

Jeanne Muldoon interviews **Roy Wheeler** who came from England to work at No. 5 Royal Air Force Radio School.

### **Excerpt 1- Arriving in Clinton for the first time**

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - And so anyway, so you and all this exotic equipment got on your CN train and landed in dear old Clinton town.

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - Well we stopped in Stratford first, on the way through. People were good. They gave us cups of tea and donuts and stuff like that.

**J.M.** - Right

**R.W.** - Then when we got to Clinton, there was a whole big crowd. Everybody knew we were coming so the station was packed. And my wife, who I married in '42, was a Canadian girl, and she was down there.

**J.M.** - Yeah...

**R.W.** - So then they put the railway cars with the equipment on, and they poured [?] them into the siding put barbed wire on, I think this thing is still going, yeah it's still going. Put barbed wire around it, machine guns and everybody couldn't understand all this and that's the way it stayed until they got it all unloaded.

**J.M.** - Now was the compound built at this point?

**R.W.** - Yes, there was a compound with electric fence on top.

**J.M.** - Yep, that was in the station, it was ready for the equipment.

**R.W.** - Right in the station, yeah. The rest of it had to be built afterwards. Most of the buildings had to be built afterwards, just enough to store this.

**J.M.** - Now you got there, we'll say around the 21<sup>st</sup> of July, how long did it take before you had barracks available, you just mentioned you slept in tents.

**R.W.** - Well they built 'em as they went along, we were only in tents for a little while. Everybody all piled into one barracks, as they got bigger, they kept building them.

**J.M.** - Approximately how many of you came over? In the initial unit, you remember?

**R.W.** - I can't tell you unless you want to count that picture.

**J.M.** - All right

**R.W.** - 'Cause that is the unit!

**J.M.** - That is the unit?

**R.W.** - That is the first unit

**J.M.** - Gotcha. Well there was quite a few of you.

**R.W.** - There was quite a few of us

**J.M.** - I would dare say, it looks 150 maybe

**R.W.** - Over 200 or something like that

**J.M.** - Yeah, I would say so. That was a big unit.

**R.W.** - Oh yeah, you had to have it.

### **Excerpt 2- Toilets (latrines)**

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - Well, we had the best latrines you ever saw.

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - Did you?

**R.W.** - Yeah, we had a trench with a 2x4 across it. Exactly what we had for the first couple of weeks.

**J.M.** - Keep you feet dry anyway

**R.W.** - We could kinda joked, we had an adjutant who was a rather big man...

**J.M.** - Yeah...

**R.W.** - And when he sat down, everybody got up.

**J.M.** - It's like a teeter-totter

**R.W.** - Well, it bent in the middle. If you're looking in a six-foot trench, you know what I mean, it's not a very happy thing to look into, is it?

**J.M.** - No, it isn't

**R.W.** - Something like MASH, you know, with the bog.

**J.M.** - That's right

### **Excerpt 3 – The food and living on British rations**

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - Did you have your own cooks with you or?

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - We brought RAF cooks, yeah.

**J.M.** - All right

**R.W.** - 'till we brought the RCAF in and then they got their own cooks because they wouldn't eat the food the RAF cooks cooked.

**J.M.** - They weren't fond...

**R.W.** - We were on, we were on British rations when we first came here

**J.M.** - Were you?

**R.W.** - One egg a month and all that sort of stuff, until we kicked up and we finally...

**J.M.** - Because that's very unnecessary in this country

**R.W.** - Brought a French chef in, Chance [?] and he came and changed everything.

**J.M.** - Good

**R.W.** - Gave us creamed corn and nobody'd eat it. We didn't know what creamed corn was, got tried to poison us.

#### **Excerpt 4- Roy discusses his job responsibilities**

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - Well I worked in the technical headquarters

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - All right, so you were in liaison with a lot of the work that was being done

**R.W.** - I looked, yes, I looked after all the secret and confidential documents, made sure they were all shipped to the right spots and where they went and had them all recorded and all that sort of thing. Made sure everything was all secured at night, noon hour...

#### **Excerpt 5- Training the United States Army Air Corps**

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - Okay, well now, when did they commence training there?

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - About two months after we got there, less than that

**J.M.** - About September

**R.W.** - Yep. Now the first people we trained were the United States Army Air Corps.

**J.M.** - You had a few Navy lads too.

**R.W.** - Afterwards, the United States Army Air Corps came in first. They went to Corpus Christi. Because Corpus Christi was the, it was outside of Texas, that's where they went to Corpus Christi. They were all big boys

**J.M.** - Right

**R.W.** - Like they were all Colonels and Generals.

**J.M.** - They were the big wigs in the Army...

**R.W.** - They were the sort of guys you walked up and they said, "Well, how old are you son?" "Oh, I'm 19 years of age Sir." "Oh, well I've only been in the service for 30..."

#### **Excerpt 6- Establishing a training centre in the United States**

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - So these people went back to establish a training centre in the United States, after that we had the United States Navy.

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - But tell me, was that in Texas at Corpus Christi or was that closer to San Diego in California?

**R.W.** - I don't know, I've never been to Corpus Christi

**J.M.** - All right

**R.W.** - I know it's in Texas, that's all we did know.

**J.M.** - Okay, maybe it was in Texas that they put in their little radar school

**R.W.** - They put in their training, yeah

#### **Excerpt 7- What was taught at No. 5 Radio School**

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - Well now, that's something else that I'd like to bring out, you, like some of them were trained in radio, ship-to-shore type of thing as well as RADAR or what...

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - No, most of it was just, actually it was only submarine devices, was what it was.

**J.M.** - All right, gotcha

**R.W.** - That's common knowledge now, nobody.... It was just submarine, just straight

**J.M.** - Because they were afraid of the submarines

**R.W.** - It was just straight SONAR down and back up again sort of thing, that's all it was

**J.M.** - All right

**R.W.** - On obsolete machines

**J.M.** - Yeah. But now, and when the Navy came it was the same thing

**R.W.** - All the same thing, they used to do it off of the boats you see

**J.M.** - Of course

**R.W.** - The United States Navy did it too. We had two liaison officers, one was army and one was United States. Now one thing I remember was we lost two officers both killed in car accidents. Used to driving on the left hand side of the road, came around the corners

and were on the right hand side of the road. They're both buried out here in Clinton right in the Legion plot. Was a Flight Lieutenant McEwan [?] and Flying Officer Sammy Parker, or Johnny Parker I mean.

### **Excerpt 8- Putting out a fire with a bucket brigade and training Canadians**

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - We had a few things, we had one of the buildings on fire one day. By the time they got the fire truck out we had ladder brigade and bucket brigade and we had it all out. The CO was mad.

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - Now, was this in one of the barracks?

**R.W.** - It was one of the buildings, it was one of the buildings over the fence, we got over the fence and put buckets over and got it out before the fire department made it.

**J.M.** - Well I don't image that the CO would be too impressed with the...

**R.W.** - He wasn't, he was a little bit

**J.M.** - ... with the fire department

**R.W.** - No, he wasn't. They had to go for a lot of drill afterwards.

**J.M.** - Because that equipment would be irreplaceable, or a lot of it...

**R.W.** - Well yeah, there was nothing in the hut thank goodness, they were building it and we don't know what caused it to get on fire but it did...

**J.M.** - And now, besides the Americans, did they start bringing chaps over?

**R.W.** - Canadians, they trained Canadians because it was Air Commonwealth Training Plan you see

**J.M.** - Yes, it was, but were there not men from the United Kingdom that came over for RADAR training as well?

**R.W.** - No, they got that in England

**J.M.** - All right, okay. I didn't know that because...

**R.W.** - Nope, it was all Canadians trained here. We had Canadian instructors afterwards you see.

### **Excerpt 10- Who trained at No. 5 Radio School**

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - Oh yeah, it was full of Americans.

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - Yeah, were you still there?

**R.W.** - Oh yeah, I was there when all the Americans were there.

**J.M.** - Okay

**R.W.** - I knew a bunch of them quite well.

**J.M.** - Right

**R.W.** - One man we had there was Andy McLean, he became president of Canada Packers, his father was president of Canada Packers. Squadron Leader Andy McLean, yeah. He was a wild duck that one.

### **Excerpt 11- Travelling to other towns and playing sports**

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - Oh, yeah, yeah, we used to do Goderich, Seaforth, Clinton, a lot of them go to Stratford.

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - Right

**R.W.** - We finally got down to London and we used to go down there.

**J.M.** - Right. I know at Centralia for instance that Stephen Township raised money and helped furnish their hall, you know

**R.W.** - Oh yeah.

**J.M.** - Things of that nature, now did you have a ball team and...

**R.W.** - Not particularly, we more football, and we played soccer a bit and boxing and stuff like that.

**J.M.** - But now when the Americans were there, did they not have a ball team?

**R.W.** - Oh, they used to get out there and bang it around. We didn't know what they were doing but...

**J.M.** - All right. I realize the difference between...

**R.W.** - Yeah, we didn't know what they were doing, we used to get out there

**J.M.** - Good, because soccer, I realize, is from your part of the country or world and we played very little soccer in Canada. I don't think it was played, lacrosse is about...

**R.W.** - Now it has taken over from regular football

**J.M.** - Has it ever!

### **Excerpt 12- Girls and riding the bus**

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - And they had dances out at the Station?

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - Oh yeah, we had dances. We had local girls used to come out for dances and we had a cinema up there that would show. Girls could come out, we

used to meet them at the gate. We had a hostess house up there where you could meet them.

**J.M.** - Right

**R.W.** - At the hospital

**J.M.** - And there were busloads that came from Goderich occasionally. The hostesses at the canteen would go down. I was a junior hostess...

**R.W.** - Oh yeah, we used to go down to the Canteen. And we used to have a, back and forth from Clinton, we had an old bus that was run by a man named George Shipley, he's been dead now. And it was 10 cents.

**J.M.** - Yes, I remember that.

**R.W.** - And if you couldn't get in the bus, you rode on top. Had a railing about a foot high all the way around top, so you sat on the top and held on the railing while you drove. I've done that many a times.

### **Excerpt 13 – Buying an old car**

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - Of course, I imagine some of the boys at Clinton did the same as they do up at... They would share to buy an old car. Everybody throw in five bucks.

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - Yeah. we did, we did

**J.M.** - Do you remember what kind of a car it was?

**R.W.** - Yeah, it was an old Essex. I remember it quite well.

**J.M.** - And you kept it in pretty good mechanical order I imagine?

**R.W.** - Well, best you could

### **Excerpt 14- Meeting his wife on the highway outside of Seaforth**

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - Now you mention that you met your wife in Clinton, now was this at one of the dances or a house, home party or...

**ROY WHEELER (R.W.)** - No, actually, I met my wife on the Seaforth Highway. I was coming home with some people and there was an accident, and with local girls too so we stopped and I said, "What's the problem?" I've been in medicine, so I was tested in it, that's what I was going in to before I got in to the service, so they said, oh this, we got this, and I said what happened? They said, we got the people here but over in the field someplace, in the corn field there is a man, he flew right through the, there was one of these with the canvas tops you know?

**J.M.** - Oh yes, yes

**R.W.** - They said, he's flown over there and he's laying out in the field someplace. They said, "Nope, we're not going over there!"

**J.M.** - Was it on those curves coming out of Seaforth?

**R.W.** - No it was on a straight away. I don't know what they've done, what they'd been in to but it was and the car was in the ditch, I headed over there and found the guy, sat with him until we got Dr. McMaster from Seaforth.

**J.M.** - I remember him

**R.W.** - so McMaster come over and he says, I looked at him and he says Oh, Well have you been sitting here for a while, he's quite a guy, I've been sitting here for quite a little while, he says, what's the matter with him? Well I said, he's got a fracture on the base of his skull and he's not going to live much longer if you don't do something. So he said obviously, by the way I say I'm going to be in trouble, I'm way, way late getting in with my pass and he said going to look after all that one for you [?]. So another car come along and got in, they stopped, I got in and this girl sat on my lap and it was my wife.

**J.M.** - Oh for heavens sake

**R.W.** - So for a long time everyone called me Doc around Clinton. But all the power to McMaster, that guy did die, he did have a fracture at the base of his skull. As soon as you looked at him you could tell the way... Those days you couldn't do much. You still couldn't do much about it then

**J.M.** - No, but if they had got him to a hospital...

**R.W.** - Well we waiting for so long to get somebody. It took over two hours before you could get a hold of anybody. But all the power to him, I got called in to the commanding officer's the next morning and Dr. McMaster called up and congratulated me on what I was doing.