

Sgt Philip Albert Bell

by his daughter Jackie McFee

Philip A. Bell sailed with The Regiment from Halifax December 1939 on the SS Ormonde, landing at Greenock Scotland on New Year's Day 1940.

While waiting in Britain for orders to embark for combat, he met Mary, the love of his life. It is questionable who chased whom around Haringay Arena. Dad always joked that his skates were too dull but she truly captured his heart! They married in September 1942 and somewhere, between Assoro and Nissoria, Abby Watts, a great friend of the family, became an "Aunt".

Although P.A. was assigned to HQ Company, he regretted that he was not able to enlist with his friends from Marmora

in Madoc. They were assigned to Baker Company and both lost their lives in Sicily and Italy. They rest in peace at Agira (Ernie Johnson) and Moro River (Crother Wilson). After crossing at Messina, P.A. was seconded back to England with Operation "Pooch" to train new recruits coming from Canada. He remained overseas for a total of six years.

Mary arrived at Bonarlaw Station and was greeted with love at the family farm in Marmora. She was a London girl and although the farming life was not for her, they were devoted to each other and remained together for 65 years.

Following the war P.A. served in the RCAF from 1949-67 during which time he worked in St. Hubert on Vampires, the first jet aircraft used by the air force; North Bay on CF-100s; Malton on the AVRO Arrow and then he was assigned to other quality control assignments in Canada, England and Scotland. The last years of his military career were spent at 437 Squadron in Trenton. Following his retirement from the military he worked for Customs & Excise in Trenton, Ontario.

Philip and Mary lived in Waterloo for the last eleven years but their hearts have always been in eastern Ontario.



L to R Keith Sharpe, Philip Bell, ?

L to R: Philip Bell, Keith Sharpe and Abby Watts



Mess Tins... by C4090 Sgt. P. A. Bell

(As related to his daughter Mrs Jackie McFee, July 2007)

When The Regiment embarked for Sicily in 1943 each soldier was issued a small personal kit with mess tins, camera and other personal items. These were stored in the Bren gun carrier assigned to him.

During the assault on Assoro, Keith Sharpe took my carrier while I remained on top fighting. He

was wounded heading down the hill, ran off the road and rolled two or three times, but recovered. For my descent the only vehicle available was a Bren gun carrier that Tiny Hyatt had. Tiny was very badly wounded (shot in stomach) but the carrier was still there. I took Tiny's carrier

and decided to bring an anti tank gun down because the others had been burned badly. Everything was burning!

Abbie Watts [Ed Note: Watts in photo on previous page] helped turn the carrier and after moving found the right brake had worn so badly the carrier couldn't steer without backing up three or four times. Sgt. Reid, the medical sergeant, decided to get in the carrier and ride down the hill in it but the Jerrys were shooting the hell out of us and dropping mortars. Sgt. Reid jumped out and made his way on foot.

I finally got down to level ground and as I was driving under a railroad overpass under the hill the Jerrys made a last attempt with mortar bombs. They straddled the



Sgt Keith Sharpe

road with last rounds. I couldn't see but managed to get through the hole in the underpass. I carried on to the rest of the unit rendezvous and thought - "Good, I need a smoke!" I opened the storage compartment and found a whole carton of cigarettes but they were unsmokable because a bullet had passed through the compartment and permeated the whole lot with margarine.

I got my own carrier back the next day but without my personal kit, so had to do some scrounging to get the needed items. These mess tins are not my original ones... I think one of them belonged to a soldier by the name of Snell [Ed Note: likely Bill Snelling].

These tins accompanied me as we continued to attack the German lines passing through Nissoria on the way to Agira. Nissoria was bad, bad with defensive positions on both sides of the road. I lost a sergeant there, Eddie Andrews, through shell shock. I couldn't pry him loose and never saw him again. He was from Hoard's Station and he has never attended a reunion. 'B' Coy took most of the casualties.

When I arrived at Campobasso I was assigned to OPERATION POOCH to be sent back to England along with Sgt. Cote, Capt. Cliff Broad, WWII Bill Gray of 'B' Coy, and a Major whose name I can't recall. We were the first five in this Operation. [Ed Note: The War Diary (7 Nov 1943) states: "CSM W.S. Grey (C5021), Sgt P.A. Bell (C4090) and Sgt J.F. Cote (C4270) today left for England, where they will instruct Canadian troops"].

We were sent to Taranto and traveled all night sitting in a box car with 3 Italian refugees. We sat in Taranto for a week waiting for a boat to Bisenta, North Africa, then on a train for 5 nights and 4 days



Mrs Jackie McFee (right) daughter of Sgt Phillip A. Bell, presenting his mess tins to LCol John Sherry for the museum.

where we arrived on Christmas Day and awaited shipping to England. The camp was very crowded. We then got a ship back to Greenoch, Scotland.

I was supposed to go to the RCR but it was decided by the higher ups that training was needed for the reinforcements coming from Canada. When D Day came we moved north to get us out of the way and we were sent to Ripon.

I spent the rest of the war in the Canadian Infantry Training Regiment. Every four weeks we got a new platoon of trainees. We had to reach them about firing rifles, tossing grenades, etc., etc. It was very hard slogging.

These mess tins accompanied me throughout the war and I brought them back when I returned to Canada and have had them ever since. Now that my wife and I are moving into a retirement home we had to decide what to discard. I hope they will be of use in the Regimental Museum.

[Ed Note: Philip Bell joined the White Battalion on 12 Sep 2007, just shortly after relating this to his daughter. See photos of Sgt Bell on previous page].