

Stewart, Jim

Today's Remembrance Day parade is one Jim Stewart will remember. It's the first time in the last dozen years that Stewart, sergeant-at-arms for the Royal Canadian Legion, won't be leading the legion's colour party and the rest of the parade participants on the march from the Belleville Armouries to the new cenotaph on Station Street for the traditional Remembrance Day service.

Failing health has forced the 73-year-old Stewart to pass on marching in today's parade — and in future parades — but it's not enough to keep him from attending the actual service.

He will be front and centre with the Legion colour party at the cenotaph "doing my duties as sergeant-at-arms."

As the legion's sergeant-at-arms for the past 12 years, Stewart has the honour of leading all public parades, like the Remembrance Day, Santa Claus and Waterfront Festival parades. Marching right behind Stewart are the legion colour party members, all the bands, floats and other marchers.

"I'm always the first person they see in a parade and that makes me feel special. I sure get a lot of recognition from people," he laughed.

Stewart's assistant, Don MacPherson, will have the honour of leading today's Remembrance Day parade in Stewart's absence.

"I'll miss it highly because I like being with the troops. But I'll be at the cenotaph, right out there with the rest of the colour party, doing my thing...the only thing I can't do is march."

The Gilbert Street resident has followed in his father's footsteps, serving both with the Black Watch militia in Montreal and then the Canadian army.

Stewart went to work right after completing his elementary school education, working in the shipping and receiving department for a furniture store and then the Canadian National Railway in Montreal.

He belonged to the Black Watch militia for almost seven years when he and a friend decided to join the regular army.

It was 1952 when the 24-year-old Stewart went to Camp Borden near

A parade veteran

STORY BY HENRY BURY, THE INTELLIGENCER
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Barrie for basic training. Six months later, he was posted to Soest, Germany.

He did an 11-month tour of duty with the United Nations peacekeeping troops in Egypt in 1956 and returned to Germany.

Stewart was transferred to Canada in 1964 and served at CFB Downsview for a year before coming to CFB Trenton a year later.

"I was a transport driver and I drove everything that had wheels, except for the planes

He remained with the local base until he retired from the military in 1972. He spent another 20 years as a custodian at Centennial Secondary School, retiring permanently in 1992.

"I enjoyed my 20 years with the army. I sure learned the do's and don'ts of being in the army."

His only regret is never seeing battle action.

"I wasn't old enough to join the army during the Second World War and I just missed the Korean conflict by two years when I did join the army. I wouldn't have minded going to war," said Stewart.

His father, Andrew, served in both world wars.

Stewart said he has gotten to know many war veterans from his almost 40-year involvement with the Royal Canadian Legion.

"I have a lot of respect for veterans because if it wasn't for them, we wouldn't have our freedom today," he said.

Stewart calls the legion on Pinnacle Street "my home away from home."

He makes a point of dropping in every day to chat with other members.

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