

Mr. Russell McKay  
2965 Steeple Hill Crescent  
RR #2  
Richmond, ON  
K0A 2Z0

Dear Mr. McKay

It was a pleasure speaking with you about your book and how it has really helped me gain a better understanding of the life my Dad experienced during his time in the 420 Squadron. I do apologize for the time it has taken me to get you this information.

The material that I included is also on the enclosed Compact Disc that can be viewed on computer. I used the Internet to obtain information on the 420 Squadron, the Halifax aircraft photos, information and photos of Stalag Luft III, the crew memorial information and the excerpt from Kent Lympe's diary.

I have included all the official and personal correspondence that my Dad had in his possession, including my Grandfather's April 20 letter (the night my Dad was shot down) which was returned by the R.C.A.F. Records Officer. I cannot begin to imagine the fear and worry that his family must have gone through after receiving that letter, until they found out he was still alive, albeit a POW.

I have also included a letter to my Grandmother from May Gough, the Mother of Sgt. Patrick Gough, in which Mrs. Gough and Mrs. Warren, the wife of Sgt. Alfred Warren, wondered about the fate of the missing crew members while still holding on to some hope. It has been almost 64 years since it was penned and while there may have been further correspondence with Mrs. Gough, I have never been made aware of it. I debated including the letter due to its very sad and personal nature, but decided to, in part, because of the number of years that have passed and because it so eloquently captures a side of war from the home front and its impact on those left behind. Every time I read that letter it tears at my emotions and I have made sure that all my (now grown) children have read it as well, in order to give them a first-hand perspective on the personal consequences of war.

I have also enclosed three documentaries on two DVDs which I'm sure you will find interesting if you haven't already seen them. Please excuse their quality, which may not be the best as I recorded them off the television and then transferred them to DVD.

The DVD "Warriors of the Night" is about the nighttime air war over Europe and the write-up for it states:

*Veterans from both sides recount the commonplace bravery and horror that they faced on a daily basis. The complex tactics that evolved and the race of competing*

*technologies are related by graphic images and animation. The war had become not only battle between men but also a struggle of science and technology.*

The other DVD contains two documentaries, “The Great Escape – The Canadian Story” and “Forced March To Freedom”. While my Dad arrived in Stalag Luft III just after the 50 airmen escapees were recaptured and murdered by the SS (he also said that escape committees were only interested in pilots and not air gunners), he was involved in the “Forced March” and documented his experiences in his “Wartime Log”. While it was interesting to correlate his diary entries with the documentary, it was unfortunate that the liberation portion of it only talks about Patton and the U.S. liberating the American POW's and Montgomery and the British liberating the British and some Canadian POW's. My Father was liberated, so to speak, by the Russians from Stalag IIIA at Luckenwalde. I say this because even after the Russians arrived at the camp and all the German guards had disappeared, his ordeal was still not over. A notation in his diary states:

*May 6, 1945 – Russians refuse to let Americans evacuate us, some trucks have gone back empty. Russians have posted guards who have shot at some of the fellows.*

The following day, however, he did manage to get away by making his way to the American lines at Magdeburg and eventually home.

With respect to the “Forced March”, I also had the pleasure of briefly corresponding with a gentleman by the name of George Sweanor who contacted me through an outfit called Halifax Aircraft Families Association (more on this later). George was with 419 Sqn and was shot down on March 28, 1943. He ended up in the north compound at Stalag Luft III and remained there until February 1945. He told me that at the time of the Great Escape, there were 2,000 airmen in the north compound: about 1100 RAF, 300 RCAF, 200 RAAF and RNZAF, 200 Poles, and the rest made up of many nationalities. He also said that what happened to Dad's crew was typical in that only 17% of Bomber Command crews that were shot down survived. He mentioned that most of those killed in the “Forced March” were killed by “friendly” fire and that he was strafed by 9 USAAF Thunderbolts, with some of his friends killed in spite of huge Red Crosses they had. He also mentioned that many more were killed by RAF and RCAF Typhoons and Mosquitos. He ended up in Nurnberg and Moosburg on the southern route while most of his friends were on the northern route (including my Dad), ending up in Stalag IIIA at Luckenwalde.

With respect to The Halifax Aircraft Families Association, I took the following information from the November 2005 website of the Ex Air Gunners Short Bursts:

*We'd be very grateful for a mention or for you to just let people know about **The Halifax Aircraft Families Association**. We're part of the Halifax Aircraft Association at Trenton. We are a group of second and third generation Hali descendants who share information on how to find service records, flight details, links, memoirs and so forth with an emphasis on families that start out knowing nothing. We have a distinguished group of vets and historians who make sure*

*we're accurate, but mostly we are sharing research information that takes hours and loads of blind alleys to find.*

*Lately, we have been getting requests in from former aircrew who are looking for one another so our mission is expanding. Since we've only just started up and our database is limited as yet, we're hoping to contact the squadrons and related associations. I have for example a gentleman from the 502 coastal command who is looking for his pilot. He's the only 502 I have in my database and I'd like to be able to give you a heads up and see if you have someone. In return, of course, I'll share everything we have and you can feel free to use it. We'd just ask that you give the Trenton group a nod for supporting us.*

*We have a newsletter and a sheet on tracking former aircrew and we are building a website to make this information more easily available. We can be found at [www.halifaxaircrews.com](http://www.halifaxaircrews.com) but we hope you'll keep in mind that it's under construction.*

*Thank you  
Diana DeLuca  
(Donald Campbell, 640 Squadron KIA May 1944)*

I am trying to find out if this organization still exists but am having no luck.

In closing, I hope this letter finds you well and that you find this information interesting. It is certainly not my intent to dredge up painful memories.

My contact information is as follows:

Bill Anderson  
851 Somerset Avenue  
Winnipeg MB  
R3T 1E5  
(204) 284-3979 (home phone)  
(204) 945-4380 (work phone)  
[Bill.Anderson@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Bill.Anderson@gov.mb.ca) (email)

Thank you once again for speaking with me as well as the opportunity to correspond further.

Sincerely