to an operational bomber squadron, 408 (RCAF). He was a rear gunner on a Handley Page Hampden bomber. It's role was to lay mines along the Atlantic coast of Europe.

On Bill's last flight, May 15/16, 1942, his plane was loaded with one 2000 pound mine and on the chance that they might encounter the German fleet, they also carried two 250 pound delayed action bombs, one under each wing.

After dropping its mine off the east coast of Denmark, they spotted a mine sweeper. They made a run at about 200 feet. Before they could release their bombs, they were hit with flack and crashed into the Baltic. All aboard except for the pilot, Howard Chapman, were killed on impact.

Bill died at age 24, after just seven weeks of operational flights. His body drifted ashore on September 12th. He was given a military funeral by the German forces on September 15, 1942. "Three volleys fired over the grave

concluded the ceremony" according to eye witness accounts.

Four days before his fateful flight Bill wrote his parents "Could anyone do more than give his life for those he loved? My life, the life you gave me, and so carefully and tenderly nursed will be gladly given, in defense of you and of the Family."

Bill's loss is memorialized at a number of locations, including:

- Millerd Point, Redonda Bay, West Redonda Island, BC - named in remembrance by the Province of BC on November 11, 2006
- St. Francis-in-the-Wood Anglican Church, West Vancouver - memorial window, dedicated in 1979
- West Vancouver Memorial Arch - east plinth
- St. Paul's Anglican Church, Vancouver - memorial plaque
- Ottawa Book of Remembrance
- University of British Columbia Book of Remembrance
- York Minster Book of Remembrance

by David Barker

New Members

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