

# A Local Veteran, John Graham, RCAF, Remembers

by Tommy Morais  
Special to the Brooklin Town Crier

Three years into the Second World War, John Graham didn't wait to get drafted. He volunteered. After graduating from high school, he went to work for an electrical company before deciding to join the Royal Canadian Air Force.

"I volunteered in 1942 at 21 years old," he recalls. "I was with the Royal Canadian Air Force for maybe a month when they told me I was going overseas."

His duties on European soil often involved driving vehicles that held gasoline reserves for Canadian aircraft. "It was fun. We got to drive on the wrong side of the road. The army went ahead and followed with their dirty work, fighting."

One time, Graham, then a corporal, was sitting on a gasoline tank when he witnessed an event he says he'll never forget. "We lost some aircraft and some of the boys jumped out in parachutes and were shot as they floated down which wasn't very nice to watch," he says. "I also saw German bodies lying on the road. They were dead, but they were still human beings."

Today, at 95 and in good physical shape aside from lost vision in his left eye, Graham finds it difficult to talk about the war, something he avoids doing as much as possible.

"I don't talk at all about the war. It's something we'd like to forget," he admits. "I guess my two friends died on the field."

Still, the veteran makes it clear he holds no animosity towards those he once fought. "We didn't like them, they didn't like us either," he says. "Why hold a grudge? It wasn't their fault, it was Hitler's."

Memories from his wartime experiences aren't all dark; some are even warm. For instance, there was the Christmas dinner when he was invited into a civilian home. "They cooked us rabbit. It would remind you of chicken," he laughs. "It was quite nice of them to invite us in."

Graham has only good things to say of his time in the RCAF and the way they treated him. "We were well looked after in the Air Force," he acknowledges. "We had beds, food - we were taken care of."

Over time, Graham lost most of his war souvenirs. There is, however, one special memory that can never be taken from



John Graham at home at the Court at Brooklin

him. That one comes in the form of the song "My Best To You", written and performed by the "cowboy" Sons of the Pioneers, which included a young Roy Rogers. Graham's been singing it since the 1940s and it takes him back to those days.

"I sang it when I came back from the war," he says. "Do you want me to sing it? I'll sing it now." Which he does, and his singing voice remains in great shape.

Today, living in the retirement home at The Court at Brooklin, he maintains a steady daily schedule, interrupted only by occasions when a family member takes him out to lunch. Nevertheless, he says it does get lonely at times as he lost his life partner to a stroke in November of 2015.

"I lost my gal a year ago," he explains. "She had a bad stroke so she went in a hurry."

Still, he has no complaints. "It's been a good life." As for the future, Corporal John Graham doesn't want future generations to see war. "Devastation is something I hope they don't experience."



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