

Lucien Desjardins - my in 1941

In the month of May, I was obliged to do a short four month stay in the Canadian armed forces but, this was quickly changed to an indefinite period following changes in the law.

I was sent to the Joliette (prov. Québec) for my basic training. Several days of this training period was spent on firefighting duties further up North.

Later on, I was transferred to Kingston Ontario within the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals (RCCS) where everything was done in English. During this training we would frequently be asked to sign up as active members without much success on my part. This is where Bill Lapré became my best friend. We had a chance to tryout all I sorts of trades but neither of us two ever singed up as "active" members

I was later transferred to the 6th Division – Signals section. I was tasked to be a dispatch rider (motor biker rider) and then trained to become a "lineman". I was promoted to the rank of Corporal.

My commanding officer a Major Bell sent me on a small arms training course at the Long Branch Ont. training centre close to Toronto Ont. where other members of the armed forces joined in from all across Canada.

I became an expert marksmen and champion of the group. Back at my home base, I was tasked to be a small arms training instructor. I then gave the small arms course (always in English) to officers of the 6th Division - Signals Corp. We were later transferred to Vancouver B.C.

After being in Vancouver for a while, I was transferred to Prince Rupert (B.C.) and put in charge of a work group in Terrace to install a communications link. My place of residence was Prince Rupert where I would prepare a weekly report for transmittal to Vancouver.

Later on, I was returned to Vancouver to join a training group in Nanaimo. The intensive training lasted several weeks.

During this time all correspondence was being held back and a short time after our training was completed we embarked on a ship called HMCS Prince David and headed over to Victoria but no one was allowed to get off the ship which departed on our mission the next morning. It was on open seas that we were informed that our destination would be the Aleutian Islands for fighting the Japanese army!!

The Hull regiment was with us, a group of five thousand soldiers.

For seven days we zigzagged in open seas to reach our destination, Adak the American army base.

The islands were invaded by the Japanese, ATTU, AGATU, and KISKA.

Intensive training again took place on Adak .

Along with the 9th American Task Force we went over to Great Sitken island (non-occupied) to do a simulated invasion. My good friend Bill Lapré and I were sent on a mountain top to do surveillance.

We dug a hole in the ground to protect us from the wind and sleep. Next morning we found ourselves in water! When we got up, we found ourselves high above the clouds but luckily we were radioed and told to come down the mountain. Quite an exercise.

We then left and rejoined the American task Force #9 (50,000 soldiers) as the David Bowie Division to invade the island of Kiska occupied by an estimated 10,000 soldiers. We were a special brigade within the David Bowie Division and our emblem was the Bowie knife.

Upon reaching Kiska, an intensive bombardment was undertaken by the heavy war ship, bombers. We invaded the island without any resistance.

We knew the Japanese had left the island in haste early in the morning while fog covered the island. (Maybe the Japanese knew that French Canadian soldiers were coming and they did not wish to get into combat with us!)

The night of the invasion several soldiers shot themselves by mistake. Approximately 75 soldiers died.

The Americans planes had dropped millions of propaganda pamphlets to the few remaining dogs on the island which unfortunately could not read.

Next morning upon arrival in the Japanese village and stayed several days camouflaged and well installed. In this hideout we descended underground where a Japanese German police dog ran by us without attacking us.

Later on we moved over to army tents on a mountain side with the Canadian Armed forces direction. All in all we were five sergeants. Sergeant Thompson was a good friend of mine. I was the only bilingual officer of the group. On a rotation basis, each of us had to clear out the morning snow piled up in front of all the tents.

One day, Major Dolard Ménard who had arrived in Kiska asked me to disconnect the bell on his phone in his tent. That bell was reconnected the next morning because he wasn't getting his messages!! Ha ha Ha !

Here are few miscellaneous items:

- We would make our own root beer using Alka Selzer pills and root beer syrup.
- Occasionally we were invited to the American tents for lunch Yum! Yum!
- After staying on the island till December some of us need to return to Canada
- We came back crossing the Bering Sea during a storm where all of us were seriously sea sick.

The morning of Christmas 1943 we were at Dutch Arbor where lots of submarines were stationed. That is where we celebrated Christmas eating excellent turkey cooked up by the Americans. We later returned to Canada

(Vancouver) and then on to Vernon B.C.

We were congratulated for our good work on Kiska !!

I got permission for a leave and returned home in Verdun (P.Q.) and fixed things up to marry my beautiful Claire on January 18th 1944. It was the best day life!

We had our honeymoon in Rawdon (P.Q.) WOW!

We then toured all the Desjardins and Riberdy families with my Claire, the most beautiful woman in the world!

I returned to Vernon (B.C.). My work duties were focused on storing all American material items (Clothes, revolvers etc..)

One morning, the base Colonel asked me and my group to see him. I was quickly accused of not being "active". I told I would not comment and had my personal reasons. During this encounter the Sergeant-major took off my hat and struck me on the head. He had just returned from Shanghai (China).

The Colonel stripped me of my rank back to simple soldier and escorted out to army barracks for ordinary (simple) soldiers .

The Victoria B.C. based "very British" officer in charge of western Canada

Asked that all soldiers who had been to Kiska to sign-up as active members within the Canadian army.

While transferring my gear over to the simple soldier barracks, the base Preacher came over and told me the officer whom had struck me was excusing himself and he had been himself forced under orders from above.

He had apologized for his action (dropping my rank) and to the fact that he was unable to speak in French to me.

I also got a visit from a Scottish major who asked me if "I was in sympathy with the enemy". I did not bother to answer him and totally ignored him afterwards. I was relocated to Prince George B.C.

Major Bell was surprised to see me downgraded to the rank of a simple soldier and gave me a rank of Corporal in charge of canteen duties and movies for the soldiers.

Again, sometime later we were relocated to Wainright (Alberta) where I worked nights as a teletype operator but eventually moved back to Montreal (Longueuil army base) where I was assigned to coal shoveling duties, shoveling coal to every tent, every day !

One day I was asked into the exam office where exiting soldiers were processed. Knowledge of my typing skills had circulated and I accepted the job (typist) which was better than shoveling coal!

Doctors would examine soldiers and my job was to type up the medical reports of soldiers leaving the army. I was offered a position as Corporal but I refused based on the fact that I had already held the rank of Sergeant and served overseas.

Shortly after, I was able to leave the army. I was finally liberated from my life as a slave because I was a French Canadian in an army run by the English !!!

Note: Bernard Desjarlais was one of my men in Kiska. He died January 28 2009. Honorable Judge Desjarlais .

End of my story – Lucien Desjardins born February 04 1920

died January 2nd 2013