

# Anguish on beach never forgotten

By DAVE KOSONIC

Tom McLean vividly remembers the Dieppe Raid 32 years ago.

On Aug. 19, 1942, he was there.

The slender 54-year-old manager of the L.C.B.O. store at Mississauga's Square One, received a military bravery medal for aiding wounded and dying Canadians during and after the battle.

One of nearly 5,000 Canadians who stormed Dieppe, McLean was a private in the Second Division of the Royal Regiment of Canada.

Although the regiment had been training on the Isle of Wight, according to McLean, members knew nothing about the secretive, planned operation.

"However, a few weeks later," explains McLean, "we were loaded on ship at New Haven, England.

"Lord Louis Mountbatten, chief of Combined Operations, boarded our ship in the harbor.

"He then explained the mission's objectives to us before the crossing to the French coast."

## BLUE BEACH

The ship McLean was aboard reached the disastrous Blue Beach at about 5:30 a.m.

"Once on the beach you never had a chance to get scared. Everything was happening so fast," recalls the veteran.

According to him, only about seventeen Royal Regiment soldiers made it up the cliff from the landing

beach and they were soon captured by the Germans.

"The enemy mortar fire kept you pinned down, it was impossible to advance," says the veteran.

"Of the 650 men in our boat approximately 135 were captured.

"I never counted all those killed but I helped prepare most of them for burial."

Because enemy positions at Dieppe were not bombed prior to the Canadian onslaught the punch of the effort was greatly reduced, believes McLean.

"Our only air assault, Spitfire strafing, was ineffective. The aircraft, flying too low, were coming into us instead of the Germans."

McLean says he and three other Canadians labored 48 hours without sleep transporting wounded to the operating room in the hospital.

"I have to give credit to the German doctors. They worked hard to save our own men," he adds.

Of the 4,963 Canadians involved, there were 3,367 casualties including about 900 dead, according to statistics.

Only about 65 Royal Regiment members managed to make it back to England safely immediately after the raid, says the veteran.

McLean was not wounded; however, he spent almost three years as a prisoner-of-war in German stalags from October 1942 to May 1945 soon after his capture at Dieppe.



Tom McLean recalls that he was one of only 17 men to make it as far as the cliffs on Blue Beach. Only to be captured and made a prisoner of war. Today he's the manager of the LCBO store at Square One.

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McLean,  
Tom