

# Looking Back

Roger Panet Ouellet



## **LOOKING BACK**

### **ROGER PANET OUELLET**

#### **My family**

My parents were Édouard Ouellet, born July 05, 1898 in Notre Dame du Portage QC son of Élisée-Simon and Elizabeth Ouellet. My mother Alice Corinne Panet born on February 5, 1895 in St Raymond Quebec, daughter of Édouard Antil Panet and Louise Terroux. Edward. My parents were married on July 4, 1923. Alice died on August 15, 1979 and Edouard in 1981. Edward, Alice and their son (my brother) Bernard are buried in Loretteville Cemetery.

I did not know my grandparents on my father's side, both died before I was born and now that I think about it my father did not tell us about his parents, other than grandfather Élisé Simon. He was the station manager and wireless operator at the Via Rail station of Rivière Quebec. Following research, I did, Élisée-Simon Ouellet was born on July 17, 1859 and died on April 21, 1923. His wife Elisabeth Ouellet was born in 1856 and died in 1920. They had two sons, the eldest René and my father. Edouard.

My father became an excellent baseball player in college having earned a reputation as a top catcher. The strangest thing is that he never played baseball with us, not even to teach us. He completed his studies in music that led him to become an organist in Loretteville. In my opinion this was a poor decision, a bigger church would have given him a more reasonable salary.

Grandfather Panet is a descendant of Jean-Claude Panet, who arrived in the country in 1740 in a naval detachment and was a royal notary, lawyer and judge. His eldest son became Bishop Bernard-

Claude Panet, second archbishop of Quebec 1825 to 1832. The most famous of the Panets was Jean-Antoine who had the honour of being appointed the first president of the first Legislative Assembly of Lower Quebec. A medal was issued in his name which you can still buy today.

Grandfather Panet was born on August 12, 1852 at the stately mansion of Louis-Bourg son of Édouard-Antil Panet and Julie Dubuc. From the age of 5 he was entrusted to a relative. He was educated at McGill university and received a notary degree in 1874 and practiced for three years in Montreal. He continued this profession for 50 years, 45 of which were in Saint-Raymond County, Quebec. He was also a member of Parliament for Portneuf County and secretary treasurer of the same county for about thirty years. He created a popular hunting and fishing country club Torelli that catered to rich American and Canadian clients.

His first marriage was to Marie Louise Terroux in 1904. This produced 13 children, 9 of whom survived: Raymond, a banker married to Corinne; Bernard, Marie-Louise married to Bradley a banker (they were my godfather and godmother). Georgine was married to a Milner. Then there were Edward, Antil, Louis and Alice my mother. In 1914 he married Marie-Louise Van Felson his second wife.

I was born in the Hospital Saint-Francois- d'Assise in Quebec City on September 7, 1924, the first born to Alice Panet Ouellet and Édouard Ouellet.

I married Georgette Methot born on September 15th, 1926 in Hull Québec, we were married on September 14th, 1946. She died in 1983. We had two children Guy who has two daughters Kyla and Julie and Lynn who had a daughter Brigitte el two boys Maxim and Fabien.

Georgette was a beautiful auburn hair and brown eyed woman who loved to dress herself and her children with pride. But her life was not what she had hoped for. She had a talent for piano and hoped to go to a New York musical school and become a pianist. Unfortunately her father felt that she was too young and refused to let her go. Our meeting and marriage led her into a different path. She had very little ambition to be a simple house wife.

My brother Guy born on December 21, 1925, died April 2018. He was married to Phyllis Nevin of Halifax who died on November 22, 2008, they had 5 children Catherine, Pierre, Stephen, Michelle and Jacqueline.

My sister Louise, born on March 5, 1927, married Donald McKay of Indian Head, Saskatchewan. Louise died on June 17, 2008. They had two children Heather who died in 2010 and Gordon married to Cheryl. They have three children Reid, Lauren and Scott.

My brother Henri was born on July 15, 1928 married to Pierette Dionne who died on June 12, 2013. They have daughters Diane who had two girls: Marie Eve and Amelie and Dominique who had two boys.

My brother Bernard was born on November 7, 1930 and died on January 27, 1971, married to Florence Bédard. They had Mark, Joanne and Joachim (called Pilou).

My sister Pauline was born on May 21, 1931 and married to Arthur Wright, who died on February 24, 1999. They had 3 children Sharon who had Melissa and Nancy. George who had a son Raphael and Anne who had two daughters Maude and Catherine and a boy Raphael.

My brother Bernard was the sportsman of our family. He was part of



several sports organizations and he was an avid fly fisherman, any trout that dared to jump was at the end of his line. He founded the Loretteville Hunting and Fish association and won the provincial fly fishing championship in 1967.

In 1970 he was crowned provincial champion of on-the-fly shooting and acted as a technical advisor to the Association. I should add that my brother Guy a navy sailor was also a sportsman he loved fishing and baseball and was crowed best weightlifter on all the ships that he was a crew member.

Our mother, Alice, was a very pretty, sweet and well educated in convents and a practicing member of her religion. She was an excellent cook I would even say Cordon Blue and very thrifty. All these qualities learned in the convent. As a young girl she enjoyed canoeing and fly fishing on the river in front of the family home in Saint Raymond. She also enjoyed doing local theatre having been chosen on numerous occasions for leading roles. Alice was also an excellent seamstress and one of her precious possessions was a small electric sewing machine with which she sewed all our clothes, She created these from clothes and dresses that she received from her sisters. Often, she sewed late at night to complete the clothes that were urgent to complete.

I loved my mother and when sometimes she would say “if I could have this or that little thing to help me cook”, I tried to make some of these things to satisfy her as money was not always available to buy them. She always used a large wood stove to cook and sometimes she would heat it too much and the pipes leading to the chimney turned red. We became firefighters and had to place water-soaked towels on the overheated pipes.

There's one thing that I can't forget ,Mom couldn't punish us. That

was Dad's job. He also delegated the work that was our responsibility, helping Mom with the work too heavy for her. The wood box to heat the stove had to be always full so we had to split the delivered wood and keep it under the gallery. My father had also taught us, at a given age, to press our pants telling us that He never wanted to hear that we had let mother do it. We also had to keep our shoes clean. I still do this.

The first years of my life were lived comfortably in a big house on Pincours Street in Loretteville. This unfortunately, ended when my father's business went bankrupt. I still remember the help packages Mom received from her sisters including toys for xmas. From the moment these packages arrived mom was looking for a place to hide them. I was always curious and found them. Luckily, she would catch me before I could open them.

One day, when I visited my godmother in Quebec City, I was diagnosed with Scarlet fever which required a stay in the hospital. I was only 5 or 6 years old.

After we left the house on Pincourt we found a house on the upper floor of a Boutet family's house on the top of a hill where we would sled in the winter. It is in this house that Pauline was born. I can see the house and its location still very clearly in memory. I was seven years old at the time. My childhood memories of this rental are far away of course but there are some that we do not forget like the pleasure of sledding on our sleighs. The hill crossed a small road leading to a farm, one of us had to signal that it was safe to Cross the street before ending up in a field where we received a rain of fine snow, what fun we had.

Being the eldest I was often entrusted to lead so that all could have their turn, of course this kind of responsibility put me on a pedestal

that was eventually abused and detrimental to the development of my personality. The countryside around us was filled with fruit trees such as cherries, apples that we could eat with permission, but without abuse. In the field during the summer, there were also blueberries, strawberries and raspberries, what a treat.

It was in this house that I experienced my first symptoms of nervousness. There was a village girl who was suffering from epilepsy and every time she was in the Church; she was having a seizure and that caused me anxiety. Also one day my father was playing a piece on the organ, so powerful that I was shivering over all my body, that made me think it was not normal and I had to leave the Church.

I believe that it was in this time that I started to undergo youthful epileptic seizures fortunately Mom knew a French doctor who treated this discomfort with Borosédine Lumière, a French product, that eventually healed me. Anxiety was a dilemma for most of my life but much less now. The only question that bothers me today is; why I didn't talk to my parents about it when I was young. Here let me remind you to always talk to your parents with any problems.

My father had completed his music studies and played organ and piano and he assumed the position of organist at the Church of Loretteville until his retirement. A very unfortunate decision as with all his musical talent he could have had a more adequate salary in a large city church. From time to time he gave piano lessons to the children of the people of the village in order to increase the salary of organist, which was only very minimal.

He was very demanding for his piano students. If they didn't have talent, he refused to continue with them. He did not want to teach his children because he did not want to throw us into a profession that

would have made us starve. He gave no thought to the pleasure that playing a piano might give us. Many of us would have hoped for that pleasure.

My mother Alice also played the piano, having learned at the convent. I remember that many times during thunderstorms and lightning she made us sit in a semicircle on the floor behind her and played soft classical pieces.

## **My Adolescence**

I attending the Primary School of the Sisters where I was congratulated for having superb writing (something not supported now) and a great affinity to compose for the first 6 years of my education. Two of which were in preparation for classical studies with the Eudist Fathers in Quebec City. One of the courses I took in the second year was Latin which, for me, made no sense in composition and being very methodical I could not see the method, to the point where my health was beginning to suffer due to the consequences, of lack of sleep.

I had to ask my father to free me from the classical courses. I was then enrolled in high school at Loretteville College in the 7th and 8th grades and I finished the 9th and 10th years in private classes in Quebec City with a retired layman named Frère Méthot.

After leaving our second house on the second floor of the Boutet, I was then about ten we went to a large house with a covered gallery on three sides that had four bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor. On the lower floor a kitchen a large living room and a room where mom did sew, ironing etc. There was also a large cellar in the basement. We were comfortable because Dad worked for the government as a traffic agent on a motorcycle in addition to playing

the organ, but it was only temporary, like all political positions naturally.

This reminds me of an incident with the temporary maid whom Mum hired on certain occasions, named Gilberte. One day when she was using a large knife with a thin blade, she cuts an artery on her left wrist and she remains speechless looking at the blood that comes out forcefully. I was there and seeing that she was not acting I wrapped her wrist in a towel, and I took her to a doctor near us. I still wonder how my instincts made me react like this at my age, fortunately for her.

It wasn't just us in this big house there was also a cat, the jewel of my sister Louise and from my remembrance she always had one. There was also Rex our dog and it was funny how mom had to train him the first time a cat entered our family. Every time he hunted the cat, he would get a harmless hit with the broom and it was only a matter of time before they became friends, but he didn't like that broom moving away every time he saw it. Strangely Rex did not endure any cats outside, he hunted them mercilessly, their salvation was only the trees.

I remember that during winter before Easter we had to break the ice on the sidewalks or face fines if it was not done. Also we had several maple trees in front of the house et Mom showed us how to harvest the sap that she used to make us maple syrup treats. The house had an ideal barn for our playground and a courtyard that ended with a row of cut tree boards, which established the boundaries of a courtyard full of timber cages about twenty feet high

It is in this courtyard that we played bandits and police often jumping from the top of these cages to avoid becoming prisoners. We were

playing hideout in this place too and one day that we were there my brother Guy falls and pierces a leg on a buried cow's head horn which inflicted a permanent scar on him.

During the winter there was a property of our friends, where we could slide from the roof to the row of wood but there was also an obstacle that had to be avoided, between the house and the row of wood a space in which there was a fence with sharp metal poles, so we had to not slow down the descent of the roof to avoid this obstacle. One day, a young person of our age who lived in this house was sliding but because he slowed himself down, he plunged into the space with the sharp metal poles and narrowly avoided being pierced on one of the poles that just pierced his pants. From that day on, the slide was over.

During the winter when there was always enough snow, we would slide from the wood cages to the abundant snow in our yard. One day we were with friends and one of them loosed his balance and fell headfirst and buried himself in the snow. All we could see were his feet. With some pain and misery, we finally managed to get him out of there just in time, he was blue, he quickly recovered. From then the slide was over for all of us.

It was probably as a result of this incident that I decided that every winter I would build a wooden platform attached to the row of wood and an ice wall going to the end of our yard to avoid ending up in the very busy street. I made a high wall of icy snow that brought the sliders back to the yard. What a pleasure we had with these slides every winter.

As my mind keeps thinking I decide to build a large sled consisting of two small sleds supporting a large plank of wood that can seat 6 to 8 people and the first sled with a swivel to guide the descents. The

greatest pleasure was to force the sled to overturn as we drove through the snow, laughing. Among our group were two girls Jacqueline Falardeau and Martha Soulard who were with us in all our games and sometimes members of their families too.

One winter day we decide to leave together with the intention of going to a farm south of the village to risk our lives by climbing on the roof of a barn and jumping and passing between electrical wires mid-way and bury ourselves up to our neck in the snow, so exciting that it is only when the owner spots us and yells at us to “get out of here” and do not let me catch you here again. We had a lot of fun, not thinking about danger naturally.

During the summer holidays we were out from 9 am to 6 pm, coming home for toilets and meals only and we found that there wasn't enough time for our pleasures such as the Cowboys and Indians games, the hiding place of an empty can, or one of us had to close his eyes counting up to one hundred and he had to find out each of us before giving way to an Other.

We also had another game where we chose two leaders who in turn chose the members of two teams. One of the chiefs would go with his team to hide them and he would come back to draw in the sand clues how to find them. The second team went looking for them. But all these games didn't seem to be enough, so I decide that we must create games of luck. Of course, we didn't play without paying and there were prizes to be won.

One day we were looking for what to do and we had the idea of making an Indian tepee. We went to the forest to collect oak bark and the trees needed to mount the tepee. After two days of hard work the tepee was completed. While we admired our work, the priest Gagnon arrives on the scene and asks us who put this

together? We said we did. He congratulates us and says tonight I'm coming back and we're going to make a little fire in front of the tepee, and I will tell you old stories, even our parents participated.

Father Gagnon accompanied us with other children to study the flowers and plants of which he gave us the characteristics and names, and he taught us how to keep them between newspaper sheets. I had a big collection but with time and the moves they disappeared.

It wasn't always just games, during the time of strawberries, raspberries and especially blueberries, growing in the fields along the railway tracks , Mom sent us with a basket to come back when they were full. This accomplished we all sat in a small circle and Mum converted the berries into delicious puddings and pies.

One night, my mother told me, you must get dressed and go to the convent, father Morissette asked to see you. So without knowing more I went to the convent. A Sister took me to his room. I see him standing in the center of the room shirtless wearing trousers among several Sisters who were preparing his bed. This priest was almost blind and needed a lot of help. The reason for my presence was that he wanted me to come every morning to serve his daily Mass, how could I refuse such a request. My job was to answer the primary prayers in Latin and helped him to climb up to the altar.

In addition he insisted that the bible be open to certain pages even if he could not read them, after so many years in the priesthood he knew all the prayers by heart. He had a heart of gold, generous to the point of giving his meal to the beggars at his door.

In the Church he used wooden boxes to mount candles. He did not need microphones or speakers in the pulpit. His tunic was repaired with various fabrics because the money was better spent helping the



poor. When He wanted to make a point his voice made the chandeliers shake, as all good preachers should do when their sermons are well prepared. He was a saint on earth and now recognized for having performed miracles of healing since his death. I served his Mass until he died.

The convent where all this was happening had the chapel for the Sisters and the students, served by a chaplain who said Mass before ours and sometimes I would arrive before that Mass was over and often the chaplain had no altar boy so I entered to finish the service. It gave me the chance to see all these pretty girls during communion.

On hot days we went to the river not far from our house, but at the start Mom would say Roger you leave with 5, children so come back with 5. One day I counted and was missing two. I was very worried until I spotted them coming out of the river. I didn't learn to swim like them, luckily, I always went back with five as mom requested.

One day I built a small car that needed an engine, but without money, what to do? I think of the motor of Mom's sewing machine and use that. Everything was fine until the moment Mom shouted (where my motor) To my disappointment my little car was no longer driving by itself. I still received congratulations for my ingenuity.

Another day my sister Louise said that she would like a small house to play housewife with her friends. Nothing more exciting than building for me and I get to work. I found some wood and I start to cut several planks in the yard when I hear: "what are you doing"! from the owner of the yard. I answer that I am building a small house for my sister and that my father would go to the store later to pay, no he says stop and put those bords in their place, and he leaves. Once it is out of sight I start again, and I manage to build the house to Louise's delight. When the house is no longer important the wood is

returned to its original place. What could be simpler, actually?

One evening I accompany my father to a local hockey game, and we stand near the game. Suddenly, I was hit in the chest by a puck and I lost my breath for a few moments. Back home Dad prepared his usual snack of bites of bread in a large glass that he fills with milk and covers with brown sugar, and I do the same. During the night I have a terrible indigestion and I choke but thanks to my father I come back alive. My mother told me afterwards that she would not have known what to do and I could have died without my father.

It must be said that Dad always gave us the necessary medical care to the point where many said he should have studied medicine. My brother Henri suffered a diphtheria attack and he had to occupy a room alone to avoid contagion and for some reason I didn't know, I was the only one who could enter to serve him.

Sunday was our allowance day, five cents each. It was a race to the store not far away for black balls, honeymoons, or coconut balls, etc., etc.

The Soularads who had a house not far from us had a shed attached to the house. After a study of the place I decide that it is perfect to create a haunted house and an act of magic by me. All for a scant three pennies admission fee. My assistants Martha Soulard and Jacqueline Falardeau were companions of our games and physically they looked alike with hair of the same color. As a master magician I had directed one of them to hide at the end of the lot and to appear when the other disappeared by a trapdoor on the stage. Before I can do anything, a little rat shouted, "there's one that's hidden here". The magic trick was doomed, but the visit to the haunted house continued with great success.

My aunt Marie-Louise Bradley had a son named Edouard married to Marthe Carignan, a descendant of the famous Carignan-Salières regiment, who during the summer holidays came to pick me up to spend a week with them in Quebec City. Every night we took a long walk in town they bought me an ice cream cone, treats that I was not used to.

One day the worst happened to us, my mother tells me, there is no more money, no food, take this note to the parish priest he will give you a ticket that you will bring to the store and give them this list. Imagine, I was then 12 or 13 years old, I experienced terrible moments of anxiety especially about our fate.

I must admit that the years spent at this house were the most intense and well lived of my life as a young man. A move probably had to follow because my memory places me at a house in Huron village near the train station. The new house was two floors high with a large basement and I have a clear memory of its divisions. There was also a courtyard with several large trees, and an old chicken coop attached to a barn. My pleasure in those years was climbing trees pretending to be monkey or Tarzan. I was going as high as the tree allowed me and I was swinging from side to side enjoying the maneuver to Mom's despair.

I needed more than that to keep me busy and after some serious research I leaned on the idea of preparing a wrestling arena on the upper floor of the barn. First, we had to reinforce the ceiling with six-inch large nails and then build the base of the arena and fill it with sawdust that we had obtained from a sawmill in the village via transport on small wheelbarrows. You imagine carrying about fifty of these bags as well. All that remained was to install the ropes around the arena and start doing propaganda. It cost 3 pennies to be admitted. This is also where I started smoking and all I remember is

that Mom tells me if you want to smoke you will have to prepare them. What a terrible mistake that I corrected by quitting in 1959. We lived in this house for a few years and then went to a house on Racine Street, the main street of the village.

Here as we were older and the girls mattered more, we would go out and meet and sometimes we would play at spin the bottle to kiss a girl or shake a man's hand where the bottle stopped. At the meetings for a birthday the pleasure was to give the celebrant (la bascule ) that was performed by holding the person by the wrists and by the feet and hit the buttock on the floor once for each year of the celebrant's age.

There is one thing that is still very vivid in my memory, for Christmas, Mum had entrusted me with the task of setting up a crèche in a corner of the living room, which was wide enough to have small villages with houses, animals and characters. Everything was filled with small lights and of course a large crib with small statues that I kept preciously having bought them one by one when the money was available. All this was covered by one or two sheets until Christmas, with notice to all, not to try to see before Christmas.

We were friends of a family consisting of a French-Canadian father and an English mother. The rule was that English only was spoken in the house in respect for the mother. Outside as their father used to say you can speak the language you want. I was very intrigued by English and I was telling my friends one day I will address you in this language. Believe me I was very proud of it that day.

The winters in this house on Racine Street were interesting , as the house was located very close to the street, the snowbanks were piling up against the front door and to get out you had to dig a path through the snowbank, a rather unique exit.

We were still in that house when war was declared in 1939 and as Dad was of age, he had to answer his duty. Before he left, he spoke to me and told me that I had to represent him during his absence. I was then 15 years old. Because Dad was in the army, Mom was entitled to a monthly check and maybe for the first time in her married life she had her own money to dispose of in the care of her family. Also, as a good cook, she had convinced a butcher to reserve all the organs that no one bought then. Mom would get a call to send one of her sons. We ate organs for most of our youth.

As I approached the age of joining the military, if the war continued. There were many discussions between Mom and her sisters and sisters-in-law suggesting that I should prepare to join the Air force, of course without telling me.

One day I was able to join a group that the government needed to learn the machinist trade . I had passed the three-month course and was waiting for a call so in the meantime I went to a farmer who needed people to collect hay and there I really learned what hard work was. Starting at 5 a.m. and following breakfast in the field to pick up and throw hay on a large cart and proceed to the barn where it had to be unloaded and returned to the field to start again. I remember coming home at night so exhausted that I ate my meal while I slept, all this day after day.

I applied to join the Air Force and I was also waiting for a call to go to work in a shop as a machinist. One day my father picked me up to go home and get ready to answer the Air Force call. I must admit that I was not too disappointed to leave the hard work of the fields. Much later I learned that my father had chosen between the Air Force and the machinist trade for me, we had received both calls at the same time and he decided. I was 17 at the time.

I was not yet 18 years old and it took a letter from my parents specifying that I had their permission to join. So officially on August 15, 1942 I was enrolled. A commitment that lasted until December 29, 1973, thus a career of 31 years and 4 and a half months.

The Air Force urgently needed pilots, so I was sent to Laval University for preparatory courses that I didn't pass because I didn't have enough English. I was then sent to Guelph, Ontario for a wireless course. Again, I didn't have enough English and I never understood why they were insisting, but this time I was directed to maintenance work.

Because of my lack of english I was sent to Toronto for a three-month English course where we were housed in the buildings of the Toronto Annual Exhibition. Our space was created by removing the divisions used for the cattle exhibition and installing hundreds of bunk beds, toilets and showers without doors. There was a long water basin equipped with water taps every two feet ,one basin for each person to use to wash. I tried to remember how the showers worked but I can't. All I can say, is that being exposed to this lack of privacy meant that I had to adapt myself and learn.

English lessons remind me that one day I was near an older man asks if he can talk to me. Of course, I said. He tells me I've noticed by your manners that you seem to come from a good family and I'd like to tell you to watch out for English words that you use that are not appropriate in public and that some people tell you to use. They know you don't realize they're rude. I appreciated that lesson.

Everything that belonged to us was in a duffel bag (kitbag) attached to the bed by a padlock. The routine consisted of getting up, washing and shaving, showering and using doorless toilets that were not always free then lunch and English classes back to class and dinner.

Evenings and weekends were free until 11 a.m. with a recommendation to practice English.

Unlike many of my companions who thought they would make their mark by speaking strong cursing French, I chose instead to meet young ladies to practice and improve my english. Following a meeting with Gladys I was asked to meet her family who invite me every weekend for a day with them while continuing outings with Gladys.

The family is intrigued by my nationality, French Canadian, asking me many questions that I was trying to understand and give answers in English, but often we looked at each other only for lack of understanding. I ended up having enough vocabulary to get by and I felt proud of my success. One Sunday I decide to go to the Basilica for Sunday Mass where inside everything happens in French to my surprise. Once outside after Mass not a single word of French is spoken, it was as if a huge wall existed between the inside and the outside, yet people spoke French inside. It was as if they were ashamed to speak French. It perplexed me.

### **My first posting**

I was sent to Saint Hubert and my job was to ventilate the parachutes and then fold them in a very specific way then insert them into the parachute bags made specifically for use by the Irving Company. Closing these bags was the most important function because the parachute had to open with a single movement, pulled on the handle attached to the closure.

Each parachute had an identification number that was maintained by the Headquarters there also a small pocket on the back of each chute containing a card on with the signature of the technician who

had completed the folding and insertion of the parachute. We had two forms of containers, one attached to the harness on the chest which could be set aside once the plane took off, the other was used as a seat for the pilots.

Each member of all crew had to be adjusted by a harness technician to ensure that the impact of the parachute opening did not cause serious injury. When the handle was pulled, a small, energized parachute that had been placed on the folded parachute was thrown out of the container, bringing the rest of the parachute out of the bag. Another job, I had here was to apply fabric to the airplane fins and then soak them in a dye that once dry became very tense and could hold up under pressure during departure and flight.

This work was only temporary because I remember being sent to Rockcliffe in Ottawa to do temporary work. In November I was given notice of a move to Europe. This news deeply affected my mother, she apparently had a serious depression that lasted more than three months, which I only learned when I returned in 1946.

It was during my time in Rockcliffe that I met the beautiful Georgette (Gigi) but in an unexpected way. One day friends and I were looking for a distraction we decided to go to Val Tétrault where there was a roller skate center. One of my companions who spoke little French joins a skater (Georgette) but she had noticed me, and she convinces her sister Madeleine to take over with my friend in order to join me and from there begins our romance.

She also had a lot of character that she used in her own way. One day, angry at her father, she throws an ashtray in his direction, which earned her a kneeling punishment in a corner of the room. Her mother, who was suffering from seeing her in this way, said to her why don't you say that we're sorry and he will let you get up,



Georgette then said to her “will you give me 5 pennies if I ask him. “This to give you an insight into the character of your grandmother and great and great grandmother.

Our fun was to meet sometimes in the evening for a walk and a short stop at a restaurant or theatre and on weekends to skate. Of course, there was time in the living room also to caress and kiss but never passed ten o'clock. Her father would appear in the living room winding his alarm clock. The family invited me to share their meal often and I remember that's when I learned to take no sugar in my coffee because there was never any sugar on the table.

There are still two special meals that Mr. Méthot prepared that I liked very much, a large bowl filled with vegetables and fish or partridges, I ate several plates. Georgette's brother, Georges had a small convertible car that was for two people, but it also had a small seat behind enough for two and we would go to a lake and once there we would go into the brush to change to swim. We sometimes swam in the off-season and we had a lot of trouble to warm ourselves up before we came home, but it was part of the fun.

I didn't have much free time and my finances were very limited because I had to share them with my family. All this continued until the day I left for Europe.

### **My internship in Europe**

I take the train that takes us to Halifax to board the boat Isle de France with 18,000 men from the Canadian Forces on route to Europe. This cruise ship (the Isle of France) had been ordered to join the war effort because it was very fast it did not need escorts but in order to avoid submarine attacks it was zigzagging constantly. The

crossing was very unpleasant we slept in hammocks that swung with the movement of the boat and many suffered from sea sickness. I do not need to specify the stink that resulted.

I don't suffer from seasickness so in the morning I went up to the upper deck to spend the day between rescue exercises. I couldn't believe everyone rolling from side to side on the bridge without worrying about getting hurt. Fortunately, the boat arrived in the north of Scotland and we are transported to shore by small boats. We took a special train that took 10 hours to get to the south of England to a military base where we are sequestered for 14 days. On the 15th day we receive permission to go to Cheltenham or Gloucester. A friend and I choose Cheltenham and proceed to first ride a double-decker bus, anxious to enjoy this new experience we choose the front seats and let me tell you that we had new and amazing sensations.

In the city for only an hour we heard a siren and we learned that there is an black out exercise. We are told that must return to the base. We head to the bus stop and instinctively join a waiting group, and that's when we hear (queue up queue up). Someone in line kindly tells us that the word means and that we have to join the queue, and voila, our first experience with English terms and believe me, there will be many more.

We are sent to a central military base, Linton in Ouse located near the beautiful and historic city of York which has many Roman remains. At this center we are assigned to a new air base. I am sent to Tholthorpe where air squadrons 420 Snowy Owl and 425 Allouettes are based, the only French-Canadian squadron in Europe, and it is with them that I will do my work. Tholthorpe was a Royal Air Force air station operated by RAF Bomber Command during the Second World War.

Once the check-in is over, I head, with my escort, to a Nissen Hut, a metal shelter in the shape of a semi-circle with an entrance at each end, and a large room with multi bunk beds on each side and a small furnace in the center. I slept there for a limited time and I still remember one thing sleeping consisted of a bed of springs covered with three small thin mattresses and a wool blanket that was hardly enough during the winter, so we often slept dressed. The heat of the small furnace consisted of burning a coal substitute called coke that gave almost no heat. A group was formed and everyone, took turns to go and get unapproved coal to have a proper fire. There was rationing on the use of coal. We all realized the risk and punishment that would have been very severe in wartime if we were caught using that coal.

One day I got very sick with a severe flu that sends me to the military hospital of the base with 103 degree fever followed by an admission to an English military hospital where I am told that I have pneumonia.

In the room of this hospital there were soldiers who had returned from the war. Others from various bases were suffering from incurable injuries or diseases, many of whom died during my stay, two of whom I clearly still remember. The first a black man who had a brain tumor that caused him terrible pains that carried him to complain loudly. He died of it during my stay. The other was a young Irish man with a tumor with no hope of recovery and who had a beautiful voice, he occasionally sang the song Danny Boy that I had never felt with so much emotion. He was a very handsome boy which attracted the attention of the young nurses on duty, with several who went to bed with him late at night. None resented him for enjoying these moments of pleasure. He also died during my stay.

I was at this hospital for Christmas 1943 and I cannot forget that day because of the gift that the patients gave me. A piece of cardboard bearing a cardboard sheet in superimposed color signed with wishes by all the patients in my room and the nurses and other staff responsible for this room. I tell you I cried with emotions that day. People waiting for death and thinking of me because I am alone and far from my country. From that day I prayed for them asking to soothe their pains when they are too intense and to advance their death when there is no hope for them.

Back to base my job now is to do the maintenance of the parachutes and harnesses and give them to the teams before they leave for each mission as well as sandwiches and chocolate bars to those who desire them. Often the chocolate was refused, and I could keep it for my use when it was offered. We were working 12-hour shifts followed by four days off and from work hours we had permission to use a small stove to prepare our meals. Our families sent us Pam or other kinds of canned meat in their parcels.

Eggs during the war were rationed. One day I decide to go to a farm not far from the base. I knock on the door, a lady opens and remains speechless. Thinking she was afraid of my uniform I just tell her that I'm a Canadian looking for fresh eggs and maybe a little piece of butter. She recovers quickly and tells me I must apologize you look so much like my son that I thought he was back from Africa. Once she is well recovered, she tells me that she can help me but that I must keep it secret due to rationing. So, from that date, we exchanged chocolates for butter and eggs. My companions were full of thanks naturally and we were careful to prepare this away from everyone's attention.

On our days off we liked to take our bicycles and go on a tour of special areas We were able to bicycle to Ripon, Harrogate and

Knasborough in a few hours, but more often we went to a place to spend the day there. Knasborough was very interesting, a small village surrounded by mountains near a lake where people were using canoes or other boats and at the end of the lake stuck at the bottom of a mountain hollow there was an open-air restaurant with an abundant clientele who enjoyed life as though war did not exist. We went there often, it was so peaceful. Harrogate was a bigger city that had a hotel reserved for troops, we could sleep there for the equivalent of two dollars. There was also a very large military cemetery which was very impressive with all its crosses dedicated to the war casualties.

One day I had a special reason to go back to find the grave of the son, of a family from Loretteville, who died in the explosion of his plane, with his team on a bombing mission. The well-known family named Lavallé was friends with my mother and father. I spotted the grave and took a picture that I gave to the family when I returned in 1946.

Often when the crews came to pick up their equipment for a new outing I would observe them and I could not see any anxiety in their deportment and if they had it was not visible and I knew that many were not much older than me and that they were undertaking a task beyond their age.

One evening one of the pilots whose name I can't remember told a companion I was assigned E for Easy (designation of the plane). I'm not feeling good about that plane. During the bombing run the plane is struck and was abandoned, the crew had to parachute. It was only later that we learned that they all survived and that they were prisoners of war. During the imprisonment the pilot was promoted to Officer.

We all had sad times when the planes came back we waited to find out who didn't come back I had at least six friends that I knew and a lot became closer with our constant encounters in my work. We often we stood in preparation for the landing counting the planes as they arrived. Sometimes knowing that one was missing we listened hoping that there was an unforeseen delay and when suddenly an engine noise excited us and it turned into a cry of joy for a pilot who had managed to bring his plane back despite the heavy damage, sometimes alone having given the command to his crew to bail out, other time with the full crew.

Every day had its story, I had a friend Jean who had followed the wireless course with me and one day out on bombing ,he and the entire crew had to bail out and they were all taken prisoners of war and all returned after the war except Jean. We learned much later what happened to him, a German soldier was escorting him to a new prisoner camp and during the walk several young Germans decided to beat him to death with pieces of wood, while the guard just watched them do it. Jean was a perfect nice young man, polite, religious, and in love with a friend from Montreal who waited for him and wrote to him every day. There was a book that was written by a German refugee in Canada who searched and obtained all the details in order to publish Jean's story. I have a copy of this book. the story also says that Jean's girlfriend never married.

On another evening as the planes were flying over to join the others during cloudy weather, the aircraft, led by a very nice young pilot, was struck by another aircraft, and the front cabin of the aircraft was severed, the pilot, and two other crew members, fell to their death. Before the accident happened the wireless player was wearing a parachute normally attached to his chest and having removed it while settling down at his station he had some uneasy feeling and began to put it back on there was an explosion and he parachuted

down. According to him had no knowledge of what had happened. We had to get permission to destroy the parachute that was soaked in blood and other debris. This poor young man was so shocked by what was happening to him that his black hair turned white overnight and he was sent back to Canada.

I have to tell you that it wasn't always a disaster day, there were times of fun as from time to time there was a full evening of relaxation where the crews joined us in the room where we normally ate. Several barrels of beer were installed to serve ourselves at will. Everyone badly needed it but since I did not drink, I participated with non-alcoholic beverages.

For the normal routine for meals, each of us had originally received a gamelle which is two small rectangular metal containers, one contained utensils and a cup. They were enclosed in each other and had a handle to transport them. If we lost this kit all that remained was to eat with our hands, impossible task, that's how precious it was. Sometimes the Commander would go in the food line with the troops without a gamelle and when he spotted one of us leaving after eating he would ask us to loan him his gamelle. A way to show his support.

As we had free passage on the train, I took advantage to go to Scotland, precisely to Edinburgh town which I really liked, the main street called Princess was special all the shops were on one side and the other side flower gardens and a bandstand. I remember the day when I was able to admire three beautiful flowerbeds containing the effigies, in flowers of color, of the presidents of England, the United States and Russia, very impressive .

There was a small village not far from our base and there were many opportunities to meet the girls at local activities. One of the kiosks

was large enough for an orchestra and located at the base of a large high castle accessible to the public. During my first trip I met a young girl and it was nice to spend time together for a day only as she lived with her parents in a small village called Preston Pans east of Edinburgh. We exchanged our addresses and in one of her letters she invites me to come and meet her parents if I return. And from that day on my vacation was spent to visit this family. The father was a miner and the mother a housewife.

When I went there, I slept in a bed in the wall of the living room on a mattress so soft that I disappeared in it and this luxury cost me very little. I brought chocolate bars and cigarettes that cost us a dollar a carton, which I accumulated for each trip. One day when I was there the mother served me fresh eggs for lunch and served powdered eggs to her husband. I immediately said your husband deserves these eggs more than I do. She replied I decide what I serve and to whom I serve it. From this day not a word except thank you from me.

Another occasion during a visit I get up one morning and the bed is full of blood there I was struggling examining myself to find nothing and I wondered how I will say this to the mother. Finally, I tell her, and she replies it's probably a hemorrhoid, bend down, I'll check. I replied I believe you are right, do not worry I will go to the doctor as soon as I return to the base. Without another word she undoes the bed and precedes to washing everything. The doctor at the base confirms the hemorrhoid and gives me suppositories. The family had a lot of fun playing dominos with friends who were very loud at times, so the girl and I went on walks. Often, we went to the pub with the family. I liked that very much even if I didn't drink, I liked the atmosphere.

On the day of the announcement of the end of the war the



Commander orders all of us to go to the landing site and lines us on both sides of the runway and we are given guns to shoot cartridges reserved for emergencies. The Commander arrives on a jeep and the moment he passes in front of us we shoot over his head shouting and dancing. Amazingly he was not hit, we are all bad shots. Once the war was over the planes were prepared for the return to Canada and there was no work for us.

I was transferred to an English unit stationed in Basingstoke a small town in southern England. There I had a long wait for my return to Canada. During our time Le Commandant received a call from a military unit that taught military vehicle driving to young girls. He asks our Commandant if he could send a group of us for a dance that the girl recruits wanted to organize. A truck, full of us went. That's where I had the chance to dance with Princess Elizabeth, unfortunately only for a short time because she wanted to meet as many of us more as possible.

To celebrate the end of the Pacific war, The British troops based here brought all the furniture from the barracks to the military practice field and set fire to it, which created a huge bonfire.

I was then transferred again to a base at Swindon not far from Reading. It was also there that I had my first beer. A gang was getting ready to leave for the city and they convinced me to join them. Naturally once in town we all go to an English pub and they convince me to drink a light beer. They tell me to taste it i must drink it all at once, I proceed to do this with the result that I got drunk.

I remember the commander of this unit organizing dance parties and a truck was sent to Reading to bring back some young girls. I had met several young girls at a club in this city that organized meetings for the troops, one I particularly liked, and I invited her to one of our

dances. We were waiting for the truck to arrive with the girls and suddenly someone announces that the truck has been in an accident and several are injured. As my young partner had agreed to come, I assumed that she was one of the injured. It wasn't until the next day that I was able to go to her house and when she opened the door, I saw her with a crutch and full of bandages. We never danced together but for the short time I had left, we just took walks and sometimes went to the theatre.

It is also at this base that we had to be very patient, boredom made things more difficult, we had no work and we all went with our bicycles to spend our time in pubs.

### **Departure for Canada**

Bravo! In April 1946 I was sent to a centre where departures for Canada were arranged. So once again I am aboard L'Isle de France for a much less difficult journey, better temperature, less rough seas and fewer people affected by seasickness. Especially the general attitude was very cheerful and of course organized poker games where several lost their last pay cheque . For me my favorite place was near the ramps watching the sea that made me relax because I did not sleep deep enough at night in our hammocks and there was always the smell of sea seasickness. Arrived on land and on route by train to Lachine Quebec, where the process of terminating military service is happening. You should have seen the joy expressed by several throwing their capes in the air shouting and dancing and shouting 'I am free.

I had a decision to make but not right then The first thing was to call Georgette but I also had to see my parents again, so I quickly make a decision to ask Georgette if she would like to come and meet my parents but she had to ask her father and after a short discussion with him he said yes. I go to her house and together we went on the

train to Quebec City to my parents' house.

I introduced Georgette to all present and after many questions and after almost three years without home cooked meals, finally a meal with my mother. Unfortunately, having made all these journeys following the disembarkation fatigue takes me and I have difficulty keeping my eyes open. At one point I say, "when will we eat?" and the meal was already over. Poor Georgette spent the evening alone with my family because I had to go to bed. I can imagine how she must have felt. I had a week to correct my fault.

### **New Post: Trenton Ontario**

When I returned to Lachine having discussed my situation with my parents and Mr. Méthot, I decided to remain in temporary service with the air force I had to wait to receive a transfer and I was sent to Trenton Ontario. In order to continue my romance with Georgette I had to travel to Hull by train for the weekends. These journeys and my work became very exhausting and Georgette and I decided, with the permission of the parents, to marry on September 14, 1946 in the Holy Redeemer Church in Hull. My parents were invited to stay at the Methots.

Georgette turned 20 on September 15 and I was 22 years old. We went on a short honeymoon to Sainte-Agathe des Monts, north of Montreal.

On the way back we prepare to leave for Trenton, Ontario where I had rented a room in order to look for a small apartment. Before leaving Hull, we had entrusted my father-in-law with a large suitcase that he had to send us. On the morning of our arrival, with Georgette in the room in town, I received a notice to go to the station's central

office and was advised that I was being transferred to Rockcliffe base in Ottawa. A call to my father-in-law cancels the transport of the suitcase and advises him that we are on our way to Ottawa to stay there. We move in with him for the time it takes us to find an apartment.

We found a small one-bedroom apartment, with a small kitchen and a passage wide enough to install a couch leading to the main entrance. There was a small gallery at the back with a courtyard. It was just 2 houses from my father-in-law on Saint Laurent Street known today as Allumetti re.

Our first child Guy is born on 21 September 1947. during a terrible storm, lightning, thunder, and rain, in the middle of the night. This may explain a lot. He weighs more than 10 pounds and has a large head. Georgette is completely lost having no knowledge of what she had just gone through. Apparently, her Doctor strongly believed that women should not suffer by giving birth, he had given her an injection strong enough to eliminate all pain, the effects continued for several days afterwards.

So begins our new life as parents with the little one who sleeps next to us in his little bed, he cried a lot and we couldn't please him. The doctor we consulted told us 'your child is starving if I gave him a banana, he would eat it all. "Finally, a solution and life goes on.

One day we decide to buy a small fridge that we buy with monthly payments and well informed that we cannot buy other items on credit until the fridge is paid in full. You can imagine how long this payment lasted with an income of \$100 per month.

Georgette becomes sick and the doctor comes to see her, and he tells her that she had suffered a miscarriage, we never knew the

gender because the fetus was not advanced enough.

The grandfather is really very proud of his grandson guy and pampers him a lot now that he walks and one day, he goes with him to go to a barbershop. Guy had beautiful blond hair with curls and the stepfather decides to have him trimmed. He comes home with him and Georgette sees him she almost loses consciousness and asks why did you do that? He replies he is not a girl he is a boy. Georgette never forgave him.

During the years we lived in Hull my job at Rockcliffe was to learn all the different phases of the Safety Equipment program, i.e. parachutes and harnesses and repair them if necessary such as changing part of the parachute and sewing it in place, we also had machines that could sew the harnesses as necessary, check the rescue bags, change off-date or damaged parts, remove lifeboats from their compartment on the aircraft, inflate them with the CO2 bottle attached, check and repair worn areas to prevent CO2 from escaping during automatic emergency deployment. Recharge CO2 bottles. There was also an inspection of the deployment of the pilot's ejector seat. Finally, the inspection of the aircraft's oxygen system. Lifeboats were made of special plastic that could be repaired as is done for automobile tires. I was learning all these methods while I was waiting to take the course for the Safety Equipment trade.

I was sent to take the course in 1949 in Aylmer Ontario and Georgette had no intention of being alone during the course so we left as a family to find a suitable little place to live. This was Georgette's initiation into the English language. I couldn't help but laugh when she told me about her shopping at the store and how to show what she wanted and the butcher where the clerk gave her the proper words in English. I must admit that she learned quickly. During this time, Guy was introduced to the theatre because it was

our favorite outing at the end of the week, besides we also had to live within our means.

I receive a transfer back to Trenton Ontario in 1950 the year of my first promotion. I was now a Corporal. The transfer to Trenton was the first that was paid for by the government, but we were given only \$100 dollars for carpets and curtains and the like. Our social life consisted of participating in activities organized by the friends we had met and a lot of local theatre where we always went with Guy who took a liking to it.

In 1952 I was promoted to sergeant in charge of our Safety Equipment section and shortly thereafter we received a transfer to Portage de la Prairie, Manitoba, about an hour's drive north of Winnipeg.

We decide to buy a second-hand Ford Mercury car, our first car, which we load with our personal things, My first driving experience will be several days on route to Portage La Prairie our destination. There we found a small accommodation in the village.

My first day at work was very hectic because I was there to open a new Safety Equipment department. It was about ordering everything we needed from a central department created for this purpose. We were warned that everything must be ready in a few days. Mission accomplished and we are ready to receive the planes. During this time Georgette prepares the house and begins to meet neighbors to find out where she can go for food especially. We still must wait for the furniture, which was sent by truck, to finally settle down.

A few months later Guy catches chickenpox and Georgette decides she needs someone to advise her. The yard is full of snow, but she ventures to go to the neighbor Mrs. Duprey who receives her with

open arms when she realizes that Georgette only speaks French. She comes to our house to advise us what to do.

From that moment on we become friends of this family of three boys older than Guy. The father, Phil, is general manager of the Manitoba bees harvest. I must admit that we were able to meet a lot of people from the village and the Armed Forces through him, so we did not lack contacts to socialize. Georgette mostly had a friend in his wife.

We applied to have a house on the base, and it wasn't very long before we moved into a nice little duplex house with a courtyard, two bedrooms and a large living room that became very popular for fun evenings. We had a lot of diversions at the non-commissioned club (NCO's MESS). Sometimes Georgette was invited by the officers' wives to model for special evenings organized by them to raise funds in support of local charities, but she did not like to model too much but rather to help with the preparations.

At my work, for the first time, we had women staff hired by the service, who were now working in our trade. It was my first experience and required a lot more control. We were responsible once-a-month to be officer of the day this allowed us to close all bars at an established time, except the officers' bar if a senior officer took responsibility.

Our contacts with the Dupreys were more constant, we invited them to become associate members of our bar and we often met at their home. One day Phil asked me if I wanted to earn extra wages, he needed help monitoring the harvest of several lots where he was growing cucumbers. I could do that on weekends. I agreed because we could use the extra money. My responsibility was to ensure that the collected cucumbers were only of a certain size.

We also met a sergeant Bernie Beaton whose wife worked in Winnipeg at a bank and came to Portage on weekends. They became our best friends, a friendship that lasted more than 60 years. Bernie passed some time ago.

Our stay in Portage was short-lived. I was informed of my transfer to Saint Jean Quebec, so I left to go to our house to tell Georgette when I met her on the way she was coming to inform me that she was pregnant. Two good news revealed halfway, by chance.

### **Saint Jean D'iberville**

In Saint Jean we quickly found an apartment on the third floor of a large condo where we met a lady from Montreal married to a gentleman from Switzerland who spoke at least 5 languages, they did not have any children. They became good friends.

My job in my new position was to become familiar with the 15 different subjects taught to military service recruits. First I had attend classes for two weeks to listen and learn all the subjects and on the third week I had to present my lesson plans to the chief and start teaching. I assure you that I was not too approachable at work or at home during those two weeks. I had never taught before, and I had to do it in both official languages. But as on many other occasions I ended up becoming an acceptable PROFESSOR.

On November 3, 1954 Lynn was born around 10:30 in the morning in perfect health but the umbilical cord was wrapped three times around her neck, we were lucky not to lose her. Georgette did not want any drugs because she did not want to relive what happened with the birth of Guy. Georgette was fully conscious and in good shape for the birth.

In 1956 Georgette decided that she would like to work outside, and



our neighbor offers to keep Lynn. She found work in a clothing store owned by a Jewish man. She has a lot of fashion sense. One day a lady shows up and Gigi looks at her and tells her I regret Madame we have nothing here that would suit you. When the owner learns this, he asks her “what's going on why did you send this lady away?” “Georgette replies” I will not sell clothing that would not suit a person and if you do not allow me to do this I will have to leave. “Another lady shows up and she dresses her completely and when the lady arrives at her house her husband asks her “where have you taken all this clothing that suits you so perfectly?” “The owner hears of this and realized that this lady and many others came back because of Gigi’s fashion sense..

Back at work, I am promoted to Flight Sergeant a crown is added to the three bars on my shoulders. I also become assistant to our Captain who dictated every day the assignment of the staff to the different classes for all the subjects designated for the day. We had a large blackboard on which each class, subject and instructor were written with chalk. We had officers, sergeants and corporals as instructors.

Following my promotion the Captain tells me from now on it is you who will take charge of the assignment and he disappears. In view of my new position I gave less lectures because I also had to solve the problems that the junior instructors had with the control of their classes. For example, a junior instructor sends me a student who was disturbing the class instead of using and imposing his authority. For me it was easy I sent the rebels to work outside under the supervision of a corporal who looked after the garden in his spare time.

One day we were missing instructors and I took over, I arrive in class and I am speechless for a moment. I was looking at a class of 60

girls not a single man. Imagine 60 girls in their late teens this is an unusual sight here. I adapted quickly to my position as teacher when I saw a student passing notes to another, she denied it, but I sent her to work in the garden. It was important to show them that our authority was always present. Sometimes we had some pretty serious cases that we had to parade for discipline in front of our Captain who also had to be very strict to maintain control. Our classes were rarely less than 40 to 45 recruits. We had a lot of difficulty during the hot and wet seasons the recruits had a lot of trouble to falling asleep. They often had to stand up for a few minutes to stay awake.

For this reason, one day I decide that we need to paint the class rooms soft pastel colors. I prepared a plan that I present to the Colonel in charge and ask him to authorize the painting and the necessary work. He agrees, and the work is done very quickly. We noticed how effective it was as well.

One day I am recommended to apply to become an officer and I complete an application for the telecom or procurement trade. I am asked to go to the Colonel Commander's office and he asks me why I applied for these two trades? I tell him I'm a tradesman. He replies you do not have many chances with these two trades apply rather for administration and you will be commissioned tomorrow. But I resist and he says I don't understand why it would be ideal for you because the work you are currently doing is administrative work and you are highly recommended by your superiors. I refuse and now that I think about it I burned my candle that day, I would probably have finished my career two grades higher. Believe me this is not an opportunity to say by my fault, but so that you know that the opportunity was present.

On our weekends we would either go to Hull or to Quebec City to

visit Georgette's family or my family. Guy was maybe two or three years old when visiting my family, my parents had a little house on a street corner and Guy wanted to go outside but Georgette was afraid to leave him there alone. He could go down the street but my mom told her it was ok. She told us that Rex our dog will stop him from going to the street. We observe him and the moment Guy goes toward the street, Rex intervenes and pushes him back into the yard, so we relax.

## **Edmonton Post**

In 1957, I received a transfer to Edmonton, Alberta to the survival school. We load the car and leave knowing that we will be on the road for several days with two young children, Guy had just turned 10 and Lynn almost 3 years old. We pass by Portage la Prairie and we stop at the Dupré's who are not expecting us at all. I knock on the door but there is a lot of noise and I am not heard so I go in and the lady turns around and yells "who are you !" you're in the wrong house! "I say Jeanne you do you not recognize Roger, she launches towards me to kiss me. She starts asking questions but I stop her and tell her my family is in the car so she exclaims but let them in. What a beautiful meeting, Jeanne picks up her phone and calls Phil who comes home. They were so happy to see us again, just like us, for that matter

The next day on our way to Edmonton we stopped at a hotel for a few days while looking for our new accommodations. I also had to report to the survival school. The second day of our search we found a small apartment on the second floor of the house of a couple of teachers with two young children. It wasn't great as Guy had to sleep in a passage but for now it was enough.

During the period we lived their Georgette's father died as a result of his injuries during the first war. One night the owner's young boy

gets up and as he passes Guy sleeping in the hall on the way to the toilet, he saw an old man leaning over Guy which really scared him and woke everyone in the house. The only explanation of course is that grandfather needed to see his grandson again before proceeding to infinity.

We soon moved again to a suitable little house not far from everything because Georgette, who does not drive will have to be alone often because of my work and needs to walk for shopping..

I went to the unit responsible for the survival courses anxious to know why I had been sent there. The job was to learn how to become an instructor of survival methods required for all crews of aircraft in service. To accomplish this we had to attend a training camp near a lake south of Edmonton. This camp was maintained by a couple responsible for preparing food for the instructors and also to service a large generator that produced electricity for the whole camp. The camp consisted of various rooms, toilets, a large kitchen, a living room and a large freezer.

The staff taking the course were housed in lean-tos that they had to assemble in accordance with the course curriculum. They also had, for ten days, to eat rations like those contained in the rescue kit in their aircraft. They could also eat small, birds and fish that they could catch. The stay at the camp included parachute jump exercises equivalent to what they may undergo if they had to bail out of the aircraft. This reduced the chance of serious injury after bailing out. A serious injury would make the chance of survival much more difficult.

The first three days near the camp were mainly to introduce students to edible things available in this environment and specially to learn how to build a shelter and how to prepare the floor for sleeping bags.

I should add that at certain times of the year there were very few birds or game, so rations had to be enough. For example, hares will stay in an area until they have exhausted the food and return 7 years later.

We also had to leave the base camp and evaluate other places suitable for shelter, which normally took several hours but always in time to set up the shelter for the night. During the cold weather, trees were cut and were burnt to heat the front of the shelter. since that was opened to nature. The survival school was allowed to put nets in the small streams and set up a sign that advised that it was for a survival course, but the more daring local fishermen removed them, to the trainee's grief.

At the end of the course each student was judged and given a certificate. But the most important thing for those starved campers was the stop at the restaurant on the way back.

There is also training to become an instructor. After several readings at the base I had to take that course and later the course for the Arctic survival which I will detail later. I wasn't very lucky for my first training exercise. It was in the middle of winter with temperatures more than twenty degrees below zero, plus there was also a lot of snow.

Our backpack contained rations for 7 days, a sleeping bag, a small frying pan, a small axe and a piece of parachute fabric. We set off to an area already chosen by the instructor, and from there we looked for an area with less wind, and available small trees for firewood. After building the shelter which consisted of two triangles of tree branches 4 to 5 feet high on which we mounted another branch on the top of these two triangles followed by a layer of pine branches on which the sleeping bag was laid. Let me tell you that 6 logs that

burned all night were not enough to give us enough warmth to sleep a full night it was so cold. We had to get up often to do exercises and go back to the sleeping bag. I don't remember being so cold in my entire life. The lack of sleep and the search for food and wood for the fire of the next night, every day exhausted our energy, but we had to survive. The rations, contained sugar, butter, small cans of meat, small sweeteners and toilet pape.

The last day the instructor advised us to stand near our shelter as he was going to check our fire to ensure that we had extinguished it properly. We were not thinking that he would tell us that our fire was still alive deep down. We had to dig deep with our little axe and our small pan before he was satisfied the fire was safely out. An important lesson to learn since we had wrongly chosen the camp location.

This course was followed by another 5-day exercise in the Artic at Cambridge bay about 6 hours flight from Edmonton with a stop at Yellowknife. I can't tell you exactly how I felt when I was watching the plane taking off knowing that we were on our own for 5 days. Around me I saw debris from planes and machinery that formed an eternal cemetery because they will never be recovered due to the cost.

A snowmobile was waiting to take us to the base of operations for the School. We stopped near a gate in the snow that leads us to the entrance of a shelter, under the snow. The first room is a large living room followed by a dining room with two large barrels full of water, from large blocks of ice picked from a bay south of our shelter. Then the kitchen and the sleeping rooms furnished with bunk beds. The heat is provided by a large fireplace located between the dining room and the kitchen.

There is also a large fridge/freezer. Unfortunately, all this comfort was only for the day of arrival and departure.

The next day we are escorted to the site where several igloos are being built. An igloo is then assigned to four of us and we are informed that we must now finish the igloo by applying snow between the open spaces between the different blocks of snow used to form the structure. This must be done outside as well as inside and we also made a pile of snow against the walls to form a self where we will sleep. This covers just over half of the interior space. On this self we put furs and our sleeping bag. The space left free will be used to leave our snow boots and a large block of snow that will be used to absorb urine as needed because in the evening after our entrance the tunnel is closed for the night with a block of snow. Our night begins between three and four o'clock in the afternoon as the darkness begins.

If necessary, we can install small wooden sticks on the walls to mount our stockings if they are wet in order to dry them by the heat of a small metal box with an oil and a wick that we can light, but watching not to turn the heat above 0 degrees to prevent snow from melting above our bed. Unfortunately if this did happen, we had to make snowballs throughout the night to stop the water. We lost a night of sleep doing this. Another well-learned lesson.

Another issue, after we have sealed all the openings of the igloo a Eskimo drilled a hole above the entrance at a precise point and angle otherwise, we would die inhaling the air we expel by breathing. You don't have to think about going to bed so early, so we get on our furs all dressed up and play cards or tell stories etc.

At bed time we take off all our clothes, put on our pajamas and go into our sleeping bags hoping for a good night's sleep and in our case we did.. However, one evening one of us had to get up to urinate and not being completely awake he urinated in one of his boots and he had to live the consequences for the course.

Now you may be wondering: what happens if one of us needs to go number two: This requires the help of an instructor who has to open the passage and escort the person to the toilet which consists of a half igloo with a small barrel on which two pieces of wood are installed. After he is escorted back to his igloo and the instructor closes the opening. I assure you that these kinds of cases must be urgent. We are advised to do everything possible to try to create a daily daytime habit for these needs.

The day after our first night in our igloo, we had to build our own igloo. The first thing to do was to find the special snow by plunging our big knives into the snow. It had to be firm to come out as blocks of a certain thickness. It was during this exercise that I suffered a disc fracture in my spine and I had to continue the work despite the pain because this igloo had to be ready for the second night. I convinced the others that it would be better for us to make it bigger to create more space that would serve to cook if necessary or play cards. Very bad idea! We could not heat the bigger igloo. We all had to get up often to warm up in our own way. Neither the instructors nor the Eskimos intervened even though the Eskimos probably laughed knowing what would happen. Another well-learned lesson. In addition I lost the confidence of my companions. My back pain became more severe.

During the day we could hunt the few birds and other animals that existed for food and there was also the possibility of fishing in the areas where the ice was thin created by the ice movement. It was just a matter of making a hole in the ice. We could fish pikes and trout. Otherwise our food was rations prepared especially for the exercise. We were also given hard cookies known as (Sailors cookies) that no one ate at first. One day I decided to put one in water all night to soften it and fry it the next day in a little butter and covered with a little jam. Our search for these cookies quickly stirred



the curiosity of the others and I do not need to tell that there were soon no more cookies available.

There was also the opportunity to watch the old Eskimos, who were walking around looking at the surface of the ice, which was 8 to 10 feet deep but in a short time while sitting on a snow bank, one of them fished a big quantity of fish and then left the area. Many of us rushed to take his place but we never got any fish. The Eskimo had left knowing that the reserve was exhausted.

Back in Edmonton I had to, learn to recognize what nature offered us as plants, root, mushrooms and others. Also, to recognize the different species and insects that could serve as food, All this to prepare to undertake my role as instructor as soon as possible.

Our school had a cottage south of Edmonton by a lake, with a kitchen and a large fridge/freezer, several bedrooms, and two generators for electricity, maintained by a resident man and his wife who provided food and prepared meals for the instructors and did daily maintenance of the generators. Each year these employees took two weeks of vacation and an instructor was to take over.

So, who better than a new instructor like me, of course. I'm advised that I must go there for two weeks but don't worry, I'm told, because there's an old Shepherd there also for company? I told them perfect we can play cards, but what I was not told, the Shepherd was an Irish Shepherd dog!! He became my companion to take on my walks every day. You can't imagine how many deer he chased from the woods.

I was qualified as an instructor for almost a year but I had a lot of difficulty with my back pain and I had to see a doctor in order to receive more intensive care, which earned me a bed in the hospital

or a number of different treatments for a month that were not adequate and the specialist advises me that it takes an operation that will be done as soon as he returns from vacation. During this wait I receive, from headquarters, a transfer to Chatham New Brunswick but before leaving I get a form detailing all the different units of the station that I must sign confirming that I have no present association with them. As I was scheduled for more work I knew they would refuse to sign the form, but I had a trick in my bag. I walk to another Specialist's office and ask him if he can free me by explaining that I can no longer do this work and that I need to have an operation in Chatham. He agrees and signs the form.

I prepared our the car for the trip by modifying it to accommodate sleeping space for the family in route. Georgette and I slept in the trunk where I had removed the back seat. Guy on the front two seats and Lynn on a small bed placed between the console and the top of the passenger seat. We stopped on route to prepare meals and allow the children to stretch, nights were spent in a trailer camp. After several stops to friends and families and more than 10 days drive, we arrive in Chatham.

### **Chatham New Brunswick**

Our arrival there a base chaplain presents to Georgette a key for a house on the base. I never saw Georgette shine so happily as it was the first time, we did not to look for accommodation.

As soon as I arrived here, I quickly realized that my presence had been planned to organize the operation of the unit which no longer had a conscientious leader. He was the same rank as me, but he quickly realized why I was there. He gave me command and tells me I'll take charge of the supplies.

On day I'm in my office when I see a young officer walk in and watch my staff do their work and leave. Intrigued I go to his office to ask him his reason for that visit. He tells me that he wanted to make sure the job was done well. I ask him why and he advises me that he did not trust the chief who apparently was often absent.

So, I tell him that now that I'm here I prefer that he doesn't do that anymore because his presence bothers the staff and they can make mistakes. I then told him that he was welcome but that I would prefer him to come directly to my office and that I would answer all the questions he had about our work. He did not appreciate my suggestion and told me I could transfer you elsewhere today. I answer him, sir, I can pack my bag in five minutes and I get out.

A few days later he comes in directly to my office and within minutes explains to me his problem with two chiefs under his command including the one I am replacing. I tell him you are always welcome here and you will be well informed for any questions about our work or you and I can discuss the news or sport etc. From that day on we became good friends.

In another incident with this officer, one day he asks me to come to his office and he presents me with my work assessment which I read carefully and I am really touched because it was very high. I cannot allow him to send this evaluation to the head office because they will not accept, but how to make him understand. So, I say thank you for your trust, but I must ask you to change it because it will be questioned. I ask him to allow me to prepare my evaluation and he agrees. This was the first and last time I did that.

Our social life in Chatham was very active with friends and in the functions of the NCO club but our time here ends November 1960, when I receive a transfer to our headquarters in France. This is very

exciting for the family; Guy was already 13 years old and Lynn 6 years old. We had to prepare everything for a departure from Montreal in November by ship. My father and mother and Georgette's sister were present, they were allowed to board the ship and visit our cabin and other parts of the boat.

### **Metz France 1960**

The departure of the ship was late in the afternoon which allowed us to admire the shore as we left. Everything continued to be amazing up to the golf where the boat was rocked by rough weather which unfortunately affected the three members of my family with seasickness. As I did not suffer from this, I advised the Stewart responsible for our cabin to do what he could for them, and I left for the promenade deck. The Stewart came to talk to me following the care he gave them, and he advises me to take them the next day to the medical clinic where they can receive a shot for seasickness. After that injection the whole family recovered and were a very happy if somewhat sleepy lot. We enjoyed the many onboard activities. Guy has the freedom of the boat which he loves and we rarely see him.

As I mentioned the sea was very very rough with many very big waves. I had a small Kodak camera, so I climb on the highest deck in order to film a big wave. I film patiently until I realize that I have no more film and that I also realize that the ship was suddenly sliding very steeply on a huge wave! The ship leans dangerously to the point where I notice that the flag poll is nearing the opposite side of the wave. At this critical moment the boat begins to straighten up and recovers. All this happens as I have to refuge on a covered boat and holding myself with both hands until the ship recovers. I still have that film.

Once satisfied that everything is back to normal, I quickly go see what happened to my family. I knew Lynn was at a party for the younger kids so I went there but no one was able to get into that room because there was a lot of damage especially broken glass. Georgette naturally had rushed to the kids room where I met her. We were reassured by the crews message that everything was under control and all the children are safe under the supervision of the responsible teams. As for Guy, it was only later that we learned that he was at the theatre watching a movie. When it all happened, he tells us that the piano started rolling towards him and says "I changed places to avoid the crash which destroyed a number of seats where I had been sitting. He was disappointed that they stopped the movie.

Following this incident, the sailors told us that November was recognized as the worst month to travel on the Atlantic Sea. The Captain told us that we had a 27-degree list and we were fortunate that we had a very heavy amount of goods that helped because 3 degrees more we would have ended in the bottom of the sea.

Arriving in Metz we were meet by a couple assigned to receive us to help us meet the necessities to settle down. We took a week to find accommodation in the city of Metz. We had decided that we would rather live with the French population than live on the base. Our new home was a large three levels house, ours being on the first floor and it consisted of two bedrooms a small living room and kitchen. The house was several years old and was on a street used by Patton and his troops during the war and had bullet marks on its façade. Its owner was a member of the French resistance who had his own garden where he grew a variety of vegetables. The head of the house was a charming lady who liked to prepare large meals that did not end until very late due to the varieties of servings and matching wines. It is in this house that we had our first Christmas in France

I reported to the base where I will work. What a surprise when I saw this great Castle located on a promontory in Metz, occupied by the headquarters of the Canadian technical division. First the documentation process followed by an introduction to the technical staff. I ended up occupying my desk in a room already occupied by three other technicians each representing a specific technical function. Mine was Safety Equipment and I was also responsible for the operations of two (2) bases in France and two (2) in Germany. Mainly I had to respond to their requests for help. I had to go to the those bases specially to ensure that any modifications required on our equipment were performed in accordance with the designated designs.

I also quickly realized that I was the only bilingual staff in this section because they came to me to translate, mainly to negotiate with the French employees hired for the general maintenance of the Château. Georgette and I had a good relationship with the companions who worked with me and we often met at their homes or at ours or at different functions either in town or at the NCO club. Lynn made her first communion in the small 1600 old chapel in front of the Chateau.

There was a young woman staying on the third floor who became a good companion for Georgette to help her know or find the markets. Georgette quickly learned to go to the street with her basket to greet the street vendors where she also met many neighbors who became good friends.

Guy and Lynn were registered at a school on the base , they were picked up by a military bus. Not far from our accommodation there was a market where I could make purchases on credit when we had no more francs that we were getting from the bank on the basis.

The couple who helped us on our arrival, invite us to spend Christmas with them and during the evening full of wine, Georgette and our hostess decide to visit French neighbors who live in the same area in order to wish them a merry Christmas and with wines in hand they go out and come back with a couple who brought a strong French liqueur with them. The party ended very late.

We were in Metz during the conflict between France and Algeria, who demanded their separation from France, This caused a lot of security problems for the Canadian forces staff. We were often called to the base during these security alerts and had to stay there for several days, however, families who lived in the city were not required to come to the base but they had to stay in their houses.

There were also many problems for the citizens of Algeria who lived in Metz they were often approached to give money to support the cause and if they refused, they were often killed. Often after the our duties many of us would go to the train station which had a first class restaurant. One evening a friend returning from the toilet and told me very low to prevent the women from going to the toilet as there was is an Algerian who has just been killed, the police were investigating.

The city of Metz is a beautiful city with beautiful Parks and gardens and its inhabitants spoke fluent French and German due to their proximity to Germany and especially the change of government caused by the war. We needed a car to visit Europe and I was able to buy one from a couple who were coming back to Canada. It was a Peugeot 403 with little mileage dating from 1958 that we hoped would serve us faithfully during the 4 years of our stay in France. We could buy a new car without taxes before returning home.

We visited Stuttgart, and Nuremberg where we fell in love with the

small mountain towns that were so attractive with the house fronts drowned with flowers of all colors. They were located on the mountainsides. In Munich we found a campground for our trailer. I was able to enjoy many different beers in Germany because each town and village had their own beers and I must admit that I liked them all.

We noticed that the use of a few German words with the seniors made them smile and friendly but not so with young people who were cold and distant.

In the second year of our stay in France. I receive a request to report to the office of the Commander General of the technical sector. I went but a little worried wondering what I could have done but he makes me feel comfortable. He tells me "I have two officers who have recommend you to be promoted to the rank of officer. Are you ready? I ask him "in what classification" Aero Engineering is his answer. I reply that I am not really qualified for Engineering. He says his two officers here tell me that you are. So now it's up to you to decide, take a few days to think about it and give me an answer in a week. Georgette and I had a good discussion, especially since I will have to go back to Canada for exams and that she will be alone with the children, but she agrees, so I tell the Commander that I accept.

I traveled to Canada and after passing two tests I returned with my officer's cap. I now have to leave the NCOs Mess and they gave me a special beer mug. I say my goodbyes and I proceed to an invitation of the Officers' Mess to be received as a new member. I am presented with another identical beer mug. A month later I was advised that I had to return to Canada with the family to follow the engineering course that I completed, and I receive my first transfer as an Officer.



In Moncton I am responsible for a team of Military and Civilian Technicians who are required to examine all technical equipment returned from all military posts in Canada. Their function was to decide whether the equipment should be repaired or dumped. I was also in charge of a workshop of machinists, carpenters and electricians staffed by civilians capable of doing everything, they were very talented.

### **Saint Hubert 1965**

I was transferred to Saint Hubert with the CF 100 airplanes maintenance team. We stayed there for five years, the longest of my career. Guy started his secondary school, so when we left for Saint Hubert, we decided to let him finish his school year in Moncton. A member of our Panet family offered to let him live with them.

We looked for an apartment in Saint Bruno without finding a suitable one, so we bought our first house, a double-decker duplex. My job in Saint Hubert was assistant manager of maintenance for CF 100 aircraft equipped with electronic equipment used to test Radar stations. In 1967 being so close to the Montreal World's Fair, we often had visitors.

### **Uplands Ottawa 1968**

In 1968 I was transferred to Ottawa and was directed to prepare our planes for a transfer to Uplands, Ottawa. Each plane had to receive a complete inspection, an air test and certified fully operational by my signature before leaving as a group. I was responsible from the maintenance of the planes and of their control. We went to various bases with our maintenance equipment, where the planes were doing nightly rounds of tests against radar stations.

We wanted to stay in the province of Quebec, so we bought our second house in Touraine. This is where Ms. Methot passed. Guy had a small studio apartment that I built for him in the basement. This was after he returned from the hospital in Montreal following his shooting.

### **Transfer to Rockcliffe 1969**

Here I managed a group of civilians and military personnel responsible for transferring technical drawings to electronic data.

### **Transfer to Ottawa 1972**

My new position was at the Air Force General Headquarter in Ottawa. I was not very interested in that job and in December 1973 I resigned my military career after more than 32 years of service. In 1974 Georgette and I decided to work partial time. Gigi at the Bay and I at Canadian Tire.

In 1975 we sold the house in Touraine and we left for an organized trip to Europe for 4 weeks. During the second week Gigi was not feeling well and we had to come back to Canada and we bought a house at the Castle Gardens which had three floors. Following a medical examination Gigi is advised that she has a malignant tumor in her left breast and her breast is removed during an operation. In the third year the house is too big to take care of and we sell it and rent an apartment in an adjacent block in the same area.

After multiple cancer treatments for almost five years Gigi died in 1982. Following Gigi's death, I started to work at the Royal Canadian Mint. I walked to and from the mint from home, 16 Kilometers -a day in all seasons. I took the job of Assistant to the Director. Later,

following interviews I was made Director of Personnel until my retirement in 1995.

In 1993 we celebrated Lynn's marriage to Yvon Roy. They have two boys Maxim married to Roxane, they have a daughter Scarlett and Fabien married to Carolyn.

I am the grandfather of Brigitte, Kyla, Julie, Maxim and Fabien. I am great grandfather of Veronique daughter of Brigitte, Aminata and Azana daughters of Julie and Imara and Scarlett daughter of Maxim and Roxane. I am great great grandfather to Zacary son of Veronik and Fred.

I met Suzanne Trepannier with whom I had 25 very exciting years of life, traveling the world, we spent more than twenty-five winters in Mexico, and summers at a cottage at Lake McGlashan. Suzanne passed in April 2019.

For 10 years I lived in a small very cozy apartment over Lynn and Yvon's house. On November 5, 2019 at the age of 95 I moved to Aylmer at L'Initial, in a condominium for the seniors, where I hope to celebrate my one hundredth birthday with the help of almighty God.

I have made this small book of my life history. I hope you will all enjoy it and pass on to your children and their descendants so they can learn who their great and great great grandfather was.

**May the almighty God protect you now and always.**

Love Papie.







