



Salute!

Veterans Affairs Canada: Proudly Serving Canada's Veteran Community

Spring 2010

Do You Need Help Finding a Civilian Job?



"I recommend this program to any CF member entering the civilian workplace for the first time or after any length of service. It's a great program for anyone looking to refresh their résumé writing, job-searching and interview-taking skills."

Jamie MacGregor

Modern-day Veterans tell us a satisfying job is one of the most important things they need to make a successful move to civilian life.

To help achieve this, Veterans Affairs Canada's Career Transition Services (formerly the Job Placement Program) offers workshops, individual career counselling and job-finding assistance to help Canadian Forces (CF) members and Veterans prepare for civilian employment.

In workshops, you can develop a draft résumé to sell your strengths, learn effective ways

to conduct your job search and practice interview basics.

During individual career counselling, you are paired with a counsellor to finalize your résumé, evaluate your skills and experience and develop a plan to enter the civilian workforce. When ready, you will get job-finding assistance to prepare for job interviews and sell yourself for specific jobs.

Career Transition Services works. Jamie MacGregor was a 33-year-old Canadian Forces member in 2008 when he decided it was time

to make a change. A colleague told him VAC had a program that could help. Now employed as a route manager with a large waste management company, he says his ability to get the job is due to the training and tools he received through Career Transition Services.

If you are a regular or reserve force member or Veteran with eligible service, a Veteran who gets Canadian Forces Income Support, or a survivor of a CF member or Veteran who would have been eligible for these services at the time of death, you may be eligible for Career Transition Services.

In most cases, your application must be made within two years of release for regular force or upon completion of your eligible service for reserve force.

If you are thinking about making the move from the military to civilian life and want to learn more about VAC's programs, visit one of our on-site offices, call our toll-free number at **1-866-522-2122** or visit us online at **www.vac-acc.gc.ca**.

IPSCs Bringing VAC to You

It has been over a year since the announcement of the integrated personnel support centres (IPSC) and the number of people using their services continues to grow.

The goal of the IPSCs is to provide a "one-stop service" where CF regular and reserve force members and their families, particularly the ill and the injured, are able to access key services provided by VAC and DND, as well as other important services. Some of these include the Military Family Resource Centre, the Operational Stress Injury Social Support Network and the Service Income Security Insurance Plan.

By placing VAC and DND staff together, the centres allow the two departments to work more closely. The result? Better service.

Just ask Marlowe Fraser, the Advocacy Director of the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association and a member of the New Veterans Charter Advisory Group.

Recently, Mr. Fraser toured his local IPSC. He said, in his opinion, the IPSC is a major step forward for VAC in terms of client service delivery and will significantly improve transition outcomes.

Mr. Fraser described the IPSC initiative as "a dream come true." Core VAC services at each centre focus on a member's recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration. This includes things like:

- transition interviews and case management;
- coordination of resources available to the client, both inside the Department and in

the community; and

- information on and access to VAC's benefits and services such as career transition services, disability and financial benefits, rehabilitation services and the Public Service Health Care Plan.

Across the country, as more people realize the ease of access and positive experience resulting from a visit to an IPSC, VAC continues to see more clients. For example, the IPSC Halifax is presently helping about 50 clients, while in Edmonton, roughly 250 clients are being helped at the local IPSC. Over 300 clients are receiving assistance at the IPSC in Petawawa.

For a list of all the IPSCs, please visit **www.vac-acc.gc.ca**.





Vol.8, No.2

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Your comments and suggestions are welcome and should be sent to:

Veterans Affairs Canada
P.O. Box 7700
Charlottetown, PE C1A 8M9
Attention: Editor, *Salute!*
 or
E-mail: salute@vac-acc.gc.ca

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ISSN: 1499-495X

Mailed under Canada Post Publications
 Mail Sales Agreement No. 40064817

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Minister's Message

Strength. Bravery. Sacrifice.

These are words often heard during any discussion of Canada's military efforts, both past and present. But, rarely have those words carried as much weight for me personally as during my recent visit to the Netherlands.

I was honoured to travel there in May with a group of Canadian Veterans and youth to remember and celebrate those who contributed so much to both Victory in Europe and the liberation of the Netherlands 65 years earlier. Among the Canadian delegation, there was a true sense of pride in what had been accomplished all those decades ago. This paled in comparison, however, to the Veterans' personal tales and the overwhelming gratitude displayed to these Canadian guests by the Dutch people. Each and every Veteran who returned to mark the 65th anniversary of their victory was rightly treated as a hero.

Along with the sense of pride, I could see in the eyes of many of our Veterans a tinge of regret that it had to happen at all—a look of sadness that such evil existed in the first place.

I am confident this feeling was shared by the youth ambassadors who made the trip with us. These young Canadians have so much of their lives yet to be lived. And yet, they are not much younger than many of those who 65 years ago ventured half-a-world away to ensure a people who were being oppressed would once again know freedom.



Minister Blackburn participates in a ceremony to bury the ashes of a former Canadian soldier at the foot of his friend's grave in the Netherlands



The Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), speaks at a plaque-unveiling ceremony commemorating the Battle of the Scheldt.

It is a tragic reality that tyranny exists. But, Canadians have always been there to defend our shared values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. They were there 65 years ago to liberate the Netherlands—one of the most significant events leading to Victory in Europe and the end of the Second World War. And, they are there again today—members of the Canadian Forces protecting the Afghan people. Canadians are providing hope to people who for far too long had none.

The names ring out through our history—Vimy Ridge, Juno Beach, the Netherlands, Bosnia, Afghanistan. I am honoured to in some small way work to help those who have done so much in Canada's name. As we have been there for Veterans of past battles, we are there for those returning home today.

Ladies and gentlemen, I honour you and I thank you for your strength.

Your bravery.

Your sacrifice.

Lest we forget.

**The Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn,
 Minister of Veterans Affairs and
 Minister of State (Agriculture)**

Canadians Return as Heroes to the Netherlands

Canadian Veterans of the Second World War returned to the Netherlands as heroes this past May to take part in ceremonies commemorating the 65th anniversary of that country’s liberation and VE Day.

The official Canadian delegation was led by the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture) and included Veterans, youth and representatives of the Canadian Forces.

From September 1944 to April 1945, Canadian troops fought to free the Dutch people who had suffered terrible hardship during their nation’s occupation. More than 7,600 Canadians died in the nine-month campaign, a tremendous sacrifice for a nation our size.

Over the course of several days, the Canadian delegation took part in a number of emotional events remembering the long-ago struggle to free a nation. Prime Minister Stephen Harper joined Minister Blackburn, Chief of the Defence Staff General Walt Natynczyk and other officials at one such ceremony, held at the Bergen-op-Zoom Canadian War Cemetery.

“Their courage and determination in grueling conditions represents the best of what Canada is,” said the Prime Minister. “Today, we keep faith with them by remembering their deeds,

honouring their achievements and celebrating the lasting bonds between our two great countries.”

The town of Wageningen hosted a poignant event, remembering the signing of the terms of surrender in the bombed and battered Hotel de Wereld 65 years before. Following the ceremony was the March Past of Freedom which featured approximately 1,000 Veterans. The delegation later attended a reception where they saw the table on which the documents of surrender were signed.

“The tone of the ceremonies in the Netherlands was sometimes solemn, sometimes joyful,” Minister Blackburn said during a ceremony at the National War Memorial in Ottawa. “The ties that bind us to the Netherlands were born of the courageous attitude and willingness of our Veterans and their comrades to sacrifice in the Second World War. The Veterans in our delegation demonstrated this every morning. Their dedication touched my heart and inspired me.”

Another moving ceremony was held at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery in front of thousands of spectators. Minister Blackburn was joined by members of the Dutch royal family, including Queen Beatrix, to honour the thousands of Canadians who made the

ultimate sacrifice during the liberation, including the 2,338 buried at Groesbeek. Among them is Aubrey Cosens of the Queen’s Own Rifles, who earned the Victoria Cross for his efforts.

A similar ceremony was held at the Holten Canadian War Cemetery where an additional 1,355 Canadians were laid to rest. Holten also pays tribute to fallen soldiers with a vigil every Christmas Eve, during which children place lighted candles on each grave.



A Canadian Veteran signs an autograph in the Netherlands.

Ready, Aye, Ready! The 100th Anniversary of the Canadian Navy



This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Navy. Many commemorative events have been and will continue to be held across the country to mark this significant milestone and remember Canadians who have given their life in service at sea.

From its modest beginning in 1910, our navy grew to play an important role in Canada’s military efforts through the years. Only three years after Britain’s King George V conferred

the title “Royal” on our navy in 1911, the First World War erupted. The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) entered the war with only two ships and 350 men, but it would grow to take on many important duties. Among these were coordinating shipping in Canadian ports, performing radio-telegraph services and conducting mine sweeping and patrols off our coasts.

The RCN grew a great deal during the Second World War and it played an important role

in the Allied victory in the Battle of the Atlantic—the struggle to keep the vital flow of war materials sailing from North America to Europe. After the war ended, Canada had the third-largest navy in the world, with 434 vessels and 95,000 men and women in uniform.

The RCN again answered the call during the Korean War. Canadian destroyers served with UN naval forces, helping blockade and bombard the enemy coast, guard against amphibious landings, protect aircraft carriers and assist isolated fishing villages.

The unification of the Canadian military in the late 1960s saw the RCN become the sea arm of the Canadian Forces. Our ships stood guard during the Cold War and have served with our NATO allies over the years. And after 100 years, that proud tradition of service continues today.

Care of Veterans Remains a Priority at Ste. Anne's Hospital

Home to just over 400 Veterans, Ste. Anne's Hospital is the only remaining hospital administered by Veterans Affairs Canada. Located just outside Montréal, Quebec, it is a place where every effort is made to make Veterans feel at home and where the families of Veterans are considered partners and also receive supportive care and attention.

On April 26, the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), was at Ste. Anne's Hospital to meet with 175 residents and clients to talk about its future.

It has been a long-standing policy for the Government of Canada to transfer hospitals to provinces in which they are located. Since the implementation

of the *Canada Health Act* and Medicare in the 1960s, 17 hospitals administered by Veterans Affairs Canada have been transferred to the provinces.

To date, previous transfers have been successful because great care was taken to protect the interests of Veterans, their families and hospital employees.

In recent years, the demand by traditional Veterans for long-term care at Ste. Anne's has been steadily declining. In 2009, the Government of Canada began discussions with the Government of Quebec regarding a potential transfer of Ste. Anne's Hospital. A chief negotiator was appointed in December 2009 to lead discussions on behalf of the Government of Canada. These discussions are in the preliminary stage and official negotiations have not yet begun.

Negotiations such as these can be complex and may take a significant amount of time.

Minister Blackburn said Ste. Anne's Hospital is a state-of-the-art facility blessed with a diverse team of dedicated employees.

"For the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as for the general population, it is important to safeguard this expertise," he said. "It is our responsibility to do so. Therefore, we must actively prepare for the future."

Minister Blackburn assured residents and clients the Government of Canada wishes to maintain Veterans' priority access to Ste. Anne's and to the exceptional health care that they deserve in the language of their choice.

Veterans Affairs Canada and the Government as a whole are committed to keeping Veterans and their families informed throughout this process and are equally committed to protecting the interests of our Veterans and the Department's employees.



Kandahar Boardroom Named in Honour of Canadians in Afghanistan



Chief Warrant Officer Wade McNaughton (right) and Lieutenant-Colonel Spurgeon Stewart, Canadian Forces (CF) Liaison Officers, meet in the recently-renamed Kandahar Boardroom in the head office of Veterans Affairs Canada in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

CWO R.W. McNaughton, DND/VAC Liaison Chief Warrant Officer, worked on this project. He said he believes it is important for the staff at Veterans Affairs Canada who create policy and then put that policy into practice to be able to see some of what is actually going on in the field.

The Canadian Forces Imagery sections in both Ottawa and Petawawa heard about the project and immediately understood its importance. They worked to print the pictures which were selected by CWO McNaughton.

The ongoing efforts of Canadians in Afghanistan are being recognized at Veterans Affairs Canada's head office in Charlottetown.

In honour of the Canadian Forces, RCMP and others working and sacrificing so much to help the Afghan people, the largest boardroom in the Daniel J. MacDonald

Building has been renamed the Kandahar Boardroom.

The pictures now lining the boardroom's walls give a sense of the extremely difficult conditions under which Canadian personnel operate in Afghanistan as well as some of the equipment they use on a daily basis.

Darragh Mogan, Director General, Policy and Research Division, also supported the project. Mr. Mogan said it would not have come together so successfully without the outstanding support of VAC and the CF Imagery sections.

How To Apply For A VAC Disability Benefit

Here are some pointers to better understand the disability benefits application process and help you apply.

Step 1 - Get an application

You can get an application one of four ways:

- 1) Download an application on-line at www.vac-acc.gc.ca;
- 2) Call us toll-free at **1-866-522-2122**;
- 3) Visit one of our district offices across the country; or
- 4) Visit your local Legion and a Royal Canadian Legion service officer can help you.

Step 2 - It’s all in the details . . .

You know the old saying, make sure the “I”’s are dotted and the “T”’s are crossed? Well, for your application to be complete, that means we need the following items:

- 1) A completed medical form from your doctor or base surgeon. This must include a medical diagnosis of your disability. We will give you the form with your application for your doctor to complete; and
- 2) Any reports on your military or RCMP file that would help make the connection between your service and your disability.

Remember, although you are responsible for getting the medical information and any other information that would seem important to your claim, we can help—just ask to speak to a pension officer at your local

district office or a Royal Canadian Legion service officer.

Step 3 - Your application arrives at Veterans Affairs Canada

We want to process your claim as quickly as possible, but we can’t do so without your help. So, please make sure you have all the information listed above before putting your application in the mail. If we don’t have all of this information, then the decision-making process will take longer.

Once you mail or drop off your completed application form and medical documentation, a pension officer will:

- 1) order your service records;
- 2) review your application, medical reports and service documents; and
- 3) let you know if there is anything else is required to complete your claim.

Step 4 - Who makes the decision on your claim

Your claim is then sent to VAC’s head office located in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. There, it is reviewed by an adjudicator who independently examines the medical and service information and other evidence you submitted for your claim. A few questions the adjudicator needs to answer in order to reach a decision include:

- 1) Is there a disability?
- 2) Is your disability the result of or partially

- related to your service with DND or the RCMP?
- 3) What is the extent of the disability?
- 4) How has the disability affected your quality of life?

Step 5 - And the decision is . . .

Once the adjudicator reaches a decision on your claim, you will receive a letter in the mail. The letter will explain in simple terms what the decision is, what evidence was used to reach the decision, the level of your entitlement and your assessment. Sometimes, we’ll need additional information, all of which will be explained in your letter.

Step 6 - If you’re not happy . . .

If you get an unfavourable decision, that means your claim did not meet the requirements of our legislation. Your decision letter will explain the reasons why and you will be given appeal rights. In some instances, you may have additional information that was not submitted the first time so you’ll have the opportunity to send this to us for a review by a different adjudicator. In all instances though, you are entitled to free legal advice from the Bureau of Pensions Advocates who can best guide you if you wish to have your claim reviewed or appealed.

It’s obvious that my military service caused my condition – I was fit before I enlisted and now I am suffering with X. So my service caused X.

We must make sure your disability is directly related to your service. Some disabilities, like hearing loss for example, can be directly related to your service because we can compare the audiograms that were taken before your service began and after your service ended. Other disabilities, like heart disease, may or may not be related to service if for example you have a family history of heart disease or have been a smoker for a number of years.

Myth Busting

I have been told you need to get my service records for each claim. To me, this just looks like you’re making excuses for being slow in processing my claim.

We need to have your service records in order to establish the link between your disability and your service. Although the time this process takes may be beyond our control, we are working to streamline it so we can get your records and process your claim more quickly.

Many of my fellow comrades have told me to expect a negative decision and that I’ll have to appeal to get the benefits I’m entitled to. Why do we have to go through all this red tape?

More than 70 percent of our first applications are favourable or partially favourable. There are a variety of reasons for an unfavourable decision, but the most common reasons include:

- 1) No disability was established—for example, you have symptoms of a sore back, yet there are no x-rays or other medical evidence to establish a back-related disability; or
- 2) The disability occurred outside the period of service—for example, your injury occurred while you were off duty.
- 3) The disability can only be partially attributable to your service. For example, you had a knee injury which was not service-related and then had a second injury to the same knee which was related to service.

What's New in Research

Neil Armstrong once said research is creating new knowledge. While they may not be heading to the moon any time soon, Veterans Affairs Canada's (VAC) Research Directorate is breaking new ground when it comes to military and Veteran health research.

Life After Service Study

VAC, the Department of National Defence and Statistics Canada have teamed up for a major research study. The Life After Service Study will explore such themes as:

- How Canadian Forces members are doing after they move to civilian life in areas of income, health, well-being and disability;
- Whether VAC's transition/re-establishment programs are reaching those in need;
- Unmet needs that call for new or improved programs and services; and
- The quality of life of VAC clients compared to Veterans who are not using VAC programs.

The ground-breaking study will fill research gaps in Canada and around the world and will also help improve programs and services.

Knowledge Exchange

In January 2010, VAC's Research Directorate hosted a three-day research forum. Presentations and sessions on military and Veteran health were used to further the use of research among staff. A highlight was the keynote session with leading population health researcher, Dr. Cameron Mustard, from the Institute for Work and Health in Toronto.

Canadian Military and Veteran Health Research Forum

Mark your calendar. Queen's University and the Royal Military College will host the first Canadian Military and Veteran Health Research Forum November 16-17, 2010, in Kingston, Ontario.

Check out the Web site for more details: <http://www.queensu.ca/conferences/mvhr/>.



National Client Survey Conducted

As part of Veterans Affairs Canada's ongoing commitment to provide Veterans and other clients with the highest-quality service, the Department conducted its fifth National Client Survey earlier this spring.

We do these surveys periodically to get your feedback on our programs and services. Your responses provide us with valuable information about your health and well-being and how our programs and services are meeting your needs.

An independent consulting firm, Corporate Research Associates, was contracted to do the survey. Telephone interviews were held in late April and early May with war service and modern-day Veterans, Canadian Forces members, survivors and RCMP clients throughout the country.

VAC would like to thank those of you who were contacted and took part in the survey. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated and the information you provided will help us improve our programs and services so we can serve you better.

The 2010 survey results will be posted soon on our Web site at www.vac-acc.gc.ca and highlights of the survey will be reported in the next issue of *Salute!*.

24/7

Help When You Need It

For help in difficult times, Veterans and their families can access free, confidential, professional short-term counselling services **24/7** by calling the Veterans Affairs Canada Assistance Service at **1-800-268-7708**. If you are hearing impaired, please call **1-800-567-5803**.

Whatever your need, we want to help.



Veterans Advocate Appointed Alberta Lieutenant-Governor

One of Canada’s most-dedicated advocates on behalf of Canada’s Veterans has a new and very high-profile office from which to speak about the cause.

Colonel (Retired) Donald S. Ethell was installed as Alberta’s new lieutenant-governor in May during a ceremony in Edmonton. Speaking at the event, he left no doubt he will continue to be a voice of support for Canada’s Veterans, particularly those dealing with mental health issues.

“I would like to reach out to those who are dealing with mental illness, to let them know that they are not alone,” he said. “That includes members of the Canadian Forces, RCMP, municipal police and emergency response personnel who are dealing with work-related stresses, as well as all people living with mental illness. I’d like to shine a light on the excellent work taking place to build a stronger and brighter future for those who are suffering.

“I also will do what I can to comfort families of the fallen, to let them know that the thoughts and prayers of their fellow Albertans are with them.”

Lt.-Gov. Ethell’s continued commitment to the Veterans community comes as no surprise



The Honourable Donald Ethell signs official documents naming him lieutenant governor of Alberta during a May ceremony in Edmonton. Photo: courtesy of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

to those at Veterans Affairs Canada who had the pleasure of working with him in recent years. He was a member of the Veterans Affairs Canada, Canadian Forces Advisory Council, which contributed to the drafting of the New Veterans Charter. He also served as the chairman for the joint Department of National Defence (DND) and Veterans Affairs Canada Operational Stress Injuries Advisory Committee and the VAC New Veterans Charter Advisory Group.

He has appeared in front of the House of Commons Standing Committee for Veterans Affairs regarding the proposed Veterans’ Ombudsman, the Operational Stress Injuries Program and the proposed national Peacekeepers’ Day.

Lt.-Gov. Ethell’s military career was long and distinguished. He served in the Canadian Forces for more than 38 years, retiring in July 1993. A Veteran of 14 peacekeeping tours and other secondments to the United Nations and other international agencies, his tours of duty included three years of NATO service in Germany and extensive service in Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Israel, Central America and the Balkans.

“I completed many overseas tours of duty that brought me face to face with people who were living with fear, oppression and instability that most of us can only imagine as Canadians. In fact, I can’t count the number of times I heard fellow soldiers say ‘Thank God I’m a Canadian’ as we went about our duties,” he said during his installation.

“I saw the terrible physical, emotional and mental toll paid by those who serve and by those who live in war-torn regions, and this gave me with a deep sense of caring and compassion for all people who are suffering.”

Advisory Group on Special Needs

The Advisory Group on Special Needs (SNAG) provides Veterans Affairs Canada with advice on how well programs and services under the New Veterans Charter are meeting the needs of seriously disabled clients and their families.

Established by VAC in 2005, the advisory group’s make-up recognizes how important it is to receive feedback from those affected by the Department’s policies. A passionate and committed group, SNAG’s membership includes professional and academic experts and people with first-hand experience with disabilities.

There is also a heavy emphasis on experience—half of the 10-member committee are modern-day Veterans who live with a disability, including the group’s chair Bruce Henwood. Mr. Henwood said the advisory group works as a team, with each member offering valuable contributions to their discussions and recommendations.

“The team is comprised of exceptional people who bring their own strengths and



In late 2009, members of the Advisory Group on Special Needs met with representatives of other interested groups. Shown from left to right are Professor Muriel Westmorland (Chair, New Veterans Charter Advisory Group), Ron Stonehouse, Maureen Proctor, Commander Cathy Bruce-Hayter (Director, Casualty Support Management/Joint Personnel Support Unit), Bruce Henwood (Chair, Special Needs Advisory Group), Don Ethell (Chair, Joint VAC/DND/RCMP Mental Health Advisory Committee), Dr. Wanda Smith, Dr. Alice Aiken, Margaret Kennedy, Dr. Don Richardson, Geoff Harbinson. Missing from photo are Stephane Martin and Dr. Victor Marshall (Chair Gerontological Advisory Council).

experiences to the table,” he said. “Some members bring knowledge and expertise as clinicians, while others offer the experience of living with their disabilities on a daily basis. This balance of perspectives is one of the team’s greatest assets.”

To date, the advisory group has submitted four reports providing observations and

recommendations to VAC about improvements to the NVC from the perspective of Veterans with special needs. VAC is looking at what changes can be made. Some of the groups’ recommendations can also serve as important advice to ministers should changes be considered by Government in the future.

Canadian POWs Return to Buchenwald



Canadian Veteran Ed Carter-Edwards holds his great-grandson, Sean Carter-Edwards, at the former concentration camp Buchenwald near Weimar, Germany on Sunday, April 11, 2010.

While most Canadians are likely aware of the atrocities carried out in concentration camps during the Second World War, few may know that 26 Canadian airmen were detained in one of Germany’s most notorious camps, Buchenwald.

James Stewart and Edward Carter-Edwards, two of the 26 Canadians held captive at Buchenwald, traveled to Germany at the invitation of German authorities to attend the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora concentration camps. Commemorative events were held there from April 9–12, 2010.

“My grandson, who I think learned a lot, was with me. He was 23 and gosh, I was 22 when I was in Buchenwald and 23 when I was released,” said Mr. Stewart. “It’s all memories, but so many memories if you’re lucky.”

Shot down over France in June 1944, the Canadians, along with 142 other British, American, Australian and New Zealand airmen, made contact with the French Resistance in an effort to escape to England. Betrayed, they were arrested by German forces as spies rather than as military POWs—meaning their rights were not protected under the Geneva Convention. Imprisoned in occupied France, they were subjected to intense questioning, beatings and other cruelties.

“My first encounter with horror was when we were betrayed to the Gestapo in Paris,” said Mr. Carter-Edwards. “That was the beginning

of my thinking ‘we’re in a heck of a spot. We’re never ever going to survive.’ That was a horrible feeling. It was almost a feeling of total despair.”

On the morning of August 15, with the liberating Allied Forces approaching Paris, the men were forced into overcrowded boxcars and sent on a harrowing five-day train trip to Buchenwald. The train they boarded that morning was to be the last to leave Paris for Buchenwald.

“You’re always looking for something. There’s always some hope that something is going to happen,” added Mr. Stewart. “As a matter of fact . . . the French Resistance tried to stop that train by blowing up one of the tunnels. The Resistance had hoped that this would block the exit of the train, but unfortunately, I think there was a cattle train on the other side of the tunnel and the Germans cleared that out and we carried on the journey.”

Built in 1937, Buchenwald is known to have been the largest camp in Germany. Between April 1938 and April 1945, an estimated 250,000 people were imprisoned there. No less than 50,000 prisoners died.

“When we arrived in Buchenwald after five days, and the doors opened, we were greeted by all these screaming green uniforms with dogs and whips . . . and then our entrance into Buchenwald where we were greeted by 45,000 walking skeletons,” added Mr. Carter-Edwards. “I personally thought ‘we’ll never ever get out of here alive. Our families will never even know what happened to us.’”

In October 1944, a first group of Allied POWs was transferred from Buchenwald to a regular German POW camp by the German air force. The remaining Allied prisoners, including Edward Carter-Edwards, thought they would never be transferred, but on November 29, the German air force returned and got them out.

“I was three-and-a-half months in Buchenwald. I did not go out with the first group who left in October 1944,” added Mr. Carter-Edwards. “They (the German air force) saved our lives. However they found out we were there, they came in and they took us out of Buchenwald, a miracle, and took us to a regular prisoner of war camp. They saved us from the meat hooks below the crematorium. So that was a miracle in itself.”

To learn more about the 26 Canadian Airmen at Buchenwald Concentration Camp, please visit us online at www.vac-acc.gc.ca.

How to Reach Us

Veterans Affairs Canada Web site:
www.vac-acc.gc.ca

Veterans Affairs Canada E-mail:
information@vac-acc.gc.ca

Do you need information on Services and Benefits?

Note: When you call us, please have your VAC client number ready, if you have one.

Canada:
Phone: 1-866-522-2122 (English)
Phone: 1-866-522-2022 (French)

United States:
Phone: 1-888-996-2242

United Kingdom, Germany, France, or Belgium:
Phone: 00-800-996-22421

Any other country:
Phone: 613-996-2242

Do you need information on disability benefit decisions or how to request a review or appeal?

Call the Bureau of Pensions Advocates (BPA) at: **1-877-228-2250**

Do you need information on remembrance programming?

Canada:
Phone: 1-866-522-2122 (English)
Phone: 1-866-522-2022 (French)
Phone: 1-800-465-7735 (Hearing Impaired)

Veterans Review and Appeal Board

P.O. Box 9900
Charlottetown PE C1A 8V7

Canada
Phone: 1-800-450-8006

Outside Canada
Phone: 1-902-566-8751

Web site: www.vrab-tacra.gc.ca

Funeral and Burial Information Last Post Fund

Phone: 1-800-465-7113

Web site: www.lastpostfund.ca

VAC Assistance Line
Confidential, professional counselling 24/7
1-800-268-7708