

TRIBUTE: Wood tells story of local Victoria Cross recipient

# Actor brings Rutherford's heroics to life

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CECILIA NASMITH / NORTHUMBERLAND TODAY

Lakeport resident Barrie Wood has a copy of a painting owned by the Colborne Legion depicting what he calls the Victoria Cross Moment — the actions of Colborne's own Charles Rutherford in a First World War incident that earned him that esteemed military decoration for heroism.

CECILIA NASMITH  
Northumberland Today

COLBORNE — Lakeport resident Barrie Wood was one of the Doors Open Northumberland volunteers who helped out in costume in Colborne June 7 and 8.

Wood's assignment was tied to this year's theme of commemorating the centennial of the outbreak of the First World War: telling the story of Colborne's own Victoria Cross hero, Charles Rutherford (1892-1989).

Wood's original plan was to impersonate Rutherford, relating his own experiences firsthand. He chose instead to impersonate one of Rutherford's comrades-in-arms, who would tell the story in the third person. This was the favoured approach for several reasons.

One was out of consideration for relatives and descendants who might still live in the area.

Another was the opportunity to acknowledge Rutherford's gallantry, which is not something Rutherford himself would have done.

"He was such a modest guy. By all accounts, he would not be one to blow his own horn about anything he accomplished," Wood said in a recent interview in his Lakeport home.

His research involved gathering material from Rutherford's Victoria Cross citation and speaking with such relatives and descendants as he could find. In a phone conversation with Rutherford's daughter Isabel, when he was still thinking of impersonating the man himself, she expressed only one reservation.

"Her only thing is, are you handsome enough? She said, 'My dad was a very handsome man.'"

On both Doors Open days, Wood stood in the uniform of a Canadian soldier from the First World War, in front of the Colborne Legion beside a reproduction of a painting the Legion has of the incident that earned Rutherford his fabled decoration — what Wood refers to as the Victoria Cross Moment.

Singly, in pairs and in groups the visitors came, and he told the story of his "colleague" to all.



RICK BROOKS PHOTO

Cramahe Township resident Barry Wood, in full uniform, re-enacts the events that led to Capt. C.S. Rutherford receiving the Victoria Cross in the First World War.

Rutherford is the lieutenant in charge of the platoon."

It was still dark when they encountered and captured a small German unit, and began arrangements to transport them as prisoners. Rutherford left his men to work on the logistics and moved on ahead.

"It was still dark and foggy. Meanwhile, we who were back there arranging the details started coming under artillery fire from the Germans. We moved into the Wood for protection, while Charles Rutherford was trying to find the platoon we were to meet up with," Wood said.

"He came back, and we weren't there. He didn't know we had moved away from the artillery barrage."

Seeing about 35 German soldiers in that dim predawn light and from a distance, Rutherford thought they must be his men and moved toward them. He soon got close enough to realize his mistake, by which time the German machine guns were trained on him.

In Wood's telling, it became a classic (if somewhat unbalanced) standoff.

Rutherford drew his revolver. The German officer did the same.

The German officer declared Rutherford his prisoner. Rutherford told the officer he was taking the German soldiers pris-

Wood summed up.

"From everything I heard about Charlie — the humility, his general demeanour — I liked him.

"And he was handsome, according to his daughter.

"It's quite a wonderful story."

He also likes the tribute Colborne Legion president Patti May pays him each Nov. 11 of attending the Remembrance Day parade without an overcoat, no matter what the weather.

Rutherford has attended these parades ever since she was just a little girl, and she would see Rutherford take the salute.

"Even when he was 97 and in a wheelchair, when the time came, he stood up, left his overcoat behind, and took the salute," Wood said.

"She said, 'If that frail old guy can do that, I can do that, so I haven't worn an overcoat since.'"

"Everybody said how wonderful it was to have such an honoured hero to take the official salute. He would say, 'I was honoured I was asked.'"

Rutherford was a farmer before the war, and ultimately went back to that, Wood said.

"He operated a general store in Keswick for some time, but came back to Colborne. He was a postmaster for a lot of years, and signed up for the Veterans Guard during the Second World War. He left his postmaster duties in the care of Miss Padg-

## Hazard House used to promote safety in the home

BRIGHTON INDEPENDENT JULY 31/14

By John Campbell

**News - Cramahe Township**  
Many fire hazards exist in the home that children need to be told about and adults reminded of but getting the message across can be a challenge.

It helps to have a 3D, interactive display, which the Cramahe Fire Department will soon have, in the form of a tabletop educational simulator designed to prevent fires by showing where the risks are and how to deal with them.

The Hazard House, which weighs less than 40 pounds and can be set up in minutes, features smoke effects, smoke alarms, electrical zapping, scenery changes, and stick-on tokens.

It "teaches what the normal household hazards are," said Larry Dadson, chief prevention

officer with the Cramahe Fire Department, and while "it's geared for children ... it can be tailored for any age group," including seniors.

Fire departments in Belleville and Alnwick-Haldimand Township have been using an older version of the model Cramahe is acquiring, and "they've had good success with it," he said.

"It gives us a good tool to teach the kids. It's going to be an improvement over what we had ... We're looking forward to receiving it."

Delivery from the supplier, Modeltech International Inc., is expected in late August or early September.

Dadson, who began raising money for the purchase back in April 2012 on behalf of the Cramahe Firefighters' Association,

has secured all the funding required, just under \$7,000, from local groups and businesses. Council agreed to provide a charitable contribution receipt to donors who requested it for income tax purposes.

He stressed Cramahe is not getting an inflatable house, like the one it occasionally borrows from the Port Hope Fire Department and costs \$30,000 to purchase.

Dadson said his department goes into the schools to talk about safety during Fire Prevention Week and at fun fairs held at the end of the school year. It also visits local groups and sets up displays at special events, such as the Apple Blossom Tyme Festival.

He's already been approached by other fire departments about using Hazard House for presentations.