

Captain (Retd) Leonard Brian Seward MMM, CD



Brian Seward was born on the 12th December 1927 in Manchester, England. During WWII he attended the local school where his lessons were often interrupted by German bomber air raids, during which the staff and students took to the air raid shelters.

Brian was one of the few boys on his street to own a bicycle and this allowed him to volunteer as an Air Raid Precautions (ARP) messenger boy until he was old enough to be accepted for training in the British Royal Navy. He trained as a Gunner 3rd Class, following which he joined the crew of the deep-sea tug, HMS Jaunty in 1945.

He then saw service in home waters, the Mediterranean, and then by VJ Day, the islands close to Rangoon where some of the Japanese still did not know that the war was over.

In October of 1946 HMS Jaunty joined HMS Newfoundland and together these two ships towed the damaged Japanese cruiser “Takao” to a selected spot in the Malacca Straits for sinking. During the postwar uprising in Indonesia HMS Jaunty was twice tasked with rescuing Dutch Nationals by towing LST’s (Landing Ship Tank) filled with ex-colonists from Surabaya and Padang to the safety of Singapore. At the end of Brian’s Royal Navy career he was awarded the Naval General Service Medal (NG).

Following his release from the Royal Navy he joined the Merchant Navy Service and visited many parts of the world including Vancouver in 1952 and 1954, and then in 1955 he immigrated permanently to Canada.

In 1960, at the age of 33, Brian tried to join the Canadian Navy Reserve, but was told that he was too old. Two years later he was eagerly accepted as a Sapper in 6th Field Squadron Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE).

Brian quickly moved up through the ranks and by 1969 was promoted to MWO and appointed as the Squadron Sergeant Major. During his tenure he visited a NATO exercise in Germany in 1971. Brian stepped down as SSM in 1973, but he stayed on in 6th Field Squadron and was seen on many a field exercise making himself indispensable by cooking for the troops.

During all this time his interest in collecting military memorabilia drove him to begin putting aside historically important items, which at times he rescued from permanent disposal at the hands of some over-zealous cleaning staff. By 1965 Brian began to safeguard these items by cataloging them and putting them aside for future display. This collection became a part of the 6th Field Engineer Squadron museum. His Commanding Officer at that time, Major Doug Whiffin was most supportive of MWO Seward’s passion for preserving the squadron’s history. By 1974 Brian had put together two glass display cases which were placed on the balcony and named the J. P. Fell Display following the recent passing of the late James Pemberton Fell, the founder of 6th Field Company Canadian Engineers back in 1911.

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Brian was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Cadet instructor Cadre in February 1979 and was immediately appointed as the Training Officer in 2573 RCACC.

In 1980 Lieutenant Brian Seward was awarded the Order of Military Merit (MMM) for his service to the Reserves and the North Shore Community.

In 1985 he was appointed as the Commanding Officer of his Cadet Corps and was promoted to Captain. He never-the-less managed to combine his Army Cadet work with his other love of collecting and cataloguing memorabilia for the museum.

During the 80's, 90's and through the millennium Brian worked tirelessly on adding artifacts, and especially medals of deceased 6th field veterans, to the already expanding collection of memorabilia. By 2004 the museum collection had grown so much that a new space was required and so the Jnr Ranks mess was moved upstairs and the artifacts were moved from the balcony area and the WO's & Sgts Mess down to the ground floor. In 2006 the 6 Field Engineer Squadron Museum Association (6 FES MA) was incorporated under the Society Act and the museum was officially named, "The Captain Brian Seward MMM, CD Gallery".

In 2010 Brian was awarded the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation for "Working tirelessly to preserve the history of 6th Field Engineer Squadron" and the memory of those who served.

At 92 years old Brian was reminiscing on his military career in 6th Field Squadron RCE, he said, "Money was in short supply and the Reserves was virtually a non-paying business. I remember one year that we received just 9 pay days for approximately 40 to 50 days volunteered. We soldiered on and finally it turned around into the fine Reserve system we have today".

On commenting on his service in the Royal Army Cadet Corp, he remarked, "We had great pride in watching young boys and girls around 13 years old, seeing them develop into young adults with a spirit of adventure and knowledge, a personal belief in themselves by lessons learned that would guide them for the rest of their lives. I think that is the most important thing".

Brian was married to his wife Donna in 1972 and they have two sons together, James and Andrew and Donna has a daughter, Sheree by a previous marriage.

HMS Jaunty <https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/7367.html>