

LANCE CORPORAL/PRIVATE WILLIAM (BILL) ERNEST DRYER

Regimental # M17191



Bill, born on January 16, 1920 at Hanna, Alberta, was the 4th oldest in John (1890) and Margaret (nee Frakes) (1892) Dryer's family of nine children. He had four brothers; Arnold, Robert, David, John (Jack) and four sisters; Mabel, Fay, Iris, Daisy. John and Margaret were both born in the USA; John had immigrated in 1909 and Margaret, in 1902.

The "dirty thirties" actually began in 1929 in Hanna. By 1931, as once again there was not a crop to harvest, the Government passed a Bill whereby a boxcar would be provided and any associated transportation costs would be paid for any farmers who were willing to move to Northern Alberta. The Dryer's took advantage of the program and arrived in Grande Prairie in August 1931. John, Bob and Bill travelled with the household effects and machinery in one box car along with a car load of horses. The rest of the

family, Mabel, Fay, Dave, Iris, Jack and Margaret, arrived by passenger train. They settled on the Eldred farm which is now where the Eldoe's Trailer Court is located. John and Arnold found employment with Herman Wendt's threshing outfit for \$3 per man and team for a 13-hour day. Once the threshing was completed, the Dryer's rented the Morrison farm (NW 25-71-4-W6) at Glen Leslie and lived there for 10 years. The first winter, a horse was traded for a wagon load of potatoes and the family lived on those along with rabbits that were very plentiful. All the children attended the Somme School.

In 1941, John and Margaret Dryer decided to purchase land from the Voz family that was located slightly east of what is known as Patterson Place in Grande Prairie. The younger Dryer children completed their education in Grande Prairie.

On April 3, 1940, Bill enlisted in the Army at Grande Prairie and served as a Lance Corporal with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, C.A.S.F. during World War II. Bill was severely wounded on October 19, 1944. He suffered a gunshot wound to the mouth and arm which left him with a permanent disability that affected the tendons in his fingers. As a result of the wounds, Bill was unable to meet the required military physical standards and was discharged on April 24, 1945 in Calgary. Lance Corporal William Dryer served in Canada, United Kingdom and Central Mediterranean Area and received the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

Lance Corporal William Edward Dryer

Bill had a son, Dennis Challis Hunt, who was born in England during the war years (possibly 1941).

On April 26, 1945, Bill married Lt. (Nursing Sister) Dorothy Edith Blair of Devon, BC. The young couple made their home in Edmonton. Bill and Dorothy separated following which he met and entered into a common-law relationship with Virginia Thetrault. Virginia's family, who had originally homesteaded in the Goodfare area, purchased the Grovedale store and operated it for many years. Bill had purchased land by means of a VLA loan that



was located on the northeast end of Grande Prairie where the elevators were located at one time. However, Bill lost the land as he was unable to maintain the payments. Bill and Virginia had four children; Phyllis Elaine,

Debra, Bill and Ron and lived on Tink's farm in the Flying Shot Lake area, at Teepee Creek and at Wanham. While in Wanham, Bill worked as a salesman selling Watkins Products. Bill also cooked in camps for Archie Hackwell's Construction Company. Virginia and eventually separated and Virginia and the children moved to Grande

Prairie (105 avenue) where it would be easier for her to find work. Bill divorced his 1st wife, Dorothy, and subsequently married Ruth Wade who had a son, David. The Dryer's had two children, Iris and Dennis William and the family lived in Grande Prairie, Wembley and on a farm in DeBolt that was owned by Bill's daughter, Phyllis Elaine Wise. Bill worked in sawmills and moved his family to Nampa where he found employment at the local hotel. Bill and Ruth separated in 1978 and Bill moved back to Grande Prairie. In his retirement, Bill enjoyed cross word puzzles and was known as a very accomplished cook. Bill became ill and passed away on November 2, 1993 in Grande Prairie and was buried at the Glen Leslie Cemetery.



Note:

- NW 25-71-4-W6 was the original homestead of W. Norman Leslie. He received the patent on the land in 1927. He must have sold the land to the Morrison's when he moved his family to Dimsdale. Alfred Wales, then Jack Wales owned the property and David and Sharon Kimble bought it from Jack Wales.

- Debra Dryer – daughter stated Bill and Virginia never married so it is unknown as to why they had a “wedding picture” published in the local newspaper

- Discharge certificate says rank was Private

Reference

Smoky to Grande Prairie History Book

1926 Census records

Sharon Kimble – Dryer land information at Glen Leslie

Interview with Robert Wise (grandson)

Interview with Debra Dryer – daughter

Right - November 9, 1944 Herald Tribune

