



REMEMBRANCE DAY

Special pullout section



Making a difference while serving at home in Canada

By **TED BROWN**
Staff Writer

While many people think of veterans of the war as men and women who fought in Europe and other hot spots in the world, during the Second World War, there was a group of women who played a vital part in the war effort, yet never left Canada.

The Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division (RCAFWD) was one of those groups of unsung heroes who played a significant role in keeping Allied troops, as well as the civilians in both Canada and the U.S., safe from the enemy.

Commonly referred to as WDs, short for Women's Division, they worked in various jobs, but many were wireless operators, using Morse Code to communicate between various Allied bases around the world.

In January of 1943, the war had been raging for almost four years, and a local young woman decided it was time to serve her country and enlist.

Born in 1919, on a farm in Esquesing Township, near Stewarttown, Martha Anne Bowman, 'Annie' to friends, was the middle child of 'Win' and Millie Bowman. Their

only daughter, she had an older brother Bill, and younger brother John.

She had attended Waterloo Public School on the Fourth Line, and later Georgetown District High School, before heading off to Queen's University in Kingston, followed by stints at the Ontario College of Art and Toronto Business School.

Trained as a stenographer, Anne decided, just shy of her 24th birthday, that she would sign up.

Carrying the rank of corporal, Anne was trained in wireless operations in Montreal, and was assigned to the 164th Squadron in Moncton, New Brunswick.

From there, she was stationed in various locations in both Canada and Newfoundland, (which was still a British colony, not joining the Confederation of Canada until 1949.)

She worked as a wireless operator in such eastern locations as Moncton and Halifax, Nova Scotia, connecting and communicating with bases in Goose Bay, Gander and St. John's, Newfoundland, as well as bases all over Britain, sending out the orders used to guide flights in and out of the

See WAR, pg. 3

Martha Anne Bowman's (later Burnett) service portrait. She worked as a wireless operator in Moncton and Halifax, connecting and communicating with bases in Goose Bay, Gander and St. John's, Newfoundland, as well as bases all over Britain, sending out the orders used to guide flights in and out of the air bases, as well as directing war ships in the Atlantic.

Photo courtesy Burnett family

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