

# In Memory of Harold Lapointe Photo Album





001-Club Crest

# IN MEMORY OF



**HAROLD LAPOINTE**

2010

002-Harold In Memory Of Harold

WESTERN ONTARIO FISH & GAME PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION

1990  
- 1991



Standing (Left to Right)  
Paul General - Safe Gun  
Brad McIntyre - Membership  
John Manvell - Secretary  
Knelling (Left to Right)  
George Fenner - President

Dick Brown - Newsletter  
Harold LaPointe - 1st Vice-President

Lawrence Lainchbury - Treasurer

004-Harold Exec Member



005-Harold Exec Meeting



006-Harold The Cake Cutter



009-Harold In discussion



010-Harold





011-Harold

# 7 toasts honour 8 brave men

OPINION  
IAN GILLESPIE



IN THE CITY

There were no politicians, brass bands or long-winded speeches. And the man at the controls of it all paid for the brandy himself — enough for everyone to take seven sips for seven toasts.

"It's going to be a cheap day," quipped Harold Lapointe as he surveyed the crowd of a dozen or so people gathered yesterday afternoon at the Royal Canadian Legion, Victory Branch No. 317.

The bar bill may have been small. The gestures were anything but.

Just like he's done every May 24th after 1944, Lapointe led his own service yesterday to mark the anniversary of the death of his six crew mates from RCAF Squadron 429, who

perished when their aircraft crashed in Belgium while on its way to a bombing run in Germany.

On that night 61 years ago, "Shorty" Lapointe was the mid-upper gunner on the

four-engine Halifax bomber when it was pierced by anti-aircraft fire.



Attacher

"It came up through the bottom of our aircraft, between my legs and exploded just over my turret," recalled the 81-year-old Londoner. "The force of the explosion took everything — the top part of the turret, the guns, the sights — everything but me out of there."

Lapointe said the bomber was then attacked again — this time by a German Focke-Wulf 190 fighter plane.

"Slightly got a good burst at him," said Lapointe, referring to the plane's tail-gunner. "But he (the German) hit us and knocked out our starboard engine."

With the aircraft in flames and Lapointe's right hand rendered limp by shrapnel, flight engineer Joe Jolley helped Lapointe don a chest-mounted parachute — upside down, so Lapointe could use his healthy left hand to pull the rip cord.

But as the crew prepared to bail out, Lapointe's foot crashed through a damaged piece of the fuselage.

"I'm stuck right up to my knee and I can't pull the leg out," he recalled. "I remember Joe trying to pull me out and I'm yelling, 'Jump you fools, jump!'"

The next thing he knew, Lapointe was free-falling through the night sky. With his left hand, he clung to the D-ring to deploy the chute. Seconds later, he landed in a hay stack.

Lapsing in and out of consciousness throughout the night, Lapointe said he was approached the next morning by a teenaged girl on a bicycle who gave him a black bread sandwich and directed him to burrow into the hay, where he found a wooden box filled with 12 bottles of gin.

"That was my anesthetic," he said.

Later that morning, Lapointe was picked up by local authorities and taken to the crash site, where German soldiers had arrived in a truck with seven coffins — one each, Lapointe assumed, for he and his six comrades.

It wasn't until a trip to the Belgian crash site 48 years later that Lapointe discovered the seventh coffin was not for him, but for the pilot of the Focke-Wulf. Apparently, the fighter had collided with the bomber, splitting the Halifax in two and hurling Lapointe free of the doomed craft.



SUSAN BRIDGMAN The London Free Press

**NOT FORGOTTEN:** Second World War veteran Harold Lapointe marks the 61st anniversary of the death of six crew mates who were shot down by a German bomber over Belgium.

## GILLESPIE: Seventh toast made for enemy pilot who also died

From Page B1

"For 41 years, I blamed myself for their deaths," Lapointe said. "I thought it was my fault — that I had made them hesitate too long to bail out."

Today, his conscience is clear, but Lapointe still makes a point to honour his fallen comrades. Yesterday, he offered a toast to each of them: Peter Nunn, Daniel McKeate, James McDonald, James Mitchell, Joe Jolley and Alec Smith.

He also made a seventh toast: "May he rest in peace." That was for the enemy pilot.

The ceremony attracted a line of Lapointe's neighbours, a handful of Legion partners and Lenora and Francis McDonald, who had

travelled from Little Pond, P.E.I., to honour their late brother, James.

During the short ceremony, Lenora sang an unaccompanied version of "The Band Played Waltzing Matilda."

Lapointe read a piece he said he outlined together from the Bible. In part, it read: "Life is a gift — accept it. Life is a puzzle — solve it. Life is an adventure — dare it. Life is a struggle — fight it."

There was another part, too. It went like this: "Life is a duty — perform it."

I think Lapointe has taken good care of that one.

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