

whitchurch
Stouffville *this* Month

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LOCAL NEWS VIEWS HAPPENINGS

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PRETTY GALS, PUSSYCATS AND PUMPKINS – Meaghan Gutkind (left), her little sister Kaeli and a feline named Jack enjoy the crisp fall air surrounded by dozens of pumpkins in the front yard of their family home on the west end of Stouffville. If you're trick or treating on Hallowe'en, chances are you'll meet a Gutkind pumpkin somewhere along your route. Photo by Conrad Boyce.

My father's remembrance

by Jill McWhinnie

My Dad, Wilf McWhinnie, rarely talked about the War. He'd been a Flying Officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force, went overseas in 1943 and was stationed at Tholthorpe in Yorkshire, England.

He was a member of 420 "Snowy Owl" Squadron. Its badge was a snowy owl — a bird which hunts at night — no doubt darkly symbolic of the night bombing done by the squadron's Halifax and Lancaster heavy bombers.

We still have the badge of the squadron, mounted on felt in a little glass frame. The jacket of Dad's steel blue dress uniform still hangs in the back of a clothes closet, his black sheepskin — lined flying boots are packed away in the basement rafters. When I was a child he told me there was a compass in the heel of one of the boots — to be used if one had to bail out of a burning plane into enemy territory. I remember watching one summer day as he tried unsuccessfully to pry open the heel to show the compass to his

skeptical eight year old.

Dad always kept his medals in little white cardboard boxes in a drawer with his cufflinks. After he died, we packed them carefully away. Did he ever tell me what they were for? He must have, but I don't remember. It probably didn't seem important at the time.

We still have the three small canvas kit bags he'd used overseas. Inside one of the bags are navigation charts and aeronautical maps of England, Wales and Scotland and a hinged double ruler that Dad used as a

navigator to chart the big plane's route to its targets on the continent. There's a map of Le Havre in the bag. Was that the crew's target one dark, cold night? If Dad were alive now I'd ask him. I'd ask him to show me how he used the charts, maps and rulers. I'd ask what it felt like to be in the freezing darkness thousands of feet above the North Sea, cold and tired, flying toward danger and, possibly, death.

One night a German fighter

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