



# Newsletter

Vol. 9 – November 2024

Harrow Early Immigrant Research Society

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# Helping local homeowners make history since 1952



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## Catching Up!

- by Lorrie Stephenson, President, HEIRS

**Volunteers at HEIRS are working on something new this year.**

**Save the date!** The HEIRS Holiday Hobnob will take place at the King Street Cafe on Friday, December 6, from 10-6. New HEIRS calendars will be available for sale, as well as local history books. There will also be chances to take home gift baskets full of merchandise and services. More info on page 3!

In early October a notice was sent out to members with a copy of proposed by-law amendments. At our October meeting, members voted in favour of adopting the revisions to the by-laws in order to bring them in compliance with the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA). One additional issue will be considered at a special meeting to be held right before the regular November meeting. At that time, members will decide whether to proceed with a formal financial review in 2025 or waive that requirement.

**Congratulations to Heritage Colchester on receiving the 2024 Mayor's Award for Arts and Culture. An honour well deserved.**

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Although HEIRS has many historic photos of our town, we are always on the lookout for more. Currently we are *In Search Of* old photos of the **Heaton building** – which is now occupied by the Bearded Dog, and photos of the original **T.B. Adams building** which was on the property now occupied by Golden Law and Hometown Dental.



We'd be grateful if you could take a peek at your old photos and pass along any that you might find so we can digitize them and share them with the current occupants of the buildings. Originals will be returned.



## Keeping Time with Legion 338

- by Dawn Bezaire, Legion Branch 338 Secretary

### Lest We Forget

The Harrow Cenotaph, created in 2015, will be hosting Royal Canadian Legion Harrow Br.338 laying of the wreaths on Remembrance Day, Monday, November 11th at 10:15 am. The Remembrance Day ceremony takes place at 10:45. Each year the Legion sells wreaths to honour fallen comrades to individuals and businesses with all money collected going into the Poppy fund to support veterans.

The Cenotaph is also home to personalized engraved bricks that are available to purchase by contacting [rcbranch338@gmail.com](mailto:rcbranch338@gmail.com). The money from the CenotaphBrickprogram goes directly into the Cenotaph fund for maintenance and improvements.

This beautiful park is located in downtown Harrow on King Street, east of the Post Office The Legion will be hosting Christmas Card nights to send to our deployed soldiers. Local Scouting and Girl Guide groups, as well as Community members are invited to participate.




Entrance to the Veterans Memorial Park and Cenotaph (Cenotaph pictured on Front cover)

Everyone is encouraged to follow our Facebook page for more information <https://www.facebook.com/groups/legionharrow338/>



Decorated rocks line the front of the Cenotaph. From a 2023 community rock paint night led by Secretary, Dawn Bezaire.

**Harrow Legion Book Club**  
**Wed. Nov 20th, 7pm,**  
 Harrow Legion,  
 37 McAfee St  
 PUBLIC WELCOME  
**When The World Fell Silent**  
 by Donna Jones Alward  
 A novel about the 1917 Halifax Explosion



## November 28th Meeting (1:30PM)

(Harrow-Colchester Arena Community Meeting Room)



### Caldwell First Nation

Carrie Ann Peters, Culture & Language Coordinator will share and educate on the traditional values of Caldwell First Nation. With a deep history in the area, predating the arrival of Europeans, the Caldwell First Nation's Traditional Territory spans along Lake Erie from the Detroit River to Long Point.

After 220 years of separation from their Traditional Territory, the Government designated a 200-acre parcel of land as a "Reserve". The Caldwell First Nation is rebuilding their community and rebuilding their connections. Caldwell First Nation continues to build relationships with surrounding Municipalities and Organizations as an effort to create an understanding of Traditional values and restore a harmonious life for the next generations.

Monthly Meetings held at 1:30 in Harrow-Colchester Arena Community Room



## Holiday Hobnob

AT THE **KING STREET CAFE** 24 King St W, Harrow

**WINNING GIFT BASKETS**



**HEIRS NEW 2025 CALENDARS AND LOCAL HISTORY BOOKS FOR SALE**

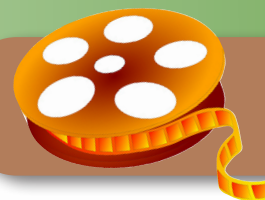
The King Street Cafe will introduce a

**NEW delectable HOLIDAY TREAT**

**FRIDAY DECEMBER 6 10AM-6PM**



**Socks & Bottoms**  
Drop off new gloves, hats & socks for the Harrow Rotary Club



## October Meeting Review

- by Ted Steele, HEIRS Director

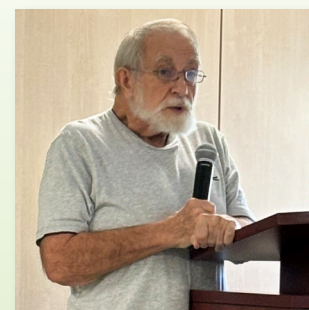
### Preserving Precious Memories



Dennis Marentette

The October 24 meeting of HEIRS featured Dennis Marentette of DDM Video Productions of Windsor [www.ddmvideo.com](http://www.ddmvideo.com). He spoke to us about his passion, and long career, of saving media of various forms by converting them to digital files for computers.

We were reminded that video ages, dries out becomes brittle or damaged, and can be lost forever. He is able to not only copy originals but usually improve the video quality of images, and set to a music background if desired. They are then put onto DVD disks or a flash drive for easy use.



Ted Steele returned to the podium this month to introduce Dennis Marentette

Saving home movies from the past preserves these special memories and allows them to be easily shared among family members at a reasonable price. I can't think of better Christmas gifts to share with our families at this special time of the year. If you have memories to be preserved, contact HEIRS or Dennis directly at (519) 739-3463 or [info@ddmvideo.com](mailto:info@ddmvideo.com) Don't let this golden opportunity slip past you. It may not come again.

## EVENTS AROUND THE COUNTY

Kent Branch OGS

### Photo Restoration & Storage

Dana Palmer discusses organization tips and restoration programs - webinar

Available until November 30

<https://m.youtube.com/@kentbranchogs4311>

Kingsville-Gosfield Heritage Society

### Mill Creek: It's Influence on the

### Development of Kingsville

Speaker: Grant Munroe

November 4 at 2:00pm

First Baptist Church, Kingsville

Essex Branch OGS: Tour of the Franco-Ontarian Resource Centre

November 12, 2024 at 7:00 PM

FREE Webinar. Registration required

<https://us02web.zoom>

[us/meeting/register/](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/)

[tZ0udOGhrDlvGdTmsPMBrdUscusM5aUGa0#/registration](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8120udOGhrDlvGdTmsPMBrdUscusM5aUGa0#/registration)

The Marsh Collection Trivia Night at Shooter's

Amherstburg, \$25/team

November 24 at 7pm

Visit

<https://swoheritage.ca/events/>  
for more event info



## D-Day War Diary

- by Lorrie Stephenson, President, HEIRS

### The Normandy Invasion June 1944 – World War II

On the expected eve of D-day, in the seaside parish of Weymouth in Dorset, England a young man from Essex County, Ontario scribed in the small notebook which he used as a diary. He wrote down the tactics that were to be used for the impending beach landing at Normandy, France. The young man, Harry Brian of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR), served aboard the HMCS corvette “Camrose” – a flower class corvette whose duties were to include escorting convoys to and from the Normandy beaches. The Camrose was one of 109 ships from HMCN to take part in the Normandy invasion.

Harry Brian clearly understood the historic significance of the events and recorded them not only in writing but through photos, which can be found at [www.forposterityssake.ca/CTB-BIO/MEM003936.htm](http://www.forposterityssake.ca/CTB-BIO/MEM003936.htm).

The Brian family lived on Poplar Bluff in Oxley for many years and many of his family members still live in the area. His diary was passed down to his children and grandchildren, including Amy Meleg Flanagan who generously shared several pages surrounding the time of the D-day invasion.

The June 4, 1944 diary entry (next page) referred to an artificial harbour. These temporary harbours, called Mulberry harbours, were a feat of engineering - a tactical response to the devastation of the Dieppe Raid in 1942 in which 6,000 men, most from the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, landed on the open beach. More than half the men were wounded, killed or captured. For the June 1944 invasion, creating a stable landing area for troops and equipment was vital.

Massive sections made of steel and concrete, called Pheonix Caissons, were towed across the English channel. Once reaching the French side they were pieced together like a puzzle to create two portable harbours, each about the size of Dover, England.

*Continued...*



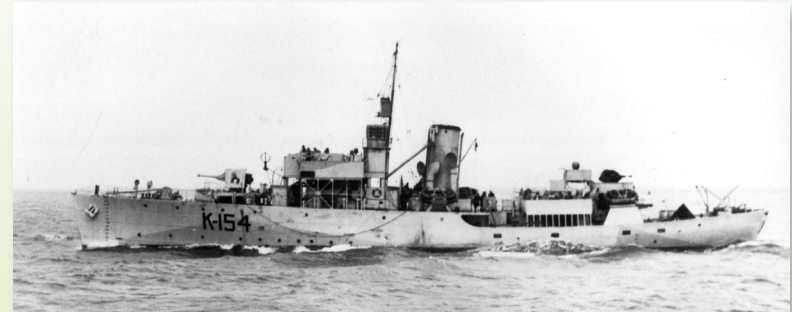
Harry Brian



HMCS CAMROSE K154 circa 1941-1942 - location unknown. Harry Brian beneath red star. From the collection of Thomas Holland Burdon, Courtesy of Dave Burdon [www.forposterityssake.ca](http://www.forposterityssake.ca).

Right: HMCS Camrose K-154

Below: A Phoenix Cassion being towed across the English Channel to Normandy. From the collection of Harry A. J. Brian, RCNVR, Courtesy of David Brian [www.forposterityssake.ca](http://www.forposterityssake.ca).



## D Day Diary ... cont'd

Towing the Phoenix Caissons across the channel was very slow - moving at the speed of a brisk walk, making the sections vulnerable to attack by Germans. Predicting this, high ranking naval officers asked 8 experienced Canadian corvettes, including the Camrose, to protect the convoys. Two of the corvettes were lost in the crossings. First was the Regina, losing most of her crew, followed soon after by the Alberni which sank in about 3 seconds. Despite these losses, not one section of the floating harbours was lost.

The Camrose made it's first crossing on D-day-plus-one (June 7). The corvettes were kept busy, and on several occasions raced full on to head off German E-boats and U-boats, and belted anti-aircraft fire at German planes.

June 4/1944 Weymouth  
10:30 Cleared lower decks for church service. Captain tells us this is the eve of invasion. We are to tow French battle ships to French coast where she will sink herself as an artificial harbour. Our planes are to be black and white striped for recognition. Harbour full of L.S.T. and troop carriers. If everything goes right they'll head for France tonight. A Monitor type battleship is here also. Lane alongside Lunenburg and put a small hole in her side with our anchor. Saw Don Forsythe looking good.

The following are some excerpts from the diary of Harry Brian...

### Jun 4/44 Weymouth, England

9:30 am Cleared lower decks for church service. Captain tells us this is the eve of invasion. We are to tow a French battleship to the French coast where she will sink herself as an artificial harbour. Our planes are to be black and white striped for recognition.

Harbour full of L.S.T. and troop barriers. If everything goes right they'll leave for France tonight. A Monitor type battleship is here also. Came alongside Lunenburg and put a small hole in her side with our anchor. Saw Don Forsythe, looking good.

### June 5/44 Weymouth, England

Invasion has not started yet, probably today. The harbour has been cleared of all ships except us and Baddeck (another Corvette) also battleships. The invasion will be in the next two days. Flying Fortress all around today, they're all black and white. Great activities over at the airbase close by.

### June 6/44 Weymouth, England

Invasion has started, hundreds of planes directly over us with riding lights on, looking like New York City being lifted into the sky. Planes have been returning all day. Huge red flashes in the sky all night. We are to

June 6/1944 Weymouth  
Invasion has started, hundreds of planes flew directly over us with riding lights on looking like New York City being lifted into the sky. Planes have been returning all day. Huge red flashes in the sky all night. We are to leave here at five in the morning escorting French battle ships to the French coast. Wrecked battleship today, very much a wreck, had to be scuttled before to escape capture by German E-boats. Part of invasion force returned, one very low in water. Hundreds of gliders went over.

leave here at five in the morning, escorting a French battleship within one mile of French coast. Visited battleship today, very much a wreck, had to be scuttled (sunk) before, to escape capture by Germans in France. Part of the invasion force returned, one very low in water. Hundreds of gliders went over.

### June 7/44 English Channel

7:00 am Weighed anchor and are proceeding to our destination. We are travelling at 4 knots which is making it very dull. The sky is still filled with planes. The news sounds very encouraging.

### June 8/44 France

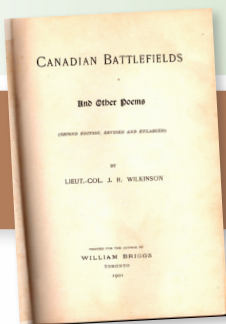
Very exciting night. E-Boat sunk by destroyer just off our stern. Enemy aircraft directly overhead shot down in flames. Came within view of France at 9:20. Hundreds of ships are here; barges, destroyers, corvettes, cruisers and battleships. Battleship shelling inland. Huge oil fire on shore. Retiring to Portsmouth.

Invasion is a success, being described by eye witness the barges landing. Hundreds of planes going over and coming back, keeping a steady line across the channel. The sight is unbelievable. They are only flying about 300 feet above us.

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## A Poet of No Mean Ability

- by Laurie Brett, HEIRS Secretary Treasurer

### Lieutenant-Colonel John Richardson Wilkinson

*After the flight of thirty long years  
They came at the welcome call;  
Someone had suggested a reunion  
Of the "old corps," one and all.  
They came from the village and crossroads,  
The town, the shop, and the farm;  
Just as they did thirty years ago,  
When their hearts were young and warm.*

*They met at the "campfire" of reunion,  
Clasped hands as comrades once more,  
Recalled the deeds of the dauntless past,  
And their campaigns recounted o'er.  
"Fall in!" the old commander shouted,  
"Fall in—after thirty years!"  
With the same old ring, save a tremble,  
And his eyes were misty with tears.*

*And they formed in column by the left,  
"Proved" in sections and in fours,  
Just as they did thirty years ago,  
Guarding our frontier shores.  
But not with the same quick precision  
As when young and strong and gay;  
But they did it, and with kindling eyes,  
Though old and worn and gray.*

Those are the first three stanzas of "The Veterans' Reunion," one of over a hundred poems written by Lt.-Col. John Richardson Wilkinson and published in 1899 in **Canadian Battlefields and Other Poems**. A second edition of the title, published in 1901 as a "revised and enlarged" work, was recently discovered on the HEIRS bookshelves. It's a 309-page publication with marbled cardboard covers, floral end papers, and – most impressively

– gilded page ends.

It's not surprising that HEIRS has a copy of Wilkinson's work. It was very favourably received when it was published, and by 1901 Wilkinson had sold 2,400 copies, many of them within Essex County. Newspaper accounts from 1899 to 1901 show that he travelled throughout the county collecting orders and then delivering them house to house.

### Who was this prolific poet and why did his poetry focus on the military history of Essex County?

John Richardson Wilkinson was born in Mersea Township on September 21, 1837. His Irish great-grandparents had settled in the United States around the time of the American Revolution but moved to Canada in 1801. His grandfather, also named John, settled in Mersea and that line of the family became closely associated with the Town of Leamington. His father, John W. Wilkinson, served as sergeant in the militia during the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837-1838.

On the family farm, Wilkinson learned carpentry and cabinet-making. For many years he was a contractor and builder. In fact, he was the building inspector during construction of the original Essex High School built in 1888 – the first high school in the county, outside Windsor.

In 1862, Wilkinson was appointed color-sergeant in the Leamington Independent Infantry Company. According to the Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of Essex, he then "took special pains to perfect himself in military tactics," passed some competency tests, and was then qualified to command a



LIEUT.-COL. J. R. WILKINSON,  
Late Commanding 21st Fusiliers.

Continued...

## A Poet of No Mean Ability ... cont'd

company and regiment. He was appointed Second Lieutenant during the Fenian Raid of 1866. Shortly thereafter he was made First Lieutenant and subsequently Captain and Major. He was also his company's drill instructor for 16 years.

When the Northwest Rebellion broke out in 1885, Wilkinson was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel and was authorized to organize five companies of volunteer infantry. The regiment, originally known as the 21st Essex Battalion of Infantry, would also be called the Essex Fusiliers. In 1927, it would take a more familiar name -- the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment.

Although his training consisted primarily of drills, Wilkinson's enthusiasm for military operations was stirred. He was one of the first men to enter the Military Rifle League and his teams always successfully competed in shooting tournaments. He also began to write poems about Canadian military engagements, paying special attention to the War of 1812, the Upper Canada Rebellion,

the Fenian Raid, and the Boer War. Titles that are especially meaningful to us at HEIRS include "The Battle of the Canard River," "The Taking of Detroit," "The Battle of Point au Pelee Island," and "The Rescue" – a poem about the daring rescue of ice harvesters who drifted "out over the bosom of Erie, 'mid the tempest's ruthless roar."

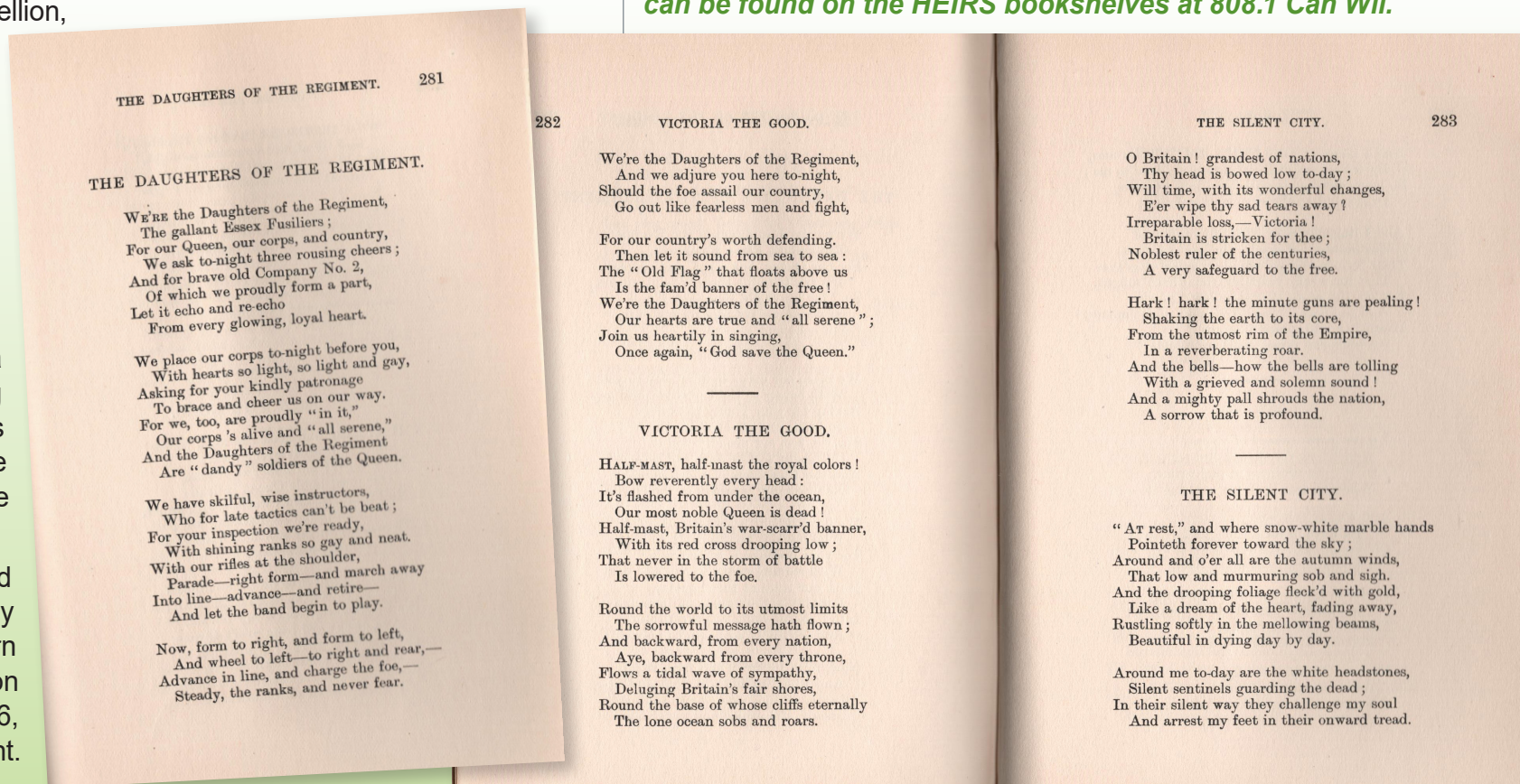
In 1892, Wilkinson retired from active military duty. When the Western Veterans' Association was established in 1896, he was elected president.

The poem that opened this story was written as a tribute to the members of the North Ridge Rifles and Leamington Infantry who mustered in 1866 to repel the Fenians (that never came) and reunited 30 years later to reminisce.

*Wilkinson's success as a local poet is well documented. In 1899, the Essex Free Press noted that the Colonel was "possessed of a good deal of poetical ability."*

A Toronto Globe report published in 1901 said, "his poems are charged with a robust spirit of patriotism and loyalty." Shortly after Wilkinson's second edition of *Canadian Battlefields* was released, *The Commemorative Biographical Record* was published (1905). In the entry for Wilkinson, the authors noted that the Lieutenant-Colonel was "an author of no mean ability."

*You can judge for yourself. Canadian Battlefields and Other Poems can be found on the HEIRS bookshelves at 808.1 Can Wil.*





# Detained by the Russians

## My Friendship with Pastor Eduard Franz

- by Brian A. Leslie

The following story was submitted by HEIRS member Brian A. Leslie and is based on conversations Brian had with Pastor Eduard Franz (1934-2012). It also contains a few personal asides about Brian's youthful adventures in Europe and how their lives intertwined.

Brian served on the HEIRS Board of Directors for eight years and is an avid writer. He writes and performs under his professional name, Brian A., Janis, and Billie (BAJB Never Alone).

This story is about my very close friend Pastor Eduard Franz and his wife Marion who pastored the Bethel Pentecostal Church by the Harrow Public School on Herdman Street. Pastor Franz died in the summer of 2012. I



Today's Pentecostal Church building on Herdman Street

was unable to attend his funeral due to personal illness. I was therefore not able to tell this story at his funeral.

Pastor Franz was born in a German section of Poland, in the north, near the Baltic Sea. As is common to most of the persons of German ethnicity in Harrow, he arrived here after escaping the Russian army that gathered on the eastern border of Germany at the end of the

Second World War. Time for people like Pastor Franz is divided into "Vor, Während und Nach dem Krieg" – before, during and after the war. This is what happened to him during the war.

As the Russian troops entered Poland, they came to the farm owned by Pastor Franz' parents. A Polish worker told the Russians that there were no Germans there, which gave the family time to escape to the grandparents' farm.

Despite the brief reprieve, the little family was eventually captured and placed in front of a Russian firing squad! The officer gave the command –

"Ready, Aim, . . ." – but balked at the final order, as he watched Pastor Franz' mother gather the little family pitifully for their last time of prayer together.

Having avoided execution, the Russians sent the family to a concentration camp built by the Germans near Berlin to house Jews and political prisoners. Pastor Franz' father died in the camp under Russian guard.

As a young detainee, Pastor Franz was granted a day pass, which allowed him to leave the camp and enter East Berlin to serve as a domestic worker for a German family. To get there and back each day he had to walk over unclaimed, decaying bodies of war casualties.

When the war was over and his family finally left the camp, Pastor Franz took a chance and jumped over the barbed wire separating East and West Berlin. This was before the Berlin Wall – "Die Mauer" – was built. He passed through Checkpoint Charlie and joined the American and Allied troops.

**Brian's story:** I was detained at Checkpoint Charlie in 1971. Despite ongoing Cold War tensions, my youthful self decided to enliven my European adventure by crossing over to the Soviet side of "Die Mauer." After four hours of pointless interrogation, I was overwhelmed by my treatment behind the "Iron Curtain" and the baffled East German officer released me back to West Berlin.

The U.S. military then flew Pastor Franz to Hanover where he trained to be a butcher and later studied to become an accountant. His



The Iron Curtain was both a metaphor and a physical barrier dividing Europe into "east" and "west" after World War II. It consisted of fences, walls, minefields and watchtowers that ran for 7,000 kilometres.



Checkpoint Charlie today



family eventually joined him and established a nursing home near Hanover that continues to operate today.

In time, Pastor Franz decided to attend Bible School in England. It was there that he met his wife, Marion Holtfoth, originally from Hamburg, Germany.

In 1945, during Operation Gomorrah, the Allies flew many mission sorties over Germany, dropping incendiary bombs that nearly obliterated cities and killed thousands of civilians. Like the city of Dresden, the Port of Hamburg, home of the Germany Navy, was a major target. As firebrands fell around them during the bombing, Marion's mother wrapped Marion and her siblings in wet blankets and led them to safety on the outskirts of the city. Commuter S-Bahn trains were waiting to take groups of displaced people into the countryside. When her mother looked out the train window and saw a sign for Glückstadt -- which translates to Happy or Lucky City -- she knew it was the right place to resettle her little family.

As a teenager, Marion decided that she would like to attend Bible School in England. Her father had returned from his military service and disapproved of his daughter's decision. He said that if she went to England, she could not return home. Marion decided to go anyway.

Eduard Franz, not yet a pastor, was the president of the student body when Marion arrived at the Bible School. They were soon fast friends. After graduation, he and Marion returned to his family home in Hanover. When the church elders objected to them living in the same house, they had a simple marriage.

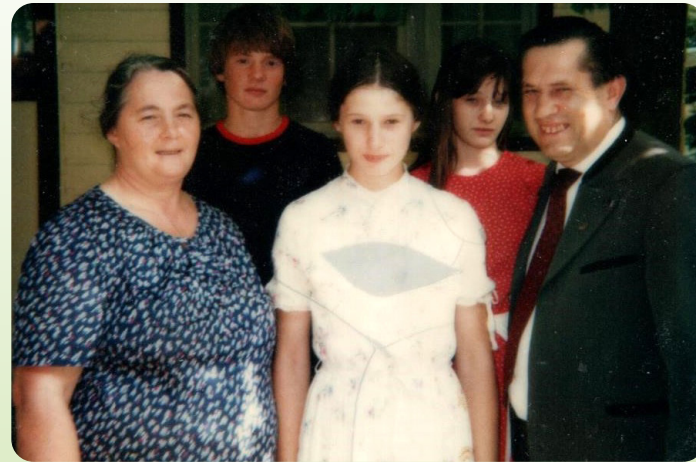
The married couple returned to West Berlin to help oversee a containment camp for refugees from East Germany, which was at that time under

***Brian's story:** In 1970, I worked at a commercial rose nursery in the German state of Schleswig-Holstein, just south of Denmark at the base of Jutland Peninsula. As the name suggests, the state is the home of the black and white Holstein cows. Every day that summer, I punched in and out of work at a barn located in Marion's small town of Glückstadt. It has always amazed me that 25 years later I was sharing memories of Glückstadt with Marion when we were both living in Harrow.*

Russian control. They also worked in the ministry of a local church. Some of their students included Helmut Kohl who became the Chancellor of West Germany, and Reinhart Bonnke, a high profile evangelist who principally worked in Africa.

In 1985, Pastor Franz was invited to come to Canada as clergyman to a German-speaking congregation at Bethel Church in Harrow. Without government authorization, he was reluctant to accept and move his large family to Canada. As a result, he made an appointment to meet with a federal government official in the West German capital of Bonn. As luck (or divine intervention) would have it, the official had come to Harrow as a young boy to visit his grandmother who attended the very church that Pastor Franz was being asked to lead.

With official approval, Pastor Franz came to Harrow with his wife and seven of his twelve children and began pastoring the German congregation at Bethel Church. In 1991, they bought a 40-acre farm on the Third Concession that continues to remain in the family.



*Pastor Franz, his wife Marion, and three of their children: Kornelia in front, Thomas and Danielle in the back.*

In 1993, I entered their lives when I decided to attend German-language Sunday School. Because of the time I had spent in Germany in my twenties, I was able to communicate with them in both English and German.

*With so much in common – two shared languages, a familiarity with Glückstadt and other German cities, and first-hand encounters with the “Zonengrenze” or Iron Curtain – it's really no wonder we became best friends.*



## Board of Directors

### President

Lorrie Stephenson

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Kat Schryburt

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Laurie Brett

Marta Leardi Anderson

Jackie Baldwin

James Gatrall

Milo Johnson

Esther Meerschaut

Ted Steele

### Hospitality

Margaret McLean

## Resource Centre Hours

Tuesdays & Thursdays 10AM-3PM • Tuesday Evenings 6-8PM

NOTE: Saturdays (by appointment)

## Membership

\$30 CDN/U.S. per person or couple.

Memberships run May 1st - April 30th annually.

Please provide phone, postal address, email

## Payment

*E-transfer payments & donations to HEIRS?*

Send to: heirsont@gmail.com

Make cheques payable to

HEIRS, 243 McAfee St., PO Box 53, Harrow ON, Canada N0R 1G0

NOTE: Members may research for free.

Non-members using research library \$10 per visit (+ photocopy fees)

## Newsletters

HEIRS newsletter is published 10 times/year: colour digital version by email or B&W print version by regular post. Colour print newsletters available at sponsor locations.

*DISCLAIMER: Information in this newsletter is based on the best sources available to us at the time of publication. Historical accuracy is important. Please advise if you have additional information, photographs or other materials to share with us.*

## Meetings

Meetings held on the 4th Thursday of the month, September to June, (July, August & December excepted).

# Canadel



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Cider flights, glass & bottles to go.

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