

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



New book on Regina Rifles shows what WWII soldiers endured *Vets from rarely recognized regiment share personal accounts on liberation of Europe*

For Immediate Release

May 30, 2001
43-01

Contact: Professor Terry Copp
Co-director, Laurier Centre for Military Strategic & Disarmament Studies
(519) 884-0710 ext. 3309

or Mike Bechthold,
Manager Editor, *Canadian Military History*
(519) 884-0710 ext. 4594

WATERLOO – One of Canada’s leading military historians and a former commanding officer of the Regina Rifle Regiment are using the seldom-told stories of the extremely successful regiment to highlight what soldiers endured in the Second World War. *Look to Your Front...Regina Rifles, A Regiment at War: 1944-45*, co-authored by historian Terry Copp and Gordon Brown, combines historical analysis and highly personal accounts from veterans to explain how the “Farmer Johns” helped liberate Europe.

The Regina Rifles fought in some of the war’s toughest battles. Its soldiers, known as “Farmer Johns” or just “Johns”, were largely farm labourers from rural Saskatchewan and western Manitoba. They defeated the 12th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, captured the Abbaye D’Ardenne, took part in the campaign to capture Caen and suffered terribly while capturing the Leopold Canal area of the Scheldt Estuary.

“The Reginas were an exceptional regiment, consistently very good at their job,” says Copp, a history professor and co-director of the book’s publisher, the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS). “But their story hasn’t been told in any significant way. They’ve been incredibly neglected.”

– more –

The authors began addressing that neglect in 1996, when Copp asked Brown to collect as many first-person accounts as he could. Two years later they agreed they had the makings of an important book. Copp, one of Canada's foremost military historians, wrote introductions to the chapters. Brown contributed his own recollections and those he could solicit from veterans.

The result is a highly personal but factually accurate history of one of Canada's most successful military units of the war – a unit that contained many Metis and First Nations people, perhaps more than in any other battalion. Complete with maps, scores of photos (some never before published) and the often-unpolished recollections of men who were there, *Look to Your Front...Regina Rifles* is an important addition to the growing (and increasingly popular) field of military history in Canada.

Brown landed with the Regina Rifles on D-Day. Twice wounded, he returned to D company, which he commanded throughout most of the war. He was acting battalion commander in the Regina John's last battle. He now lives in Red Deer, Alberta, and has had several articles published in the journal *Canadian Military History*.

As well as editing *Canadian Military History* and co-directing the LCMSDS, Copp teaches history at Wilfrid Laurier University. He regularly leads tours of Canadian battlefields in Europe and has written books on the Canadian involvement in Northwest Europe in the Second World War.

He will be the guest speaker at the Royal Regina Rifles annual banquet on June 02. He will also be attending speaking and book-signing events in Saskatoon on June 04, Waterloo on June 06, Toronto on June 13 and Kingston on June 21.

The book, priced at \$36, is available at selected booksellers across the country or through the LCMSDS at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 3C5. Please visit www.wlu.ca/~wwwmsds/books.htm or call (519) 884-0710 ext. 3309.