



Story as a platoon
Sergeant in 1941

Before the memories fade from his mind forever, 1st Lt. William (Bill) S.P. Story was able to sort them all together in the hundreds of pages of letters, photos and mementos of his life.

His loving wife Dianne has compiled those scrapbooks so that his sacrifice and patriotism are never forgotten.

Story was born in June of 1921 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

His military service began with the Winnipeg Light Infantry as a platoon sergeant and in the Volunteer Airborne at Currie Barracks. It was 1940 and he was just 19 years old. The principal of Story's high school wrote that the graduates of Gordon Bell High would be assured representatives who would fulfill the obligations placed upon them. His senior high school yearbook was dedicated to the flame of a war-free future.

Parachute duty was all right with Story.

He'd always wondered if he had the nerve to jump. Training would be held in the United States, where he'd always wanted to visit. Here was his chance.

They had just a short time to train and it wasn't too long after arriving that they donned their chutes and were taken by truck to the airport where the big C-47s waited to carry them back over to the jumping field at camp. He was scared, but the one consolation was that everybody else was just as scared as he was.

"It was the greatest thrill I ever experienced (that first jump)," he wrote home in a letter. "There was nothing in those later jumps that equal that first one," Story later said.



From there, he was sent to Fort William Harrison in Helena, Montana, as a member of the 2nd Canadian Parachute Battalion, to be integrated in the 1st Special Service Force, World War II.

The force went to Kiska, Alaska, where they took part in a dry run. They were the first troops to make the landing on the island. They were prepared to jump in, but the bad weather forced them to use landing craft. "On finding no one there, we were very disappointed," said Story. "We didn't know anything about real war then."

Story was assigned to the 5th Company, 2nd Regiment as a 1st Platoon section leader after completing U.S. Army Intelligence School at Fort Ritchie, Maryland.



Upon completion, Story was sent to 2nd Regiment Headquarters as an intelligence sergeant.

By Dec. 4, 1943, he became the first enlisted man in the Force to be field commissioned as a lieutenant.

He was given the King's Commission in the field of battle in December 1943.

“The peculiar setup of the Force is one of the reasons why it didn't come sooner,” Story wrote to a friend. “But I am proud of having made it the way I did, and I am happy, because it has meant so much to the folks at home.”

June 10, 1944, Story sent a letter home describing a total of 127 days of continuous combat, more than any other unit had ever put in at one time in this theater. He wrote that the forces received due credit in the capture of Rome. They captured seven bridges over the Tiber and drove the Germans out

He said the force moved at a phenomenal speed – at one point capturing more than 300 prisoners without firing more than a half a dozen shots.

The Globe and Mail's top headline read, “Rome Falls – Canadian-American Unit is first to enter capital.”

Once inside the city limits, Story described it to his family as a city that isn't bombed out and where the people are fairly well dressed. “These Romans don't look as though they've suffered much.”

In one letter home that year, he wrote, “We would rather be spoken of as the Canadian-American unit rather than the 1st Special Service Force, as Special Service in the American Army means a group of people who arrange to deliver donuts, run shows and take care of the morale of the troops in combat.”

The men began training for the invasion of France and fought victoriously in South France, Ile du Levant, Mont Agel, Nice, Menton, Garavan and the Franco-Italian border.

The Black Devils, as they were called, were considered the toughest of the tough. They were disbanded Dec. 5, 1944. Then the war was over.

In 1947, they had their first reunion and continued to do so through the years.

In less than three years, Story became a decorated, notable soldier. In September 1945, he was discharged to the Canadian Army Reserve, where he served until May, 1962, when he became a United States citizen.

On Jan. 18, 1944, Story wrote home to his parents describing the good job the troops were doing and the fact that the fame of the 1st Special Force was beginning to spread.

In the mountains of Italy, he explained they were, saddled with heavy packboards to carry their belongings.

“The force is doing wonders over here,” he wrote. “The Jerries don't like to see us coming anymore. We certainly have licked the daylights out of them so far, and we expect to do it again. They are not the supermen that they used to claim they were. As a matter of fact, some of the ones we've taken as prisoners looked pretty sorry.”

Story wrote that all of those prisoners were glad to be captured and that the war for them was over. In many cases, they turned themselves in, he said.

He went on to describe the Italians he came in contact with, calling them poor. Their homes had been destroyed and their belongings, including furniture, stripped from their possession.

“The Germans are treating the Italians the same way they have done the people of all other countries they have occupied. They are stripping them of everything they own,” wrote Story in a letter home.

There were times when Story and his men came across Italian families in desperate need. In one instance, knowing they were going back to base the next day, they gave a family with children their extra socks, gloves, overshoes and rations.

“You can be thankful the war is being fought over here and not in North America,” he wrote, “for you can not imagine the suffering people of these countries are undergoing.”

By February, Story was on the Anzio Beachhead in Italy.

To Tommy, he wrote, “War certainly broadens a man, or a fellow, depending on how you think of me now. I have done more in one year than I have in 20.”



Even at the age of 93, Story feels those few years of war were packed with much learned.

Today, nestled in comfortably at The Palms of Mount Pleasant alongside his wife Dianne, he looks around his room with fond memories of a time that turned a 19-year-old boy into a man.



Medals

The following medals were awarded to 1st Lt. William S. Story during and after World War II by his U.S. Army unit (precursor of today's Special Forces), the 1st Special Service Force, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion and the French Government.

1. Canada 39-45 Star
2. Pacific Star
3. Italy Star
4. France-Germany Star
5. Canadian Volunteer Star with Clasp
6. King George VI Medal
7. Canadian Federation Medal 1867-1992
8. Queen of Canada Medal – Elizabeth II – 60 years
9. Liberation of France Medal – Helping liberate Southern France
10. French Medal, with bar, for assisting 1st French Army in its attack on Montecassino
11. U.S. Army Bronze Star