

THE VETERAN'S VOICE



Joyce Allen

Throughout her life, Joyce Allen has held many titles: mother, grandmother, past member of the board of governors at the University of Winnipeg, lifelong learner, a citizen first of Britain and later of Canada, and also a proud Manitoban. But as MSBA discovered during our latest "Veteran's Voice" interview, Joyce is also a veteran.

As a young child growing up during the final years of the

Second World War, she well recalls the need to seek refuge in air raid shelters as German rockets rained down on civilians, killing over 50,000 of her fellow Britons. This experience motivated Joyce to serve her country, even with the war at a close. She was not alone. Of her five siblings, Joyce's three sisters also each joined the military, while her two brothers continued to don their "civvies".

Starting in 1959, as an aerial photographer with the Royal Air Force at the height of the Cold War, Joyce flew surveillance missions on Lancaster bombers, eventually finishing her career with the RAF in 1967 before moving to Canada, as thousands of other British veterans did during the 20th century.

During her years of service, Joyce's work was of such significant importance to military intelligence gathering, that the details of her aerial surveillance missions were held as state secrets by the United Kingdom for a quarter century following their completion. With the limitations now lifted, MSBA found out a little bit more about what Ms. Allen achieved on behalf of her country. Before the age of satellite photography or remote computer imagery, Joyce Allen was responsible for taking pictures over some of the most sensitive regions possible during the Cold War, including in Aden (now Yemen), Eastern Germany and over the Soviet Union itself.

Once these missions had returned to base, Joyce was then responsible for processing the canisters of film that she had shot during these missions, and also for interpreting what they meant for the British high command. Given the sensitivity of each mission, she alone had to attend to these three critical tasks. As Joyce explained to us, during the Cold War, the British had

converted the old World War Two Lancaster Bombers into full-fledged spy planes. The bomb-bay doors became "bulb-bay" doors, and were retrofitted with up to 25 cameras snapping photographs at a time, in order to provide images of as large a territory as possible. The ultimate objective: to monitor the build-up of Russian military installations and to track Soviet activities on land and at sea.

Beyond these few details concerning her service however, Joyce remains tight-lipped. Some secrets are simply not meant to be shared, even to this day. If there was one revelation from our interview however, it was that for every "James Bond" employed by Great Britain during the Cold War, there was also a Joyce Allen!

We would encourage all Manitobans to watch our [video interview](#) with Joyce, to learn more about her thoughts on freedom, democracy and the importance of remembrance.

A Note on the Important Role Played by Canadian Women in Past Conflicts

The unfortunate reality in Canada today is that women who are veterans are often not recognized in the same manner as their male counterparts. On this eve of the 100th anniversary of the First World War, understanding the role played by women through military service, and also in support of the war-effort, could not be more important.

It is in fact largely due to the contribution of women during the First World War, that led to the very first granting of voting rights to women in 1916. This occurred right here in Manitoba, and Canadian democracy was strengthened as a whole. When Canadians think of the meaning of freedom, liberty and democracy in connection with the First World War, the images tend to reflect men fighting on a battlefield to protect their home and native land. Too often lost is our collective remembrance as a society of the images of women war workers preparing ammunitions—bullets and artillery shells—and making critical war goods in factories across Canada.

By any definition, this was not work for the faint of heart. It required long and physically



demanding hours, well beyond the normal workdays we recognize today. Many women in these roles were wounded not from entanglements with barbed wire and bullets on a battlefield, but from making the same. Many women suffered the exact same array of horrifying bodily injuries from the use of mustard and chlorine gas in the trenches during WWI but this came not from the battlefield but instead, from exposure to these substances while making these bombs for the Imperial Munitions Board.



In return for this significant work and overall contribution, women fought on the home-front for democracy but also in another important way—demanding full enfranchisement—the right to vote and to hold political office.

However, factory-work was not the only role for women during the war. Throughout Canada's military history, women have served on the frontlines as well. According to Veteran's Affairs, over 200 women have died in service to our country.



During the First World War, a total of 3,141 women served as nursing sisters for the Canadian Army Medical Corps. Of these nurses, 46 gave their lives in service to Canada. Four of these deaths occurred during a German bombing raid and 14 nurses were killed when their hospital ship, the Llandoverly Castle, was torpedoed by a German u-boat.

During the Second World War, in addition to the reprised role of Canadian women in war production factories across the country, over 40,000 women signed up directly for service in the Canadian Women's Army Corps, the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service and the Auxiliary Air Force and Women's Division of the RCAF.

As MSBA learned during the course of this series, veterans such as Joyce Allen were continuing to serve in the British and Canadian armed forces following the close of the war in 1945, including on highly dangerous and sensitive missions, and in 1974 (see our "Veteran's Voice" article on Ross Campbell), women participated for the first time in overseas peacekeeping missions. During the war in Afghanistan, Canada experienced its first direct "female combat casualty" when an officer, Captain Nichola Goddard, was killed outside of Kandahar in 2006.

Lest we forget



An MSBA Postscript

Two years ago, MSBA was honoured when the Province of Manitoba recognized 2016 as the “Year of Women Trustees”. This proclamation served to recognize the important role played by women trustees to local democracy throughout Manitoba history. The proclamation also served to recognize that in Manitoba, women were eligible to serve in the office of school trustee even twenty-five years before gaining the right to vote provincially.

As MSBA also learned during the course of our research preparing for that occasion, many of Manitoba’s women trustees have also served their province and their country through their military service. In conjunction with the “Veteran’s Voice” project, MSBA would like to highlight two extraordinary examples of women trustees who so served.



Katherine Gloria Queen-Hughes

According to the Manitoba Historical Society, in 1933, Gloria Queen-Hughes became the youngest woman elected to public office as a school trustee (being only 24 years of age at that time). It is because of her achievement as a trustee that Grade 12 was added to the full provincial curriculum and taught in public schools, without fees.

During the Second World War, Gloria

Queen-Hughes organized the Women’s Auxiliary Corps (later the Canadian Women’s Army Corps), and later served as Commander of “I” Company at Halifax, Nova Scotia and London, England. Invalided home in 1943, she joined the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and returned to Europe as Deputy Director in Germany’s British zone. Returning to Canada in 1946, she became active in community organizations and, in 1966, she ran for Mayor of Winnipeg against Steve Juba, the first woman ever to campaign for that office.

She died at Winnipeg on 13 February 1978 and is buried at Brookside Cemetery.

Serving as a school trustee on the Winnipeg School Board from 1974 to 1981, Inez Stevenson was the second black woman ever to be elected to office in Canada.

Mrs. Stevenson is today recognized for supporting the adoption of multiculturalism as an official policy at the provincial level in Manitoba, while also advocating for social justice and equality for all children.

Among Mrs. Stevenson’s many volunteer and community advocacy endeavours, she also proudly served with the Canadian reserve militia.

In this capacity, Inez Stevenson even participated in military exercises at CFB Shilo near Brandon, Manitoba.

For more information about the life and achievements of Inez Stevenson please see: <http://www.mbschoolboards.ca/womenTrustees.php>

In commemoration of the end of the First World War, MSBA would like to honour the memory of, and to recognize, all trustees who have served our country.



Inez Stevenson

