

BILL RANDALL: LANCASTER PILOT WAS A MOUNTAIN RESIDENT

With all the recent notoriety achieved by VERA (Civil Registration C-GVRA), the Canadian Warplane Heritage (CWH) Lancaster, it is fitting to acknowledge the human element for this year's Remembrance Day. Consider for example, Bill Randall, a Lancaster wartime pilot who lived on the west mountain. As a teenager, Bill's future was influenced by Colonel Robert Inch, a member of the central Mountain's Inch (Park) family. In 1941, Bill Randall joined Hamilton's first air cadet squadron formed at Westdale Secondary School by Colonel Inch. In 1942, like a lot of Westdale graduates, Bill joined the RCAF and began pilot training in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Upon completing his training he was assigned to fly multi engine aircraft and appointed to 150 Squadron, flying Lancaster bombers from Hemswell Airfield in East Anglia, England.



Lancaster pilot, Bill Randall played an active role in the (CWH) Lancaster Support program helping to raise funds to keep the Lancaster flying. He and his 1944 Lancaster crew held a reunion in 1985 at CWH during the restoration of VERA. (Photo courtesy Bill Randall)

Of all his wartime missions, Bill was most proud of participating in the attacks on the German rocket site at Peenemunde, and "Operation Manna" in Holland. Peenemunde was the production and testing facility for Nazi terror weapons that were fired indiscriminately at Britain, killing thousands of women and children. "Operation Manna" was the delivery of food to the starving Dutch in German occupied territory near the end of the war.

Returning from the war, Bill became a teacher and after a long and successful career, retired as a school principal. He passed away in 2001 and we can be sure that like all of our veterans, he took great satisfaction in knowing that as a pilot, he played a part in destroying one of the most evil regimes that this chaotic world seems to perpetuate whenever mankind turns a blind eye.



Dutch citizens cheer a Lancaster delivering food to occupied Holland in "Operation Manna" 1945. (Dutch archive Photo)

Mountain Memories is written monthly by Robert Williamson for HMHS. See the Society's website (hamiltonheritage.ca) for more information

(November 2014)