

Testimonies of veterans

Frederick Biggs

During the war, having no work, Frederick Biggs *enlisted into the army in 1941*. He was trained during two years in Huntington, Trois-Rivières and then England, He went to France as a tank driver. He tells how he was made prisoner about a month the war ended. *« I was on a battle in Germany with 3 other tanks. The Germans attacked near a railroad track ; we took off the tank and walked for days until we reached what we thought was an ally camp. It was a German camp. (...) Our group of 14 Canadians, one officer, 2 sergeants and 11 soldiers., was taken prisoner.”*

“There were no Jews in that camp. (...) We have been treated alright (...) Enough food and Red Cross boxes containing canned stuff, candies, everything. (...) We stayed there 28 days, I think. And afterward it was the end of the war and we got released.”

(Source: interview made in april 2002 by Claire Massé in the setting of the oral history programme of Heritage Sutton)

Roland Goyette

Roland Goyette was born in Sutton as were his parents. He is 95 years old today. He joined the Army in April 1949 at the same time as his older brother Normand better known as Chim. The two brothers << wanted to travel, we loved Canada(...) we were convinced that English or French, we were all alike. >>

For two years, Roland was in training in Canada in St.-Jean-d'Iberville and Petewawa. Pour << apprendre à tirer du canon >>. He was then sent to England where he joined the Royal Canadian Artillery, a unit composed of francophone and anglophone soldiers. When he witnessed tension between the two groups he liked to remind all << don't ever forget that we are all the same, (...) que tout le monde a le même Dieu, le même sang rouge et que nous >> who where born French, who worked in French, who went to school in French”, have made an effort to learn English. He also heard anti-jewish comments to which he would make the same remarks on the equality of all.

After landing in Sicily, Roland Goyette for the next 28 months went through all the conflict zones of Western Europe. He went up the Italian peninsula all the way up to Germany. He was involved in the famous Mount Casino battle which broke the German (Gustav line) and led to the liberation of Rome. He was also involved in the final allied push against the German in Northern Europe.

As an artillery gunner, Roland was not involved in close combat with the enemy. He shelled enemy positions with long range projectiles. << Nos canons, y tiraient un maudit bout(...) On tirait pas pour tuer; on tirait pour éloigner l'ennemi (...) pour arrêter la guerre. >> He prefers to

forget: << Parce que tu sais, tu veux pas te souvenir (...) tu mets ça de côté. Même si j'ai tiré après quelqu'un, que j'ai peut-être tué quelqu'un (...) j'ai toujours aimé ce que j'ai fait, c'est drôle hein ? j'ai fait des fois ce que j'aurais pas dû faire; je l'ai fait pareil et je dis merci d'être encore ici. >>

He considers himself lucky: << J'ai été à la guerre, j'ai été tout partout, pas de blessure. J'ai eu un peu mal à la jambe... >> As a gunner he could have developed hearing problems, but no. << Je faisais attention. Quand je tirais, je me mettais un petit peu de côté pour que ça passe dans le devant de la face au lieu de passer dans les oreilles. Quelque chose de même. J'ai été chanceux en maudit, j'ai jamais rien eu. Except malaria. In early January 1945, he was treated in a field hospital in Italy where he met Gaétan Mireault, another soldier from Sutton, wounded in action in the crossing of the Senio River.

The war finally ended. He was greeted by imminely grateful populations. The people would ask him <<Combien t'en as tué? >>, which made him unease. He would answer << On n'essayait pas de tuer personne. >>

Then he came home. The sight of bananas at the station made him so happy << Moi, j'ai toujours aimé les bananes et j'en avais pas vu depuis longtemps. And then it was the return to Sutton. << J'ai toujours aimé Sutton, j'ai toujours habité Sutton; j'y ai bâti une maison. (...) mon chez-nous, c'est Sutton. >> He opened a canteen, then he worked in his brother Chim's garage << who had a talent for mechanics >> he also came back safe from the war (the garage, located at 76 Principale South, was later sold to Serge Poirier).

A few years later, he married Raymonde Bernard, he had a son, now deceased and two daughters: one lives in Toronto, the second one lives in the area.

(Source: interview made in May 2016 by Georges Létourneau and Michel Guibord in the setting of the oral history programme of Heritage Sutton; additional information: an interview given Jesse Chayer and an article in *The Record*.)