

A daughter's search for her past

Every once in a while, someone calls the office with an interesting request.

And as I rarely can resist the challenge to do a little sleuthing, the call is often transferred to me.

Last week it was a woman from Quebec, on a quest to discover her past. Linda Lewis is a 54-year-old woman from St. Hipolyte, located in the Laurentians. She has a son and a daughter and works as an accountant.

Life over the years has been good, but one thing is missing. You see, Linda never knew her dad.

Her only recollection of him is from 1950—when she was three years old—when he and her mother separated while living in Montreal. Since her mother died 36 years ago, when Linda was 18, she was limited in finding out much about him.

"I know he lived in a number of places in the U.S.," said Linda with her delightful French-Canadian accent, "I think it was near Boston or Salem (Mass.) but I'm not too sure."

Linda had one concrete fact. Her father, Robert William Lewis, lived in Acton the final years of his life and died Nov. 28, 1993. His death notice ran in the *Acton Free Press*, Dec 8, 1993.

"I was in Georgetown earlier this year," she continued, "and got a copy of the death notice, but couldn't find any more information."

The death notice refers to Lewis as "husband to Helen, father of Linda and Bill Lewis and stepfather of Mike and Sandra Robinson."

I said I'd make inquiries for her with lifelong Acton residents. I also asked her to send me more information—anything pertinent.

Her e-mail the next day told me Robert William Lewis was born in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Feb. 23, 1917, and that he was a veteran.

He was married to Helen Campbell (formerly Sutherland) in May of 1992, and she was younger than him by several years.

I started with contacts at Branch 197 (Acton) of the Royal Canadian Legion. Longtime member Frank Spielvogel, talking from his Mount Forest home, thought Bob Lewis' name was familiar, but he couldn't put a face to it.

John Dunn of the Cemetery and Parks department of the Town of Halton Hills, (also in charge of Branch 197 membership records) confirmed Bob Lewis was buried in Fairview Cemetery.

After checking records for me, Branch 197's

A TED BIT



Ted Brown

Ab Irwin discovered Lewis was a sergeant with the Royal Canadian Engineers during the Second World War. In civilian life, their records show he was with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Ab also discovered his last place of residence was on Kingham Road, Acton.

Since being a member at Georgetown Legion was another possibility, I checked with Branch 120. Bob McNeilly told me he wasn't a Branch 120 member. Bob was good enough to call Erin Legion as well—no luck there, either.

A couple of calls later, I learned Branch 120's Charles Tutty had helped with burial arrangements at Fairview Cemetery in 1993 through the Legion's federal assistance program.

So who was this Bob Lewis, formerly of Kingham Road, Acton, and did anyone in Acton know him or his wife Helen?

Linda tells me she just wants to talk to anyone who might have known him, simply to learn who her dad was, his likes and dislikes, what he did in his spare time, his favorite beer, or anything else that would help fill that void.

"It's curiosity as much as anything," she said, "I just feel I want to know who he was. Most people know their dad—I didn't. I just need to put my mind at ease."

Anyone who might have known Bob Lewis can contact Linda Lewis at 1021 Lac Connolly Road, St. Hipolyte, PQ, J8A 2B5, call 450-563-1849 or e-mail at linda_r_lewis@hotmail.com

Or contact me at 905-873-0301 ext. 257 or e-mail tbrown@independentfreepress.com

Linda said she'd gladly make a trip to Halton Hills to talk to anyone who knew her dad some time in the future—it's that important to her.

I'm hoping a reader can help our Quebec neighbour learn a little more about her dad.

And in doing so, perhaps gain a little more insight into who she is as well.

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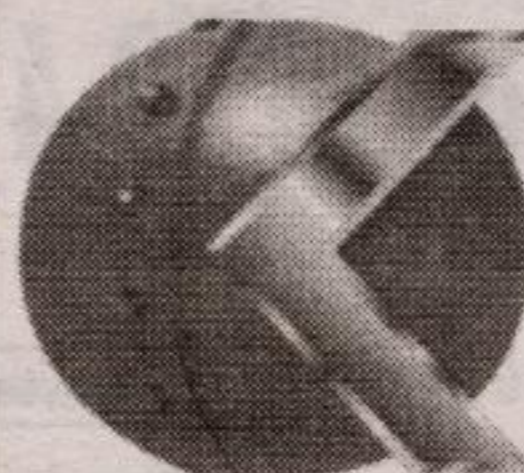
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