

Sixty years later, gunner's family is by his side

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that he might turn up someday, perhaps suffering from amnesia. It never happened.

Years passed and the graves of the two airmen were faithfully cared for by the local residents, meticulously maintained in the cemetery of the ancient church that had been built around 1150.

Sixty years later, May 5, 2003, a silent march entered the church grounds.

Led by the tap of a solitary drummer, the group was comprised of a handful of veterans, their family members and officials from the town.

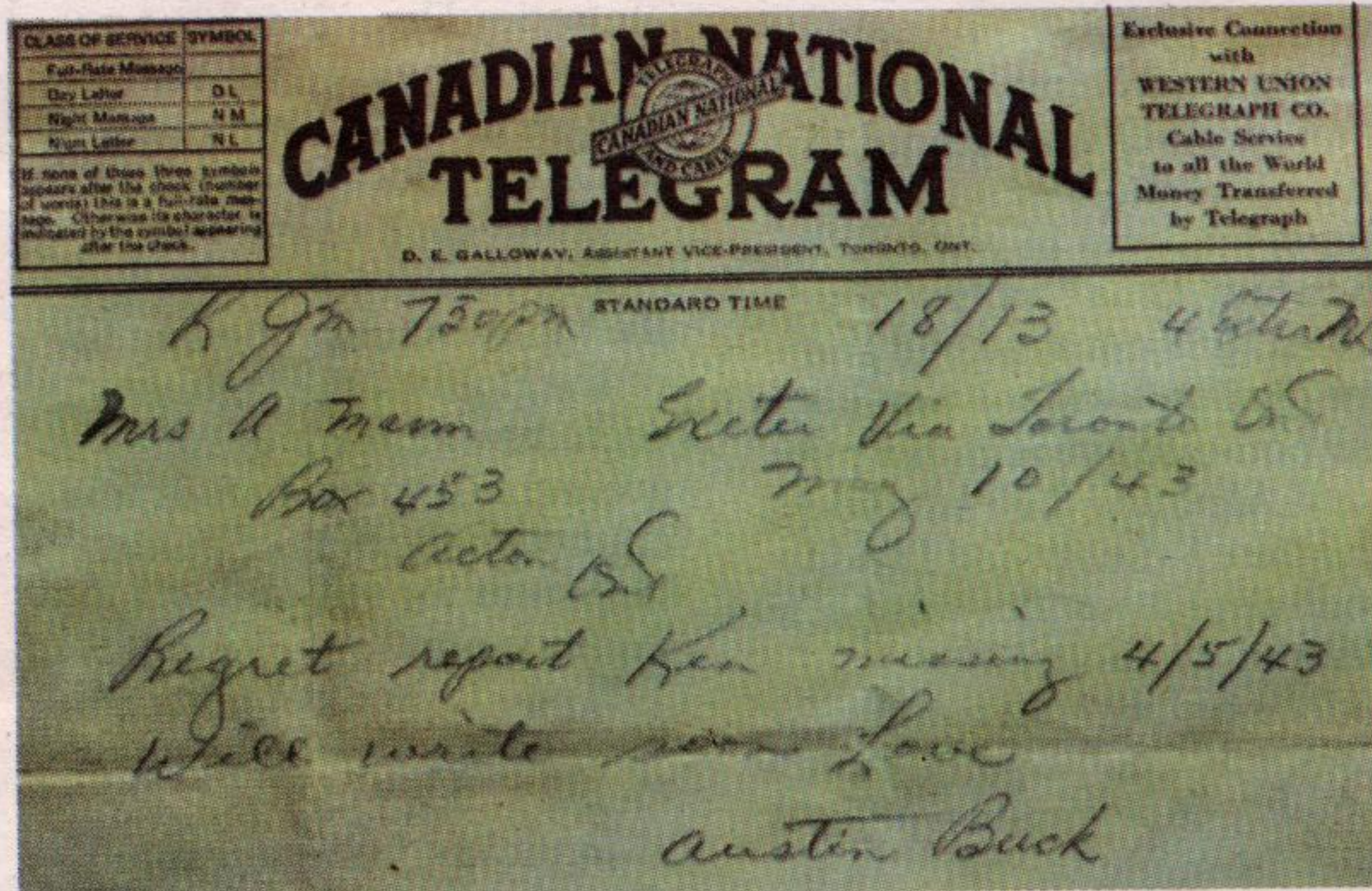
Among them walked Lynda Paul of Ballinafad.

Lynda was in the midst of touring war memorials in Europe, after signing up for the Keeping the Memory Alive tour organized by Tom Schenk and Martin Boomsma of Georgetown.

As the ceremony recognized the sacrifice of the Halifax airmen, Lynda stepped forward and was able to finally place flowers on the grave of her long lost uncle, F/Sgt Kenneth Buck.

"It was like a sense of closure for me," said Lynda, "I never really knew him since I was only three years old when he died, but I watched my mother mourn him most of her life."

"It was such an emotional



Lynda Paul's mother Lena first received word that her youngest brother was missing in action when she received this telegram from her other brother Austin.

Photo courtesy of Lynda Paul

moment for me," she continued, "I could see that Kenneth had been remembered and honoured by the Westergeest people for those 60 years, but now his family was at his side. It was certainly a wonderful feeling."

That moment hadn't just happened by luck. Months of planning had gone into bringing all the elements together so Lynda Paul could stand at her uncle's grave that day, and honour him fittingly.

The quest began when Lynda acquired her mother Lena's personal belongings after she died. Among them were numerous letters Lena had received from

her four brothers while they were overseas.

In addition, Lynda found letters to Lena from Kenneth's widow Dorothy, who had later married an American airman, and was now living in the U.S. She still wore the wedding band she received from her first husband, F/Sgt. Kenneth Howard Buck, when they exchanged their vows March 27, 1943.

"Reading those letters, my Uncle Kenneth became a 'real' person in my mind," said Lynda, "I felt I had to make the effort to find out as much as I could about where he was buried, and, in doing so, honour

his memory."

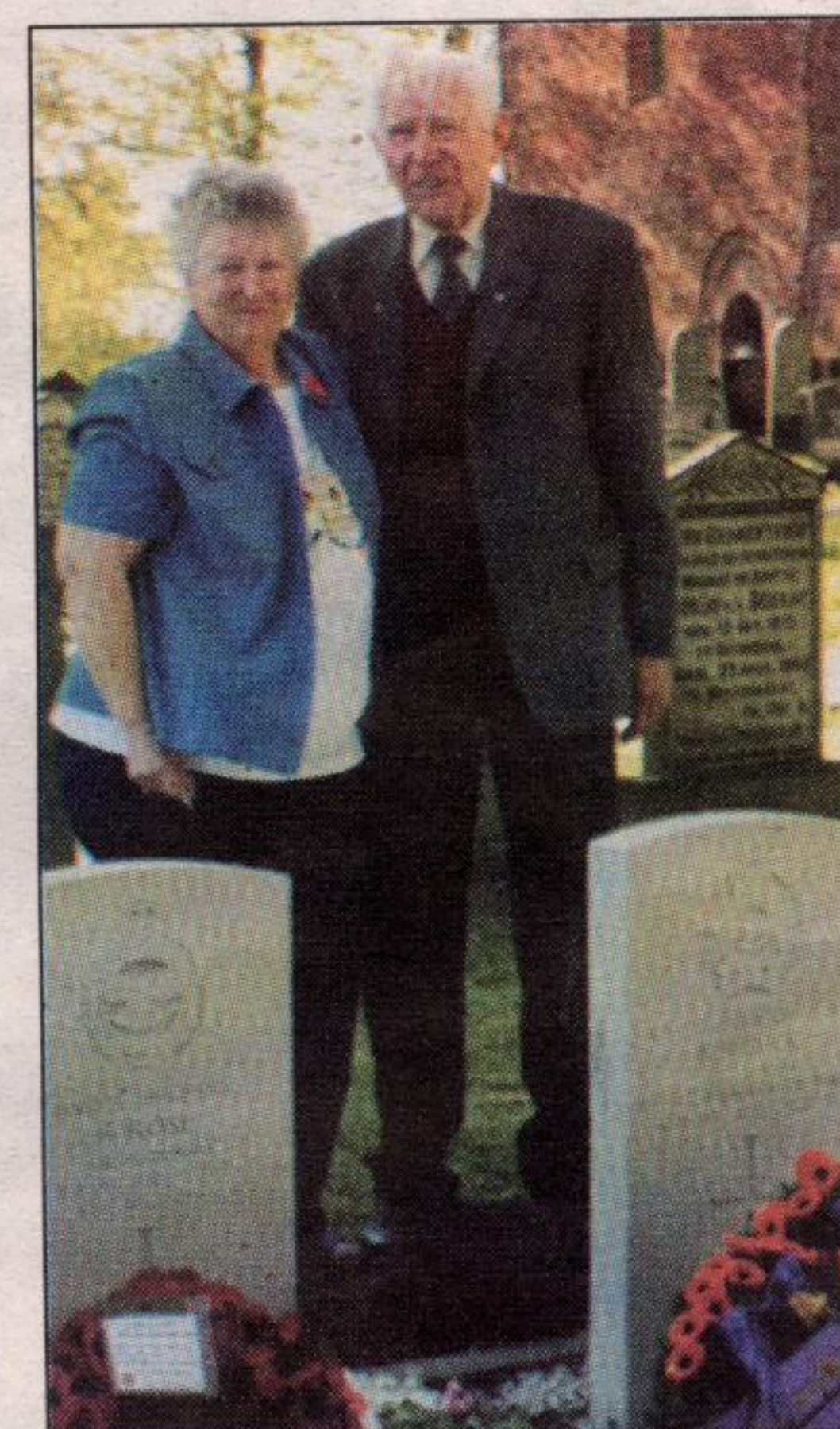
Talking to her uncle, Herbert Buck of Owen Sound, she learned of a Westergeest Christian school principal, Reinder Postma, who had contacted him to gain background about Kenneth. Over the years, Postma had made it his personal mission to educate his students of the efforts of those who, like Buck, had made the supreme sacrifice to liberate Europe.

Postma had searched for information on the RCAF pilot buried in the town cemetery, and since the records listed Buck's hometown as Owen Sound, he had simply searched the Owen Sound directory assistance from his Westergeest home, and placed a call to the only Buck in the Owen Sound phone book.

It was Lynda's Uncle Herb. Unfortunately, Uncle Herb died before Lynda could actually acquire Reinder's name and address, so she assumed that connection was lost. She figured she'd be forced to hire a professional researcher who not only was expensive, but had no guarantee of success.

By an incredible stroke of luck, she was contacted by Postma, via e-mail, the very night she had decided to hire a professional.

They exchanged bits of information, and as he told the



Lynda Paul was able to meet 85-year-old Luit Klaver, the man who pulled her uncle's body from the wreckage of the Halifax bomber, and later buried him in the Westergeest cemetery. Photo courtesy of Lynda Paul

stories about the farmhouse safe house, the aerial battle and subsequent plane crash and the ancient church and cemetery, she became more and more intrigued with the story behind her uncle who lay in the Westergeest cemetery.

See AIRMAN, pg. 5

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