

Charlie Martin memorial unveiled on D-Day anniversary

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By EMALYN FRANCO-ROMANO
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Thursday, June 6, was not only the 58th anniversary of the D-Day landing in France but it was also chosen to pay tribute to a man who gallantly fought and survived the Second World War to become perhaps Mississauga's greatest soldier — Charles "Charlie" Martin.



MARTIN

At a ceremony at St. Hilary's Church, on Highway 10 at the QEW, Martin was remembered by residents, Royal Canadian Legion members and former veterans members of the Martin family with the unveiling of a specially-created cenotaph memorial in his honour on the church grounds.

Charles Cromwell Martin was born in Wales on Dec. 17, 1918. He emigrated with his parents to Canada in what was then called Peel County, Ontario, on a farm in the Dixie area. He worked on area farms during the Depression to help his family. When the Second World War began, Martin enlisted as a rifleman in the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada.

It was in England where Martin met his wife-to-be Vy. Later on Martin was wounded by enemy fire and was then removed from battle returning home to Peel County followed by his new bride. He received many medals for bravery and later wrote a book about his experiences that became a CBC documentary.

Doug Kennedy, war veteran and former South Peel MPP, was one of many friends who came to pay tribute to Charles Martin.

"Eleven million Canadians, our entire population, mobilized for our all-out World War II effort starting in 1939. This memorial, through Charlie Martin, symbolizes them," said Kennedy.

"It is to make us perpetually conscious of the costly achievements of those who served on the home front and those who took up arms."

The cenotaph, that is placed inside a Peace Garden, is a design made up of two semi-circular brick walls that face one another with a cross in the centre of the walls. The memorial is so designed to tell a story about Martin's life. The walls signify the circle of Martin's life broken by the conflict of war.

"We have an ongoing debt to those who served," said Kennedy. "This memorial will rekindle our memories and be a

constant reminder to future generations."

Kennedy along with Charles Brown, a friend of the late Charlie Martin, came up with the idea to build a memorial last year. Parishioners, ex-veterans, legion members and many others donated funds for the creation of the cenotaph located in the peace garden of the Church. The cost of construction was approximately \$33,000.

"We've had such an overwhelming response from the community," said Brown.

"It was nice to have everyone's support."

Charles Martin died in 1997 at the age of 78. He was the proud father of two sons, Charles Stewart and Richard James. His widow, Vy will always have fond memories of her husband who was dedicated to his family,

community and country. She along with other members of the Martin family expressed her emotions after the unveiling.

"This is a very emotional day for me,"

said Vy. "It's really wonderful to think that two men are responsible for this (memorial) all because they believed my husband was a good man. I'm truly honoured."



Staff photos by Rob Beintema

The Charles Martin Memorial was unveiled in front of St. Hilary's Anglican Church last Thursday more than fifty years after one of Mississauga's most famous warriors came ashore on D-Day's Normandy beaches. Here, members of Charlie's regiment, The Queen's Own Rifles, stand at the memorial in salute to those lost in battle.