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## Edith Bacon awaits army corps reunion

By BRUCE STAPLEY

For Stouffville's Edith Bacon, June 24 to 26 will be a return to a time when comradeship, dedication to duty, and self sacrifice comprised the essence of her very existence.

For it is on that weekend that the veterans of the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC) are being recalled to Peterborough for what they hope will be the biggest reunion since the Second World War. And Edith is already counting the days.

"It was the highlight of my life," she insists of her years in the Corps, a time that saw her serve at a medical hospital in Kitchener, and eventually make the trip overseas after VE day as part of the post-war program in Britain.

For Edith, the memories of the friendships, and the feeling that what she was doing was contributing to the war effort, has left a magic glow over the years 1942 through 1946. The very thought of getting together with so many of the CWAC women in June has her as excited as a little child.

"I got the old uniform out," she said proudly. "And it still fits! It was such a great feeling to be cleaning buttons again."

The reunion, which Edith is helping to publicize in this area, is being hosted by CWAC members of the Elizabeth Smellie Branch 452 of the Royal Canadian Legion, and will coincide with the corp's 47th anniversary. Edith is assisting in the effort to contact the corp's 21,000 members. The task becomes difficult when one considers how many of the women married after the war, changing their surnames.

"We have the names of 1,100 so far," she claims. "Two of the organizers are friends of mine, so I got early notice on the reunion."

The reunion will include organized activities such as a memorial service, a boat trip down the Trent, barbecue dinners, and bus tours to museums and craft shops. It is to be held on the campus of Trent University, and it is hoped that as many as 500 will make the trek from all across Canada.

"There is a contingent from Victoria, British Columbia that will board a train in Vancouver," says Edith. "They are going to pick up women in Calgary, Regina, and Winnipeg as they go along."



EDITH BACON  
 Serving Canada in wartime

The reunion promises to be a time of renewal of friendships, and of reminiscing about the varied experiences of these ladies, who all of a sudden found themselves immersed in a world previously inhabited only by men.

Edith recalls the reason for the CWAC's creation in the early 1940s. "The CWAC was originally formed to relieve men in Canada from their duties on the home front so that they could go overseas. I never expected to go overseas myself, but it was a wonderful experience."

She initially joined in September of 1942, and was stationed in the Kitchener hospital base. "I was in the orderly room, as a clerk, with some ward duties on weekends." She recalls that the conditions were somewhat spartan. "We were the first women's corp on that base. It had been occupied by men up to that point, so it was pretty crude."

She recalls that the barracks were heated by pot bellied stoves. "I remember many a morning when the wash cloths were frozen solid," she laughs.

In July of 1945, she was sent overseas on a reconvered cruise ship. "It was called the 'Isle de France'," she recalls. "I remem-

ber that I was sick the whole way over."

Upon arrival, she was assigned to the Quartermaster's Store of the Canadian Army Entertainment Unit in Guildford, near London. "England was a mess," she remembers. "It was so drab. They hadn't started rebuilding. When I went back in 1961, it was so different. It had all been refurbished."

The reward was certainly not financial. "I was paid \$1.20 a day. When I got my corporal's stripes, I got a raise."

But the big payoff, she insists, was that of personal satisfaction, a feeling of doing one's bit, of making an important contribution.

"I was so proud of that uniform," she says sincerely. "Just the fact that we were doing our part. I really enjoyed the work I was doing, and the friendships were wonderful."

And these friendships weren't restricted to fellow service people. "The civilians in Kitchener would have us over for supper, and when I was in England, I met a lady in Aldershot whom I still keep in touch with."

So much so that she recently attended the wedding of the woman's grand-daughter. "And they say they are going to name their first girl after my daughter," she says proudly.

Part of the warmth of army life in CWAC, Edith maintains, was that the camaraderie transcended position and rank. "Even the superior officers would mix with the enlisted girls. The captain would come in and play rummy with us in the evenings in Kitchener."

Edith picks up a scrapbook and points to pictures of fellow CWAC ladies. Every snapshot conjures up a memory and a smile. She turns to a page with a photo of one of the six women she still sees on a fairly regular basis. "She lived in Springhill, Nova Scotia," she explains. "She and her husband were re-established in Port Colborne after the mining disaster."

Another turn of the page and she smiles at the recollection of another friend now living in Saskatchewan. "I hope to see as many of them as I can at the reunion," she says.

And she's sure to have her uniform buttons polished and shiny for the occasion.



## Recalling wartime memories

Stouffville's Edith Bacon is raring to go to a reunion of Canadian Women's Army Corps in Peterborough in June. The former corporal was stationed in Kitchener, but travelled overseas in 1945 as part of the post-war contingent in Britain.

—Bruce Stapley

## Gables' Anne returns to Uxbridge

The Music Theatre of Uxbridge Secondary School is presenting Anne of Green Gables this Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 8:15 p.m. in the school auditorium.

The cast of 30 is headed by Julie Henderson as Anne, with Steve Kerr as Matthew Cuthbert, Kerri Prentice as Marilla Cuthbert, Rick Bagshaw as Gilbert Blythe and Karen Winterstein as Rachel Lynde.

Alisa Whitaker, Marianne Smith, Marianna Djurakov, Jennifer Prentice, Nadia Brown, Mylissa Faulkner and Kim Dempster are other featured performers.

Backstage activities are supervised by staff members at the school including Bruce Brandon, producer; Richard Watson,

musical director; and Sharron Marshall, Marilyn Langs, Sandy Darby, Jan Buchanan, Anne Chillingworth, and many more.

From the community, David Reed's in charge of special effects and Michelle Garbutt supervises make-up.

Anne of Green Gables, a musical based on the novels of Lucy Maude Montgomery, has played every summer at the Charlotte-town Festival for the past 20 years. This show is the 11th production by the U.S.S. Music Theatre since its formation in 1971.

Director John Garbutt describes the production as an excellent example of family theatre. The cost is \$5 per ticket, with a special \$4 rate for seniors and students.

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