



Together we improve the well-being of the people we serve

Between Us

The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre ♦ OTTAWA, ONTARIO

AUTUMN 2009

Cleve Conlon: From tank commander to valued health centre volunteer

By Brant Scott

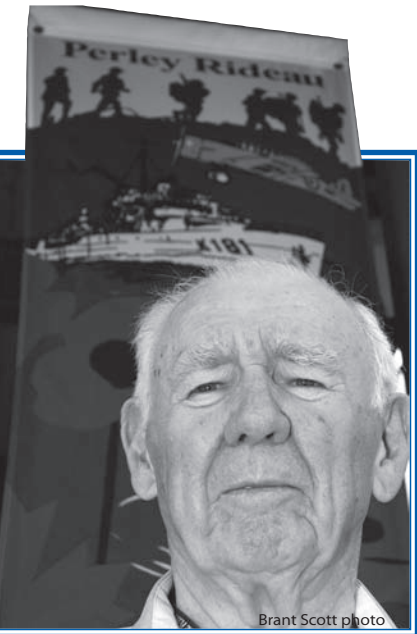
When the Canadian army administered tests to Cleve Conlon for his mental capacity in 1942, the examiners were astounded.

He had all the parts to be a commissioned officer, they said, and he enlisted with the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps to prove their point. Cleve had joined the Governor General's Foot Guards in 1938 at the tender age of 17, so he already knew how to take orders.

The efficiency of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was a victim of the war, with so many police officers packing off to join the war effort. Cleve answered the desperate plea of the RCMP to beef up its ranks in 1940. He would spend a short time with that legion of young men who mitigated Canada's escalating peacekeeping void back home.

"The RCMP were looking for a number of sub-constables under the age of 21," he explains. "They didn't tell us that most of what we'd be doing was studying law for six months and then looking after 72 horses

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Brant Scott photo

VOLUNTEERING AT 88: Cleve Conlon is a valued volunteer at the Perley Rideau. He discovered the health centre as a respite patient and kept coming back to help others.

Summer Youth Program connects students and residents at Perley Rideau

By Brant Scott

What goes around comes around for teens who dare to be different. The Summer Youth Volunteer program is funded in part by TELUS through the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation. Students can use the hours toward the 40-hour mandatory public service requirement at their high schools and many teens fulfill their entire high school requirement in a single summer.

The Perley Rideau has acquired a sterling reputation for nurturing its volunteers, and those who fall within the youth category get an extra helping of TLC. The health centre staff take the time to groom teenaged volunteers to prepare them for their future endeavours. Manager of Volunteer Services Joyce Burnett and Volunteer Services Assistant Elia Touesnard ensure that summer youth volunteers and those in the year-round program receive the guidance and enthusiasm they need to excel.

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they had no use for at that time. I didn't like horses much, so I soon quit and joined the Armoured Corps. I went straight into advanced training at Camp Borden."

Landing at Juno Beach

Cleve was soon destined for England as a reinforcement lieutenant. After a year of gunnery, driving, maintenance and field training in England, Lieutenant Conlon landed on Juno Beach with Four Troop, Second Squadron of the Governor General's Foot Guards on July 24, 1944, about six weeks after D-Day.

"We were detailed to land on the beach on D-Day, but the storms that day were so severe that the tanks were banging around inside the ships," he recalls. "Some of them ended up going overboard in the deep water. So, they kept putting off my group for over a month after the D-Day landing. The beach was relatively clear by that time, and the soldiers who had been killed had been taken away and buried. But, it was still a hell of a mess there. The big wharf that Churchill had designed had not yet been completed."

The tanks that the Allies brought across the English Channel had been waterproofed in England right up to the ring around the turret. Cleve was assigned to take the tanks into a big yard and use explosives to blow off the pliable waterproofing compound.

"My tank group went to Ifs, France and that's where we got our baptism of fire," says Cleve. "The shelling was so heavy at night, the men would get underneath the tanks to stretch out to sleep. We had infantry around protecting us. One of our men was slowly squashed, though, when the tank he was under settled into the mud. The commanding officer said no more sleeping under tanks. That put the kibosh on that."

As an 88-year-old volunteer worker at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre nowadays, Cleve has a clear recollection of those dangerous and dark days of World War II. He occasionally glances at the sheaf of hand-written notes he uses when he speaks to school groups about Canada's contribution to the war effort.

Three days of constant shelling

"For three days we were confined to our tanks during the battle for Hill 195," he says. "We couldn't get out for three days. You can well imagine why I don't agree with having females in an armoured or infantry regiment. If they have (a personal hygiene need), what do they do? The men urinated in a large empty shell casing from the master weapon and, because I was the tank commander, they'd hand it to me so I could throw it out of the turret. Lucky me.

"In action, the tank commander had to have his head sticking out the turret to see where we were going," he adds. "That's why so many of them died. We had helmets, but very few of us used them because it was a nuisance to try to use your headset with a steel helmet on."

Lit up like a Ronson

Cleve says some of the equipment used by the Allies suddenly became antiquated as the Germans invented better armaments.

"We were in U.S.-made Sherman Mark IV tanks that we dubbed 'Ronsons,'" says Cleve. "Ronsons were cigarette lighters, of course, and our tanks would blow up just like that when they were hit. The Germans had an 88 millimetre gun with a long shell that sliced through the four inches of steel on those Shermans like butter. If they hit the ammunition or the gas tank, then flick the wick, up it would go, just like a Ronson."

Following the war, Major Conlon was a Company Commander with his regiment when he decided to work full-time for the Canada Life Assurance Company. His steady ascension in the



TANK COMMANDER: Cleve Conlon spent a good part of World War II as a target. His crew once spent three straight days in a tank during heavy shelling.



Open Forum

*By Greg Fougère, Executive Director and CEO
The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre*

Pandemic planning team is now ready to roll

As the world prepares for an anticipated battle with pandemic influenza, the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre is hoping for the best and prepared for the worst.

We have a Pandemic Plan in place to deal with the potential scenarios that could occur. H1N1 has been given a high profile in the media, and a team at the Perley Rideau has been working hard over the past six months to prepare for any and all contingencies to protect our residents, our staff and our volunteers.

We have adopted an international Incident Management System structure that will mobilize several teams at once. This system will take into account essential procedures that relate to the chain of command, communications, human resources, education and training, antivirals and vaccines, support for family members, and others. As Perley Rideau professionals are assigned to handle these areas of concern, we must also plan for caregivers to become infected themselves. The scenarios that could occur are numerous and it's our job, in the interest of safety, to deal with the evolution of events that may occur.

I am pleased to say that we are ready. Preparing for a pandemic is hard work, and those involved have done a great job. I am convinced we are up to the mission.

If several people who reside and work at the Perley Rideau were stricken with the H1N1 flu virus, for example, we have a plan for training non-direct care staff, volunteers and family members to assist with resident care. In fact, we have already started training staff and volunteers and the Perley Rideau has been purchasing pandemic supplies. We know it is crucial to stay one step ahead of potential trouble.

Our Incident Management System will address myriad operational factors that include limiting access to the health centre, resident transfers, materials management, recreation and creative arts, liaison with government agencies, care of the deceased, and many others. The Pandemic Planning Committee has left no stone unturned in equipping the Perley Rideau for what could lie ahead.

We are hoping for an enjoyable and comfortable winter at the Perley Rideau, but we are well prepared if Mother Nature delivers her worst.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Greg Fougère".

Greg Fougère

Cleve Conlon: From tank commander to valued ... *continued from page 2*

business world reflected his stellar military career. Based in Toronto and Nova Scotia for several years, Cleve received the Canada Life North American Award in 1974 and the President's Award in 1975 for high achievement.

He returned to eastern Ontario after his first wife died and he retired in 1977 at 56 years old. He moved back to Ottawa after the death of his second wife three years ago and continues to enjoy his five children. Cleve lives by himself on The Driveway in Ottawa and he says volunteering at the Perley Rideau has infinitely enriched his way of life.

Respite care set the stage

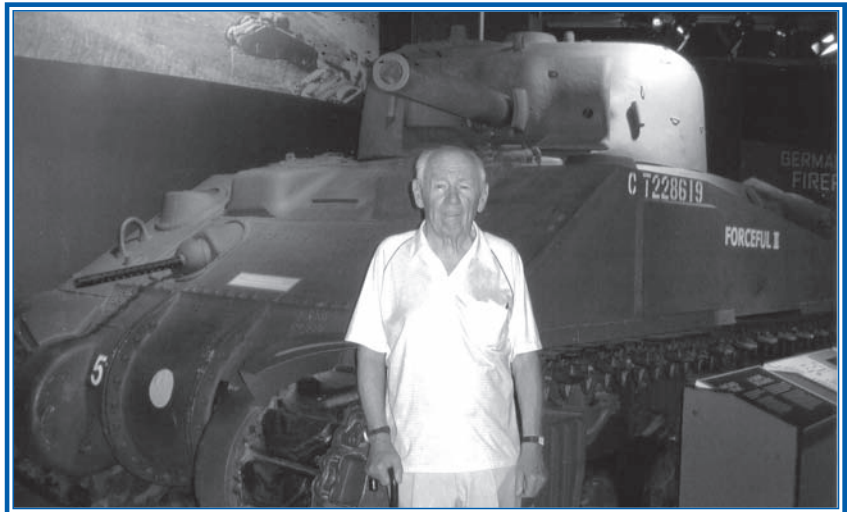
Cleve found the Perley Rideau while he was recovering from emergency surgery on his aorta. He was admitted into the health centre on Christmas Eve 2002 as a respite patient on the mend for 10 weeks. It was that stay that convinced Cleve that the Perley Rideau was well worth investing time in after he recovered. And invest he has.

"They looked after me so well when I was in respite care," he says. "Everyone had a smile on their face and everyone was so kind. I spent 10 weeks in respite care and I was treated so well, I told (manager of volunteer services) Joyce Burnett I'd like to volunteer. When I got here, I didn't know what I was going to do and nobody could tell me what I should do. So, they said, 'just follow your nose,' and I did. I've come to know many people here very well. I really enjoy what I do, but I'm beginning to feel my age now."

Cleve does a great deal more than just follow his nose. Having seen enough raucous action himself to last a couple of lifetimes, he is often summoned to commiserate with other vets about the haunting spectre of war.

"Sometimes a vet needs to talk to another vet because no one else can understand what we saw and heard," explains Cleve. "Some guys have kept things bottled up for a long time and that can result in difficult senior years for some people. Sometimes I'm asked to lend a hand to Perley Rideau residents when the going gets tough."

Cleve Conlon continues to make a difference



SHERMAN TANK: This Sherman tank at the Canadian War Museum is similar to the vehicle assigned to Cleve Conlon for his landing on Juno Beach. Cleve continues to visit with fellow veterans as a Perley Rideau volunteer.

to all who are fortunate enough to cross his path. He doesn't refer to his speaking notes when he reflects on human nature: "One thing I've learned is that when you give a person a smile, they almost always smile back." **BU**

Christmas Tree Sale

The Gloucester Lion's Club
Christmas tree sales
will commence Dec. 4th
at the following locations:



- Capital Golf Course
(parking lot)
3798 Bank Street
Ottawa
- Apple Saddlery
(parking lot)
2645 Innes Road
Ottawa



Perley Rideau donors are loyal and generous

*By Paul Finn, Managing Director
The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation*

The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation has established a long and fruitful relationship with many of its donors.

We do our best to express how important those donations are to each and every resident in our health centre. Put simply, there are many things that wouldn't get done without the assistance of donors. Your generosity makes life at the Perley Rideau more comfortable and joyous for so many.

The benefits of charitable giving don't end with the residents. The donors themselves tell us that their lives are enriched by knowing they are contributing to the welfare of others. Sharing wealth is a pillar in a compassionate society, and playing an active role in that society feels great.

We encourage our donors to become acquainted with the projects we undertake at the Perley Rideau so they might choose how their funds are used. We are always happy to distribute donations on your behalf, but we welcome your active participation in supporting specific projects.

As Managing Director of the Foundation, I do my best to communicate with benefactors so they know their generosity is delivering good things to Perley Rideau veterans and residents. You deserve to see your dollars at work, and work they do.

Many donors feel a special affection for the war veterans who have delivered us a free and safe society for future generations. Canadians

have a proud tradition of showing great respect and loyalty to those who have perished defending us. It is important to remember that many brave men and women who served in our armed forces are still with us, and they too deserve our thanks and admiration. They went to war so we may prosper, and now we are counted among the safest and wealthiest nations in the world.

The Perley Rideau is also home to residents who did not serve in the armed forces, and they took pride for keeping the home fires burning. Our senior citizens forged a stable society with solid laws, wise investment and good government. When we think of our forefathers who built our country brick by brick, let's remember that many of them are still here. And, the Perley Rideau is pleased to be their residence of choice – they have come home.

Thank you to our generous donors for giving year after year. Rest assured your donations are always put to the best possible use to maintain our residents' contentment in their twilight years.

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Summer Youth Program narrows the generation gap... *continued from page 1*



YOUTHFUL ASSISTANT:

Dan Lafrenière, 18, was a Perley Rideau Summer Youth Volunteer when he found his calling. He is now studying for a future in health care.

a passion for all that life has to offer, and Perley Rideau staff sees in them the dedication that drives good volunteers to go the extra mile.

Program provides career guidance

Working in the Summer Youth Volunteer program at the Perley Rideau has changed the life of 18-year-old Dan Lafrenière. He started the program at the health centre a couple of summers ago, and he is now embarking on a career in medicine. He is studying to become a Registered Practicing Nurse at St. Lawrence College in Brockville this fall, and he says the Summer Youth Volunteer program was his launch pad.

Dan was the 2007 winner of the Outstanding Summer Youth Volunteer award and has evolved into a mentor to many other teens. He says he came to the Perley Rideau without a vocation in mind, but he quickly learned that helping others is his forté. When he decided to pursue a nursing career, the Perley Rideau staff played an active role in providing guidance and recommendations to equip him for a future in his post-secondary

This year, the winner of the Outstanding Summer Youth Volunteer Award is Marty Stickl, 14, of Life Christian Academy in Orleans. The Outstanding Service Award was presented to Aashna Uppal, 13, of Bishop Hamilton Montessori Christian School in Ottawa. Both youngsters exude

school of choice.

"I quickly became very comfortable working with the long-term care residents with dementia," says Dan. "The youth program gave me the experience, the references and a better understanding of what I'll be doing. It's helped me find long-term goals."

He says the Perley Rideau is a people place where residents and workers share the mutual benefits of caring.

"Any help I've provided at the Perley Rideau was given back to me in spades," explains Dan. "I was able to do a co-op placement in recreational therapy at the Perley Rideau for a couple of classes at Canterbury High School."

Teens witness the circle of life

With teens looking at the vast majority of their lives ahead of them, working in a seniors' environment can be daunting at first. In Dan Lafrenière's nearly three years as a volunteer, he has seen many residents nearing life's end. Working with seniors has left him wise beyond his years.

"I've seen a lot of residents pass away and it



SUMMER YOUTH VOLUNTEERS: This group of teenaged volunteers helped to make life more enjoyable for Perley Rideau residents this summer. From left to right are Alex Langille, Aidan Shenkman, Marty Stickl, Jessica Marulanda, Natalie Marulanda, Aashna Uppal, and Dan Lafrenière.

Summer Youth Program narrows the generation gap... *continued from page 6*

teaches you a lot," he says. "You do get quite close to some residents. I don't really feel extreme sadness when they go because it seems very timely. It's hardest when they're still very spry and pass away suddenly. It's very interesting to talk with some of the veterans about their wartime experience, too. It can be very bracing."

Aashna Uppal had an inside track on a day-in-the-life of a Perley Rideau volunteer. Her mother, Dr. Gayatri Uppal, is one of the health centre's physicians.

"My mother said that working with people provides really good experience and she suggested I try it out," says Aashna. "So I said sure, it sounds cool. I might come back next year and do it again because it's fun."

"I've learned a lot here," she adds. "I had a great talk with one of the residents who used to be in the navy. He destroyed the biggest ship the Germans ever made. It was called the Bismarck."

Enthusiasm eclipses reluctance

Marty Stickl also had someone on the inside who recommended volunteering as a worthwhile summer activity.

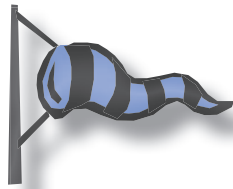
"My sister, Meg, volunteered here two summers ago," he explains. "She said it was really good experience for getting a job and I needed some volunteer hours for school. At first I was a bit reluctant, but I really enjoy it. I told one of my friends about it and he might come next summer. I'll be back for sure."

Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation Managing Director Paul Finn says his sponsors support the program because it helps so many people on many different levels.

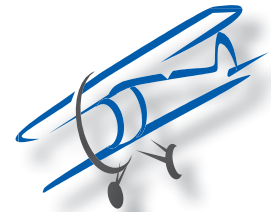
"This program is a resounding success every year," says Finn. "It is the perfect example of how our sponsors can help the residents, the staff and the young people who are seeking new adventure in their lives. It is of immense benefit to everyone." **BU**

The Fourth Annual TOUR OF DUTY GALA

Saturday, November 7, 2009
at the Canada Aviation Museum



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In support of the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation
and the Canada Aviation Museum Foundation

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6:00 p.m. Cocktails and museum tour

7:00 p.m. Dinner, special guests, live/silent auctions, dancing

Tickets \$175 with \$100 charitable tax receipt: please call 613-526-7173

Corporate sponsorship and tables available: please call 613-949-8051

The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation

Perley Rideau

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Together we improve
the well-being of
the people we serve

The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre is a 450-bed long-term care home with 250 beds designated for veterans

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