

REMEMBERING HALTON'S FALLEN COMRADES

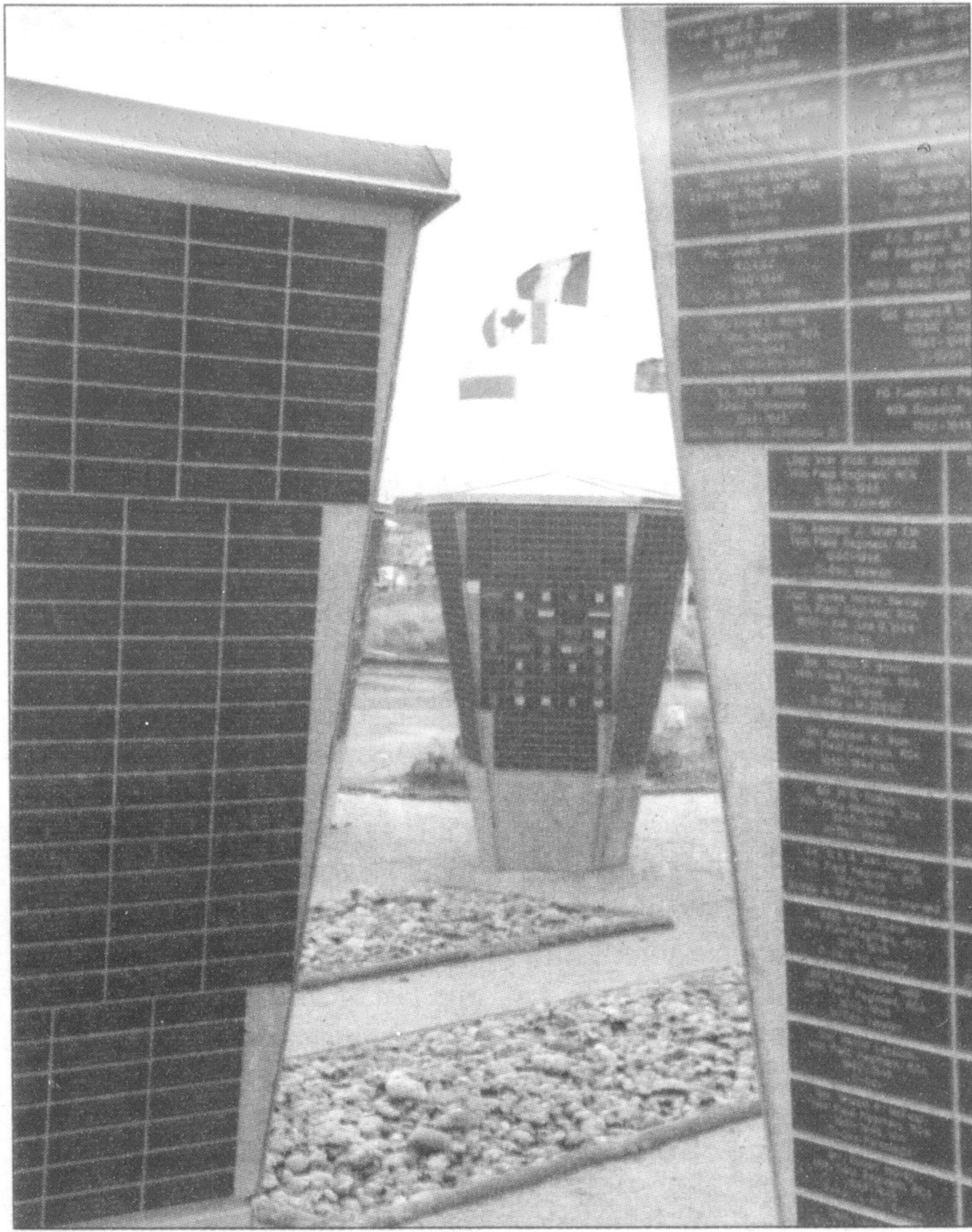


PHOTO COURTESY OF JUNO BEACH CENTRE

MAN ON A MISSION: Veteran Garth Webb of Burlington was the driving force behind establishing France's Juno Beach Centre in 2003. Today he works tirelessly to encourage Halton students to fundraise to purchase commemorative bricks in memory of 264 Halton soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Second World War.



LIESA KORTMANN / SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Father of Juno Beach Centre still not finished

By Lt. Garth Webb
D-DAY VETERAN

On June 6, 1944, the writer of this article landed on Juno Beach with some 18,000 others as the 3rd Canadian Division started the invasion of France with the Americans and the British.

The significance of this date and the battles that followed made each D-Day veteran automatically a hero.

In recent years a number of Second World War veterans have created a memorial known as the Juno Beach Centre in Normandy at Courseulles-sur-Mer. It tells the story of Canada's participation in the Second World War and how it influenced Canada's development as a nation.

This museum includes the Italian Campaign as well as all the Canadian battles in 1939-'45. Due to publicity given to Juno Beach, those from the Italian Campaign called themselves the "D-Day Dodgers."

A temporary exhibit for display at the Centre in 2008 is currently being prepared. The 1st Division, who trained in the UK as many did, traditionally had the oldest and most distinguished units — so while the 2nd Division got blasted at Dieppe and the 3rd Division took invasion training, we were aware that 1st Division had gone to Sicily and then Italy for active duty.

The Italian Campaign overall was a large scale undertaking of liberation similar to the one we were in, starting close to a year sooner and with Canadian participation not different to ours. More than 93,000 Canadians served in this campaign.

The battles in Sicily and others will be in the exhibit at the centre for visitors to see and learn more. Our recent recon (reconnaissance) trip was restricted to the Ortona district and Liri Valley to Cassino.

On the headstone of Cpl. McConnell, of the Seaforths (Seaforth Highlanders of Canada), killed in Ortona the day after Christmas 1943, is the following inscrip-

tion: "If I should die on foreign soil be this forever Canada."

Laying nearby with him are 1,400 of his comrades, which makes Ortona the symbol of Canada's effort and sacrifice in the Italian Campaign. This will also be highlighted in the exhibit at the Juno Beach Centre.

The Ortona actions were on terrible, but likely typical, Italian terrain for battle engagements. Note the similarity of units in Ortona that are active today in Afghanistan. The Patricias' (Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry) inflicted heavy losses while suffering 68 casualties at Villa Rogatti on Dec. 6, 1943.

The Liri Valley was the location for more 1st Division activities. These battles were in May, while we were lining up to go into action on June 6, 1944. The Liri Valley events between May 16 and 23 established the 1st Canadian Division as the equal to any of the formations in the armies of Italy.

The 1st Division was joined in May with

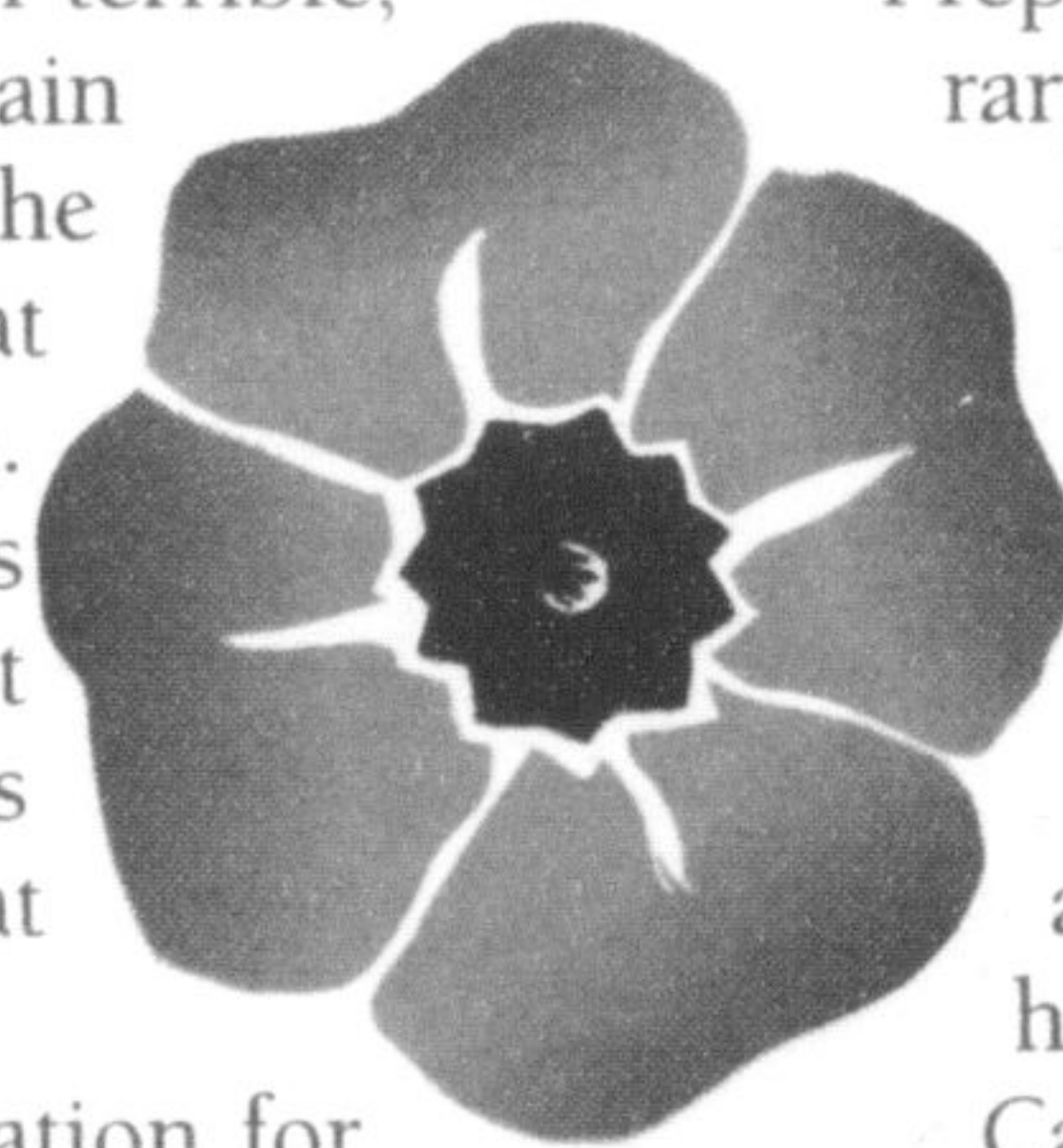
the 5th Division clearing the Liri Valley to result in success with the Poles at Cassino.

Our big day was June 6, 1944 but in Italy the Canadians, as always with the Americans, Brits and others, especially the Poles, were leading up to the liberation of Rome on June 5, 1944.

Preparation is underway for a temporary exhibit at the Juno Beach Centre showing the world the allied strategy "the more Germans in Italy the fewer in Normandy," so the 39,000 D-Day Dodgers fought continuously and in savage battles in the Italian Campaign before and after Juno Beach made us all heroes.

Cassino was cleared out and four simultaneous battles took a heavy toll from the allied armies. Today the cemetery preserves the memory of French, British, Commonwealth and American servicemen who died to liberate Rome between November 1943 and June 1944.

The Special Service Force, the 1st



Remembering Halton's sacrifice one brick at a time

As president and director of the Juno Beach Centre, Burlington D-Day veteran Garth Webb has been an active promoter of projects to remember every Canadian soldier who sacrificed his or her life during the Second World War.

To that end, Webb has been devoting his energy locally to promoting the Halton Juno Beach Memorial Brick Campaign, a project intended to raise awareness and funds to purchase a memorial brick for each of the 264 Halton men and women killed serving Canada between 1939 and 1945.

The bricks — actually plaques with the names of veterans inscribed on them — are displayed on kiosks located on the grounds of the centre, which was opened on June 6, 2003

at Courseulles-sur-Mer, France. On the properties courtyard there are 17 kiosks containing some 11,000 bricks already purchased by and for Canadian veterans.

Webb's goal is to see the brick purchasing program expand across the country and ultimately result in a brick purchased for each of the more than 42,000 Canadians killed while serving in the Second World War.

Additional commemorative plaques can be purchased for \$250 each, while an extra donation of \$25 will see the brick donor receive a replica wooden brick with the Juno Beach logo to recognize the purchase of a veteran or donor brick and to confirm that a "brick" is being installed in the centre in his/her name. (The replica wooden brick is

Division and later the 5th Division contributed to the battles for Cassino.

Halton resident Garth Webb has made it his mission late in life to ensure the world never forgets the heroic efforts and sacrifices made by Canadian soldiers on June 6, 1944.

At the age of 25, he was a member of the 18,000-strong 3rd Canadian Division that landed on Juno Beach during the D-Day invasion of France.

Webb was a lieutenant in charge of a team of gunners of the 14th Field Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery.

He landed within 90 minutes of the first soldiers who were sent ashore.

Later in life, Webb, along with life partner Lise Cooper — widow of a D-Day veteran — spearheaded an effort to open the Juno Beach Centre in Courseulles-sur-Mer, France 59 in 2003.

The centre serves as both a monument to the more than 5,000 Canadian soldiers killed during the entire D-Day campaign and to the 42,000 Canadians who died during the Second World War.

only available to those purchasing a brick.)

Webb also joined forces with educators from Halton's public and Catholic school boards to produce a teaching unit to be used to educate today's youth about Canada's Second World War and to boost fundraising efforts to purchase one or more of the commemorative Juno Beach Centre bricks.

For more information about the Juno Beach Centre, the Commemorative Resource Guide for Canadian Teachers and Students or the brick campaign, visit www.junobeach.org.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage has designated the Juno Beach landing site as of national historic significance to Canada.