

Basil LeBlanc, Canadian Grenadier

As referenced in NASPD Pipeline magazine's second issue of 2019.

Ted Kahn's (Kahn Steel) father in law, Basil LeBlanc, 94, of Franklin, Massachusetts, is originally from Nova Scotia and fought with the Canadian Grenadier Guards in World War II. He landed on Juno Beach in Normandy a few weeks after the first invasion. Assigned to a Sherman tank, he was loading ribbons of ammunition into the machine guns when the big gun, a 75mm cannon, jammed and blew up his hand.

He was being triaged in a front-line infirmary when a corporal made a crack that it looked like he had a self-inflicted wound in order to get out of the war. Basil healed but never made it back to his unit before the war ended. The sarcastic words from that corporal were devastating. He would not talk about the war for nearly 70 years until the Grenadier Guards reconnected with him.

Four years ago Lieutenant Colonel Henry Gourdjji and Major Brian Tracey invited Basil to Montreal to be honored on Remembrance Day and to receive his Wound Stripe (Purple Heart equivalent). Ted and Basil's entire family were there for the event. Basil addressed the regiment with an emotional and eloquent speech centered around how words matter.

In 2017, Basil was chosen to represent his regiment for the 100th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge in France. One person was chosen from each of the approximately 150 regiments throughout Canada. With his son David, Basil was flown to France to participate in 10 days of ceremonies, speeches and solemn cemetery tours, culminating in the April 14 ceremony at the monument on Vimy Ridge. This event was attended by dignitaries from around the world and 25,000 Canadians to pay homage to the fallen Canadians.

Ted contacted Lieutenant Colonel Gourdjji and Major Tracey about speaking to the NASPD in Montreal during the NASPD Summer Conference. The lieutenant colonel is on a secret mission and unavailable, but told Major Tracey that Colonel Paul Taillon speaks all over the world about the Grenadier Guards, US and Canadian Special Forces, veterans, ISIS and the Taliban. A highly credentialed speaker and historian, Colonel Taillon will be our lunch guest and speaker for our Friday conference lunch on June 21, 2019.

Basil is also an accomplished artist. He spent a decade painting the interior walls of a barn, located on the property of a family home near Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, to depict the interior walls to depict the four seasons of that region. It is an amazing work to view. Tour buses now stop at the house to walk through the barn.

Here are links to two videos you will want to view - one of Basil's barn paintings and the other of Basil receiving his Wound Stripe:
<https://youtu.be/Vyx3yGrxOwc>
<https://globalnews.ca/video/rd/356445763796/?jwsourc=em>



Basil LeBlanc - May 2019



Basil LeBlanc (front) with his son, David (left), during trip to France for 100th Anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge.



These are additional photos of Basil LeBlanc and David LeBlanc during their trip to France.

