

Dance through the Darkness



The Untold Story of the R.C.A.F. Streamliners

Andy Sparling

Dedicated

to the young men of the R.C.A.F. Streamliners, who forged a world-class big band out of nothing while a war went on all around them, and then shared their music with servicemen and women aching for a taste of home



L TO R: GEORGE LANE (VOCALIST) TROMBONES: CHARLIE OVERALL BILL BEBBINGTON MEL SMITH - SAXES: PHIL SPARLING PAT RICCIO JACK PERDUE FRANK PALEN - PIANO: LYLE KOHLER - TRUMPETS (BACK ROW, L TO R): FRASER LOBBAN BILLY CARTER CLAUDE LAMBERT - DRUMS: DON HILTON - BASS: JACK FALLON - GUITAR: LEN COPPOLD - MISSING: BOB BURNS (SAX)

PHOTO AT 21 CLUB, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

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Foreword

I regret not looking into this story a long time ago.

I got mildly interested in the RCAF Streamliners in the late 1980s, more than forty years after my dad Phil had brandished his weapons of war overseas – tenor and baritone saxophones, and a clarinet. I asked him a few questions “on tape” for a radio program I hosted on the big bands, and managed to elicit a few less-than-revealing clips that I included in the show. Somehow satisfied, I stopped thinking about it, and Dad rarely volunteered anything after.



Twenty years later, wanting to know more, I asked him to write down what he remembered about his wartime Streamliners experience. He produced a 10-page memoir in ink – he never touched a computer in his life - revealing more in his thoughtful and sometimes poetic style than he ever had. Still not a lot, but enough for me to think, OK, now I’m getting interested.

We lived in different cities and I was still working. I didn’t follow up. About a year later, he died rather suddenly. Opportunity lost.

Slowly, in the ten years after his death, I became borderline-obsessed. I’d come across a photo here, have a conversation there, and I connected with a then-surviving band member and, not wishing to make the mistake again, recorded a serious interview before he died. I applied for Dad ‘s service record; checked out

books, looked in Canada’s national archives, museums, old newspapers, all of it. I’ve been in touch with most of the families, and Len Coppold, the last surviving Streamliner in 2020, who all provided a wealth of photos and information.

The more I looked, the more pride I took in the accomplishments of my dad and all the musicians, sometimes barely out of their teens, who served their country in a unique way. I frankly did not expect that every family member - sons, daughters, spouses, grandsons, granddaughters - communicated to me their own deep pride in their guy’s membership in what knowledgeable musicians have called one of the greatest big bands ever produced in Canada.



Back: Bill Bebbington (trombone), Billy Carter (trumpet), Don Hilton (drums), M.O. Smith (trombone), Jack Fallon (bass)
Middle: Claude Lambert (trumpet), Fraser Lobban (trumpet), Phil Sparling (reeds) Front: Frank Palen (reeds),
Pat Riccio (reeds/arranger), Jack (Jake) Perdue (reeds), George Lane (vocalist) Not seen: Lyle Kohler (piano), Charlie
Overall (trombone). Len Coppold (guitar), and Bob Burns (reeds) would both join later.

I've been surprised to find there's not much about the Streamliners in the archives, the museums, and the old newspapers. This account of mine is cobbled together with some first-person interviews, a surviving list of every gig the band played (between 500-600) in the U.K. and in Europe, a few newspaper and military publication clippings, information from a very few books, family members, some archival material, a personal memoir and my Dad's military service record. It's a good story - full of wartime music, fear, friendship, sadness and humour.

In just three years, this group of semi-professional musicians grew from a motley trio of "let's jam in our spare time" Canadian air force recruits into a 15-piece swinging ensemble described by the great Glenn Miller as "the best band in Europe...next to mine." There were performances with major stars in the U.K. and beyond - Vera Lynn, Stephane Grappelli, Gloria Brent and Anna Neagle. After the war, Streamliners played with jazz legends like Duke Ellington and Art Tatum...and two even recorded with the Beatles. They dodged "buzz" bombs, endured close calls during the Battle of Arnhem, and stood in shocked witness to the aftermath of the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. They did all of it to give Allied fighting men and women that indispensable and soul-nourishing taste of home - when, and where they needed it most.

This is for them, their families, and for all those who'd like to know.

Chapter One

A 'Musicians Wanted' Notice?

On Friday, April 12th 1940, 17-year-old Phil Sparling played his saxophone in an eight-piece dance band for the town high school's "At Home" celebration.¹ The town was Clinton, Ontario, and Sparling, who was a student at Clinton Collegiate Institute until he quit at the end his Grade 11 year, had devoted himself to music full-time playing in Johnny Carr's London, Ontario-based orchestra.

He wasn't the only ex-C.C.I. student who'd begun to make his way in the world with a sax. At 16, Jack Perdue had also quit school for music a year or so earlier. He played that year on the Lido Deck at Burlington's famous Brant Inn with a terrific up-and-coming band under the leadership of Richard Avonde.² Perdue had already played professionally with the Avonde band in the summer of 1939 at the big ballroom in Port Stanley on the Lake Erie shore.

Perdue had a buddy with him In the Avonde band from Goderich, Ontario - just a few miles up the road from Clinton - a wiry and talented trumpeter by the name of Billy Carter, who would eventually be described by musicians in-the-know as one of Canada's best.

Across the Atlantic, the German war machine smashed and occupied Poland at the start of World War Two, as Jack and Billy played for the dancers at the Brant Inn. And by August 1940, as Phil and Johnny Carr's band played in Kingsville, Ontario, Paris was under Nazi rule while Britain prepared for what many predicted would be the inevitable German invasion from just across the English Channel. The United Kingdom hung by a thread as badly outnumbered Spitfire fighter pilots barely managed to keep control of the skies over London and other major cities.

It wouldn't be long before Billy, Jack, and Phil would respond to the danger, and enlist in the fight – just like tens of thousands of others across the country. But they had no idea they'd be sharing studios and stages with some of the world's biggest entertainers, or playing their horns for servicemen and women who couldn't get enough of their North American-style jazz and swing.

¹ Clinton News-Recorder, Apr. 18, 1940, "Large Crowd at C.C.I. 'At-Home'", pg. 1

² Clinton News-Recorder, Sept. 14, 1939, "Local Boy Makes Good," pg.1



BILLY CARTER JACK PERDUE PHIL SPARLING

In February 1941, Sparling enlisted and began six months' training as a "rigger" (a specialist in assembling, maintaining, and repairing airplane structures) at the aircraft school in Galt, Ontario. As he would joke much later, he was pretty much a disaster at mechanical stuff, and the air force officially listed him as "short-sighted" and on one occasion as "unsuited" for ground crew work. He liked to say that "I saw a 'Musicians Wanted' sign and I said, "where do I sign up?" Ground crew training had taken him to the RCAF Technical Training School in St. Thomas, Ontario, and in July 1941 he was

mercifully delivered from maintaining airplanes and re-assigned as a "bandsman."

More than two years later, when the Streamliners had really got their act together and had become a big hit with the personnel stationed in Gander, Newfoundland, the base newspaper (The Gander) described the origins of the Streamliners in St. Thomas.

*"It was more than two long war years ago, when an air frame mechanic, a former professional musician named Bill Carter, couldn't get the song of that high hot trumpet out of his blood. He hunted up a couple of pals who felt the same way, Phil Sparling and Jack Perdue, both from Clinton, Ontario, and like himself, former professional musicians. They started to jam it in their spare time at St. Thomas T.T.S. (Technical Training School) where they were stationed.... they persuaded some kindred souls to join them in the Air Force Blue in St. Thomas who also had professional experience in the big dance spots of Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto. But musicians join the Air Force to play another kind of music. The kind you walk (and march) to. And these guys weren't used to walking. It was a little different than playing from a comfortable chair. Then there was the matter of concert music, the long-hair stuff, which is very nice, but it just ain't got "that beat that heats." - **The Gander, January-February 1944***

One of the young musicians in St. Thomas was bassist Jack Fallon of London, Ontario. After the war, Fallon remained in England, and was one of two Streamliners to forge incredibly successful professional careers in the U.K. He played with the legendary Ted Heath big band, Duke Ellington and the Beatles, and with many other major stars.

Fallon wrote a book about his life in music in 2005 entitled *From the Top – Ellington to the Beatles*. He began his military career in the Army, and went to basic training in Woodstock, Ontario, with the Canadian Fusiliers in 1941. According to Fallon, an order came from Ottawa just three days later for him to report to the RCAF school in St. Thomas, where the creation of a dance band, a concert band, and a brass band had been green-lighted.

“This rapid transfer had been instigated by Bill Carter, a trumpet player, who shortly before we had arrived had been put in charge of recruiting players for the dance band and if suitable, for the concert and brass bands.” - From the Top-Ellington to the Beatles p.39

Billy Carter’s “recruitment” of Fallon and other pro and semi-pro musicians came after the St. Thomas station was getting by with volunteer soldier-musicians. It was their hobby, according to an article appearing in *The Aircraftman*, the publication for enlisted personnel, which put out this call for volunteer musicians:

“Any of you fellow-Aircraftmen who play band instruments are urged to see Cpl. Walton of Squadron 1 Wing 2. To date the Bugle Band has 12 buglers and 9 drummers. If your hobby is music—band music—here is the place to keep it up. The boys practice two or three nights every week and play for a number of the parades.” - The Aircraftman, RCAF St. Thomas T.T.S., May 1941

As summer came to a close in 1941, future Streamliners began to show up in St. Thomas to play in the new, permanent dance orchestra that was established, and where suitable, in the concert and brass bands as well. The list included drummer Don Hilton and saxophonist/arranger Pat Riccio from Toronto - two key additions who did much to earn the Streamliners their impressive reputation three years later; trombonists Mel Smith from Lang, Saskatchewan, Charlie Overall from Ottawa, and Bill Bebbington, a Salvation Army musician from St. Thomas, Ontario; trumpeters Claude Lambert of Wyoming, Ontario and Fraser Lobban from Owen Sound, Ontario. Frank Palen of Woodstock, Ontario was another addition to the reed section.

A year later, south of the border, Glenn Miller (yes, the famous bandleader) joined the U.S. Army. He would soon be trying to convince the American military brass to send his swinging army band overseas as well. The efforts of Carter, Perdue, and Sparling to get a dance band going were taking place amidst the big band swing fervour that Miller and other American bands had created all over North America. And, in just three-and-a-half years, they would be part of a band so good, it would be performing with Miller’s big band all-stars at the same venue in London, England.



CONCERT BAND RCAF ST. THOMAS TECHNICAL TRAINING SCHOOL, 1941

In the photo above, the concert band included Jack (a.k.a. Jake) Perdue, (front row, extreme left), Frank Palen (front row, third from left), Pat Riccio (to the right of Palen), Phil Sparling (to the right of Riccio), Don Hilton (back row, second from left, behind tubas), Jack Fallon (with the stand-up bass in the middle of the back row), trombonists Bill Bebbington, Mel Smith and Charlie Overall, (back row, first, second and third from right), and trumpeters Billy Carter and Claude Lambert, front row, second and third from right. Not seen: Fraser Lobban

In a written memoir a year before his death in 2010, Sparling said this band was not very good, and actually broke down during a performance in the officer's mess in the fall of '42, some time after this photo was taken.



MARCHING (BRASS & BUGLE) BAND, RCAF ST. THOMAS TECHNICAL TRAINING SCHOOL , 1941

Future Streamliners in the photo above: Jack (Jake) Perdue (front row, extreme left), Pat Riccio (front row, fourth from left), Jack Fallon (immediately behind Riccio), Billy Carter (immediately behind Fallon), Don Hilton (front row, extreme right), trumpeters Fraser Lobban and Claude Lambert (second row, first and second from right), Phil Sparling (partially hidden, immediately behind Lobban), Bill Bebbington (fourth row, extreme left)
 Not seen: Mel Smith

While he would go on to be one of the leading bassists in Europe after the war, Jack Fallon played trumpet in this band. It didn't start out very well when he confessed to not being able to march in tempo, with an "upper body that had a mind all of its own," so to speak.

"The drill sergeant said I could be spotted a mile away, bobbing up and down like a one-man 'Mexican wave'. My marching did improve to an acceptable standard. The brass band was called on to play many funerals in winter, which meant standing around in the cold and the mouthpiece would freeze to your lips if you didn't keep it in a warm pocket when not in use." - **From the Top: Ellington to the Beatles p.42**

The dance band - the embryo for what would become the RCAF Streamliners a couple of years later – emerged in the late summer and fall of 1941. The photo below is an early one, because it does not include all future members of the band that would eventually be deployed overseas.



DANCE ORCHESTRA - RCAF ST. THOMAS TECHNICAL TRAINING SCHOOL, NEW YEAR'S EVE 1941-1942

Future Streamliners in the photo above: Phil Sparling (front row, third from left), Pat Riccio (to the right of Sparling), Jack Perdue (to the right of Riccio), Mel Smith (back row, trombone, extreme left), Billy Carter (next to Smith), Fraser Lobban (next to Carter)

Very early in its life, in August 1941, the new Station Dance Orchestra was the subject of a report in the local newspaper for what was likely one of its first gigs.

“Corporals Hold First Dance” - St. Thomas Times-Journal, Aug. 1941

“A delightful event took place on Friday evening, July 25th, in the Masonic Temple, St. Thomas, when the Corporals' Mess held their first dance. The ballroom was tastefully decorated and the Station Dance Orchestra, under the leadership of Flt/Sgt Greene, furnished splendid music. Over two hundred couples were in attendance and, in spite of the extreme heat, everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Favors were presented to each lady guest and all present were given paper hats. Several of the officers and their ladies attended the dance and they were loud in their praise of the arrangements and the entertainment.”

A year-and-a-half later, the Station newspaper described what had become regular weekly dances for everyone at RCAF St. Thomas.

“LET THERE BE MUSIC”

*“Saturday night dances in the Recreation Hall continued to be very popular during January, and the month saw Squadron No. 1, 2 Wing staging enjoyable evenings. In addition to these, the new Technical Section Dances got under way with the Aero-Engine Section, and the Maintenance and Flight Routine Hangars holding enjoyable get-togethers. As usual, the jollity of all these occasions was abetted by the excellent music of the Station Orchestra. The Technical Section dances were additionally merrified by the careful planning of novelties and entertainment by the committees in charge. Here's hoping they all continue in like manner!” - **the Aircraftman, Feb. 1943***

Life for the musicians at RCAF St. Thomas was a lot easier than it would be in another year-and-a-half when the band would be deployed overseas. Jack Fallon reported that he and two bandmates rented a summer cottage in nearby Port Stanley on Lake Erie. My dad, Phil Sparling, met my mother, Margaret Elaine Nichols of London, at the big dance hall in that same resort town about a 20-minute drive from St. Thomas. They were married in London in the fall of '42.



Bunch at Port Stanley - 42.

Good times.

Jack Fallon (bottom centre). Billy Carter (immediately behind Fallon), Claude Lambert (immediately behind Carter) and Charlie Overall (back row, 2nd from left) on the beach at Port Stanley with friends in the summer of 1942. Late the next summer, life would change dramatically.

(photo supplied by Jordan Carter)



Left: Phil Sparling takes time off from RCAF St. Thomas to marry Margaret Elaine Nichols in London, Ontario, Oct. 10, 1942. He was 21, and she would be 22 in ten days. Don Hilton's daughter Nancy says she's pretty sure Don met his wife Betty Jane in Port Stanley as well.

Ten months later, both the brass band and the dance band would be posted to Gander, Newfoundland. On August 23, 1943, they boarded a train for the east coast. After some down time in Halifax, a six-day voyage to St. John's, and another train trip, this somewhat motley crew finally arrived in Gander on

September 11th.³ They would spend so much time rehearsing and playing gigs over the next year that they would become, in the view of musicians in-the-know, one of the greatest big bands ever produced in Canada.



RCAF T.T.S. ST. THOMAS DANCE ORCHESTRA, 1942 - NINE OF THE ELEVEN MUSICIANS ABOVE WOULD BECOME MEMBERS OF THE STREAMLINERS AFTER ITS POSTING TO GANDER, NEWFOUNDLAND. L TO R: CLAUDE LAMBERT, PHIL SPARLING, DON MACINTOSH (WOULD BE REPLACED BY LYLE KOHLER), M.O. "MEL" SMITH, FRASER LOBBAN, JACK FORD (WOULD RESIGN AFTER PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES WITH PAT RICCIO), DON HILTON, BILLY CARTER, PAT RICCIO, JACK "JAKE" PERDUE, JACK FALLON



RCAF ST. THOMAS T.T.S. DANCE ORCHESTRA SAXES: PHIL SPARLING, PAT RICCIO, JACK FORD, JAKE PERDUE

³ Fallon, Jack "From the Top: Ellington to the Beatles," pp. 43-44



RCAF ST. THOMAS T.T.S. DANCE ORCHESTRA BRASS AND RHYTHM - BACK: DON HILTON, JACK FALLON, DON MACINTOSH
FRONT: MEL SMITH, CLAUDE LAMBERT, BILLY CARTER, FRASER LOBBAN

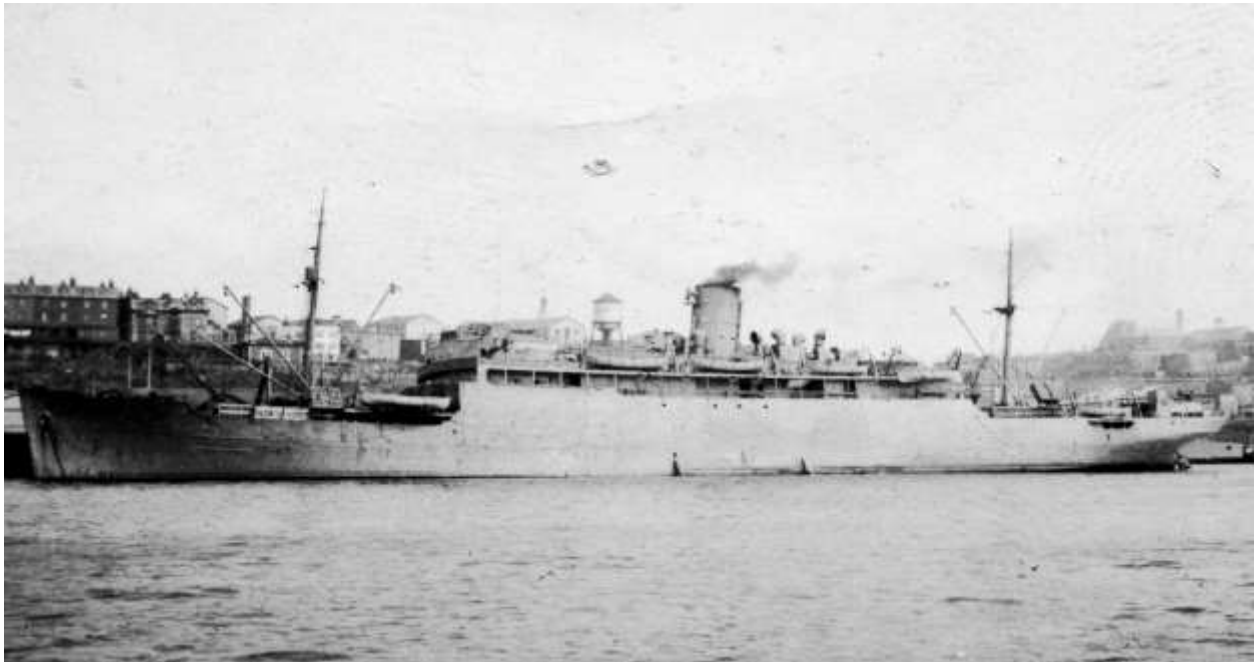


Left: Jack Fallon was still required to play the cornet in the brass marching band, even though his first instrument was the stand-up bass. He joked that his upper torso had a mind of its own when it came to marching, although he eventually got it to what he called "acceptable." After the war, Fallon played with Duke Ellington and the Beatles and with many other major stars.

Chapter Two

Newfoundland Nurturing

The band arrived in Halifax on Friday August 27th, and spent about a week's down time viewing army shows. They boarded the "Lady Rodney" on September 3rd for the trip to St. John's, where they would catch a train for Gander. It wasn't the normal Halifax-to- St. John's ferry, because it had recently been sunk by a German U-Boat. Don Hilton's daughter Nancy says Don told her the trip took nearly a week because the Lady Rodney headed south first, perhaps as far as Boston, in order to join up with a convoy that would offer protection against the threat.



SS LADY RODNEY IN ST. JOHN'S NL IN MAY 1943. (ROGER LITWILLER COLLECTION, COURTESY ROSS MILLIGAN, RCNR RTL-REM165)

Jack Fallon writes that the relatively small Lady Rodney had a particularly hard time of it in the very rough North Atlantic. "One airman was admitted to sick bay with sea sickness," he writes, "and that was before we left the harbour. He remained there for the rest of the voyage." Fallon reports that after six days of sailing, some of it in very foggy conditions, the ship arrived in St. John's harbour.

The bandmen disembarked in St. John's and boarded a wood-burning train for the journey to Gander, 200 miles to the north. Writes Fallon:

"The carriages were lit by oil lamps. A unique smell was generated, not very pleasant, by the combination of the smell from the oil lamps, wood-burning stoves, and wood smoke from the train."

But the future Streamliners got to their destination on September 11th. Not that it was an elaborate train station. More like a clearing in the bush, according to Fallon, who describes the sergeant who met them as not being in a very good mood at having to meet the ragtag group of musicians. He did, however, manage to get them into some kind of marching order, and escorted them to their barracks.

The next morning's silence was broken by American B24 Liberator bombers readying for takeoff. The barracks were near runways used by the Americans who were also stationed at Gander.

RCAF Station Gander was a huge air operation. The civilian airport had been literally carved out of the uninhabited and road-less bush in the mid-to-late 1930s. As trans-Atlantic passenger flight expanded, the governments of Canada, Newfoundland, and the U.K. agreed to build an airport because Gander was located near the railway and the "Great Circle Route"- the shortest air distance between London and New York. It was the biggest airport in the world in 1940, and it played a key part in getting more than 10,000 military aircraft from North America to Europe during the war. By the time the musicians from St. Thomas got to their barracks, the airfield consisted of four runways and hundreds of buildings – barracks, hangars, and a hospital – and the most advanced system of communications then available. 1500 Newfoundland civilians had jobs there.⁴

The band soon settled in to a daily routine, soon picking up the name *RCAF Streamliners*.

"This is where it all came together; much rehearsing, many dances and concerts for us, and many funeral services for those insanely courageous CANSO (anti-submarine) crews, who challenged the wolf packs in obsolete machines with a top speed of 90 miles an hour."⁵

This is from my dad's memoir. I asked him to write down what he remembered most about the Streamliners about a year or so before he died. What follows are his first words, which relate to the band's rapid musical development at Gander:

"First of all, the ever-present, all-abiding and overpowering presence of the man who made it all happen – Pat Riccio. His mastery of the alto sax, his ability to put on paper the beautiful big band sounds that glowed like precious gems when they leaped out of our instruments, and his skill at getting the mostly inexperienced group that Fate handed him to play like gifted veterans - all these things were truly remarkable."

⁴ Website – Heritage Newfoundland & Labrador www.heritage.nf.ca

⁵ Sparling, Phil written memoir, June 2009

“He had help, of course; Charlie Overall (3rd trombone) was his faithful copyist who sat up many a long night putting Pat’s scores into meticulous, intricate road maps for us. Don Hilton, (drummer) Pat’s sidekick for years in Toronto, and Jack Fallon, the redoubtable bassist, and Bill Carter, trumpeter extraordinaire, who somehow or other made a great brass section out of guys who were not very experienced. Also, Claude Lambert, with some Toronto experience, and the rock of the sax section, Jack Perdue. Jack came in on tenor, but switched to lead alto after Jack Ford’s philosophical differences with Pat caused him to quit.”⁶

The fledgling ensemble had one advantage. While most bands got their music by acquiring off-the-shelf “stock” arrangements, Pat Riccio was a gifted arranger who managed to impart to the Streamliners their own “sound.” (Author’s note: Riccio’s son Pat Jr. would later play keyboard with the legendary Anne Murray for twenty years, twelve of them as her music director.)



Pat Riccio, from Toronto, one of the driving forces in the emergence of the Streamliners as one of the most popular Allied military service bands during World War Two. Riccio wrote an arrangement of a pop tune called “Damn That Dream” for the brass band from St. Thomas, which had also been posted to Gander. The enlisted men and women, and of course the band members loved it, but the military brass nearly had a fit as it wasn’t “in taste” with a military band. “So, it was back to Colonel Bogey,” in the words of Jack Fallon.⁷

⁶ Sparling, Phil written memoir, June 2009

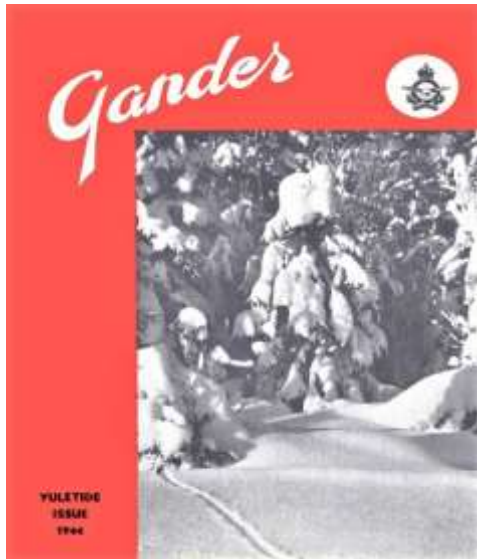
⁷ Fallon, Jack “From the Top: Ellington to the Beatles” p. 46



Billy Carter, from Goderich, Ontario, would become the on-stage leader and conductor of the band. My dad told me often that Carter was one of the best trumpet players he'd ever heard.



The Streamliners were fortunate to have trombonist Charlie Overall of Ottawa as the band's copyist. His job was to take the arrangements done by Pat Riccio, and copy out a part for each of the band's fourteen members by hand. Charlie's work is so meticulously neat, it looks as though it is computer printout.



RCAF Station Gander had its own newspaper named *The Gander*. A bi-monthly, it was usually full of news about the activities of everyone on the base which was, after all, the size of a small town. The Streamliners and the dances they played were the subject of a two-page photo-spread in the paper's Christmas 1943 issue.

The Gander reported: "One form of entertainment which is thoroughly enjoyed by the personnel are the dances. Our station band has also in its midst a dance orchestra and their efforts are sincerely appreciated by the station. Other forms of entertainment are bridge tournaments, the library, stage plays by station personnel and movie houses."



AFTER HOURS

One form of entertainment which is thoroughly enjoyed by the personnel are the dances. Our station band also has in its midst a dance orchestra and their efforts are sincerely appreciated by the station. Other forms of entertainment are bridge tournaments, the library, stage plays by station personnel and the movie houses.



That Christmas of 1943, someone with a sense of humour took the time to devise a splendid menu for Christmas dinner at Gander. The eyes of servicemen and women must have been popping out of their heads until they read the last four lines! Merry Christmas, indeed.

AIRMEN'S MESS

C.A.P.O. NO. 4

R.C.A.F., OVERSEAS

CHRISTMAS DINNER 1943

Tomato Juice

Roast Young Canadian Turkey

Savoury Dressing Giblet Gravy

Whipped Potatoes Vegetable Macedoine

Cranberry Sauce Assorted Relishes

Plum Pudding Rum Sauce

Fruit Candies Nuts

Coffee Milk

Note—"The above-noted is subject to change without notice."

Anyway, dreams aren't rationed—YET!

MERRY CHRISTMAS

In the May-June 1944 edition, *The Gander* reviewed a show the band played for base personnel in the R.C.A.F. Theatre called "Music and Comedy." In just three months, it was apparent the band was becoming a hit.

THE GANDER, MAY-JUNE, 1944

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ENTERTAINMENT
BY EUGENE HILL, Y.M.C.A.



MUSIC AND COMEDY

Friday, May 20th, saw the production of Music and Comedy in the R.C.A.F. Theatre. This was a joint program by the Band, Glee Club and Drama Club. W.O.B. Bill Calvert was master of ceremonies for the first part of the program and introduced the Band under the direction of Col. George Houswood. Among the Band numbers, one with particular appeal was "Modern Therapy" by De Hone, our Band strapper. Based on the line, "Darn that Dream", Pat gave us the wacky funk nightmares in every dress—and we liked it! Good work—keep at it Pat. Also popular, was the one talking "Nightbridge March" from Eric Carter "London Street". Other Band numbers were the Hungarian Czardas and Hungarian Dances No. 3 and 4 by Straker.

Songs of pleasure greeted the Glee Club on the opening curtain, for the W.D. members were all attracted to evening gowns and were lively to look upon. Right for lounge days. Under the direction of Eugene Hill, Y.M.C.A., they gave us three groups of songs, including folk-songs, popular songs, Stephen Foster songs and ending in a grand finale with the Band in Eggar's "Land of Hope and Glory".

Last, but far from least, came the Drama Club's comedy "Darn That Dream". The troupe were staged by hard luck all season which continued until the last gasp. The day before the show one of the cast entered the Hospital thanks to some brilliant work on the part of A.C.I. Owen Watkins of the R.A.F., the show was able to go on. He recovered the loss of the very considerable part during the day of the performance and went on after a very brief rehearsal with the rest of the cast just before the show. And—so good was his performance—we are very sure that you would never have realized it if we hadn't told you. The story of the successful battleship who went to bed for a week just to enjoy it, kept the audience in a hilarious mood, thanks to the excellent work of the cast. The full cast was as follows: L.A.C. Leo Kaufman as Mr. Whitehouse, L.A.W. Audrey McEwen-Miss Whitehouse, L.A.W. Ruth Thorne-Victor Whitehouse, L.A.C. Tom Rizzo-Barton the butler, A.C.I. Owen Watkins—Mr. McWinkle, L.A.W. Eric Glasgow—the cook, and L.A.C. Bob Whitehouse as Basil. The direction was in the very capable hands of L.A.W. Evelyn Roberts and L.A.C. Houswood handled the make-up.

the program added interest. Among these was Bob Clark who made a grand and very full-fashioned MC when complete with derby, whiskers, glasses, cane and gloves, not to mention the jaunty sports attire.

Then there was Tommy Mansour of the Canadian Army who plays a strictly professional accordion. He brought along four of his friends who played guitars, percussion and the double-bass. When they all got together on a Rhythmic, the things they did to our ears! They had rhythm. The R.A.F. sent us another sensation in Eric Fogg. His tremendous voice and "strut-your-stuff" had the audience "oozing" with delight. Two Jitterbugs turned in a really "hot" performance, and had the crowd clapping for more. They were Foster Goodson and Paul Martin.

The "sustaining" feature of the program was our popular band, the Streamliners, featuring more of Pat Riccio's derangements. (Now you know what I mean, Pat. For instance, when Phil tootles on his oboe in "Dancing in the Dark"—what it does to a guy!) among the band numbers, one with particular appeal was "Modern Rhapsody" by Pat Riccio. Based on the tune "Darn That Dream," Pat gave us the works from nightmares to sweet dreams—and we loved it!

Alfie Scopp filled in for Bob Hope and gave us a number of his songs in New York. Alfie, probably should be satisfied with half as much. Ken Genge and his band gave us some very pleasant novelty in the ambulance line. Suddenly cancelled, happily, even. But that wasn't his fault; the cast slipped. Harvey Persson, one of our popular songsters, gave out with the line, "I couldn't sleep a wink last night" and "Candlelight and Wine". Looks like a lot of night work there, Harvey! But NICE, if you can get it! And that was all, Adios.

HAVE YOU A HOBBY ?

If you ever have the urge to beat somebody over the head (and WHO doesn't, don't do it; beat a nail instead. Thanks to W.C. Sifton, room has been provided in the Hospital for just that purpose; see call in the Buddy House. First opened for the benefit of the patients, it is now opened for all personnel, Tuesday to Friday nights inclusive, each week. So—if you want to

RCAF Station Gander had its own radio station – VORG - (Voice of Radio Gander), and the band did a weekly broadcast. Apparently due to freak atmospheric conditions, the broadcasts could be heard far beyond the normal range of the transmitter – even as far as eastern Ontario, under the right conditions. That helped the band attract some loyal fans.

One of the Streamliners' most ardent followers was Saskatchewan-born Pilot Officer D. P. Scratch. In fact, the usually quiet and well-mannered Sergeant Scratch got to know the band members very well. He even arranged a flight for them in a Liberator bomber over the Grand Banks. The Liberators were used to look for and break up large ship-threatening icebergs with percussion bombs. As Jack Fallon reported, the flight lasted a little over an hour, and was "a great experience."⁸

However, this most devout of Streamliner fans would soon engage in erratic and bizarre behaviour that would lead to his court-martial, and ultimately, even to his death.

⁸ Fallon, Jack - "From the Top - Ellington to the Beatles" p. 46

The Strange Tale of Flying Officer D. P. Scratch

Donald P. Scratch enlisted in the RCAF in 1940. As a sergeant pilot, he was posted to Gander, assigned as a co-pilot on a Liberator Bomber (B-24) flying antisubmarine patrol, and then promoted again to the rank of Flying Officer. Scratch had hundreds of hours flying the giant Liberators and seemed in line for another bump up the ladder to captain. The Commanding Officer of the squadron held him back because of his slight build and an ankle injury he had suffered in a serious crash two years earlier. It seemed that his boss didn't think Flying Officer Scratch would have the strength to control a Liberator in an emergency. It didn't help that the other captains flying the bombers had less experience than he did.

Flying Officer Scratch appears to have become very depressed. On June 19, 1944, he was in the mess hall and involved in a hot and perhaps alcohol-fueled debate about whether one man could fly a Liberator by himself. Instead of going back to his quarters when the mess hall closed, he went down to the airfield, fired up a Liberator (no one thought one man could do that, let alone fly the plane), and took off.⁹

He made low passes over the field at Gander, flew between hangars, skimmed rooftops, blew pebbles off tarred roofs, and rattled windows. Then he headed off for Argentia. The U.S. control tower didn't know what was happening. After several low passes and no radio contact, the Americans sent up two P-40 fighters; when they got close to the Liberator, they saw the cockpit was empty. Then they saw Flying Officer Scratch in the mid-upper turret. He had put the aircraft on autopilot and was rotating the turret with guns that were ready to shoot. The American pilots tried unsuccessfully to get him to land. He waved at them, went back to the cockpit and turned the aircraft for Gander.¹⁰ By this time a crowd of military personnel had gathered near the hangar when Scratch's Liberator came into view. According to Jack Fallon, it was quite a show:

"We first spotted the plane flying very low coming up the runway heading straight towards our barracks at full throttle. The noise was increasing every second and he missed our quarters by not more than a few feet. Then the plane made a vertical pull-up, peeled off at the top and flew down to the far end of the runway, turned around, and flying about ten feet above the runway he came back. And this time the target was the officer's mess. flying along the "ridge pole" with only inches of clearance, once again pulling up in a



FLYING OFFICER D.P. SCRATCH
COURTESY LIBRARY OF CANADA ARCHIVES

⁹ Saltwire Network, Sept. 29, 2017 "The Scratch Affair" Part 1 www.saltwire.com/opinion/the-scratch-affair-part-1-44374/?location=central-newfoundland

¹⁰ ibid

vertical climb, a manoeuvre more suited to a Tiger Moth, missing the officer's mess by inches."¹¹

Scratch took the plane down to the end of the runway again, turned, lined it up, and made a textbook landing. He was arrested, court-martialed, and dishonourably discharged from the RCAF about a month-and-a-half later. But incredibly, and very sadly, it would not be the flying officer's last unauthorized bomber run.

Surprisingly, a psychiatric consultant's report at the end of the process concluded that "at present," Scratch had no psychological illness, and that he was "fit for full duties." So, he was allowed to re-enlist, which he did in Montreal just twelve days after his discharge. A few days later, he was posted to RCAF Station Boundary Bay in British Columbia as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, still without the promotion he thought he deserved. Later that fall, his world fell apart again.¹²

On December 5th, after a night of drinking, he commandeered another Liberator, single-handedly readying it for flight, and promptly drove the plane into a drainage ditch while taxiing out to the runway, causing serious damage. Undaunted, he made his way back toward other planes, picked out a brand-new Mitchell B-25 bomber, and again, prepared it to go aloft. And fly it he would, like never before, for the next five-and-a-half hours.

It was a terribly dangerous exhibition of low-level flying that terrorized the base at Boundary Bay, while at the same time eliciting some quiet admiration from knowledgeable witnesses. Scratch was, in all this, proving to be quite a talented pilot.

Airman Norman Green, who was in the mess hall at 7a.m., said the place shook and dishes fell to the floor as a result of a plane flying low overhead. He provided this eyewitness account about what happened next:

*"As usual that morning at 8:00 hrs., 1200 airmen and airwomen, all ranks (I among them), formed up on the tarmac in front of the control tower for CO's inspection. Just as the parade was about to be called to attention a B-25 Mitchell bomber came across the field at zero altitude, and pulled up sharply in a steep climb over the heads of the assembled airmen, just clearing the tower. Within seconds, 1,200 men and women were flat on the ground. The Mitchell then made several 25 ft. passes over the field. Group Captain Bradshaw dismissed the parade and ordered everyone to quarters. Over the next two hours we witnessed an almost unbelievable demonstration of flying, much of it with the B-25's wings vertical to the ground, below roof top level, defying gravity. We were continually diving into ditches to avoid being hit by a wingtip coming down a station road. He flew it straight and level, vertically with the wing tip only six feet above the ground without losing altitude, defying all logic, and the law of physics."*¹³

¹¹ Fallon, Jack "From the Top - Ellington to the Beatles"

¹² Website, Vintage Wings of Canada "Déjà Vu: The Curious Tale of Sgt. Donald Scratch"

<http://www.vintagewings.ca/VintageNews/Stories/tabid/116/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/616/Deja-vu.aspx>

¹³ *ibid*

At about 10 o'clock, Donald Scratch climbed to about 800 feet, and then pointed the plane downward. The crash, about six miles north of the base, killed him instantly. He was 25.

The Flying Boat



CANSO FLYING BOAT

RCAF WORLD WAR PHOTO

The Streamliners' nerves were tested in a CANSO "flying boat," in which they were transported occasionally. It was used primarily for coastal patrols, convoy protection and submarine hunting. It could land or take off on water or land, with its two engines above the wings and its retractable landing gear. They'd heard all about one of them crashing while trying to land on water with the landing gear down. On one trip, according to Jack

Fallon, the band took off from land in a CANSO, and landed on water.

"When it came time to land on the water, we were asked to stand down in the hull, to help "trim" (distribute the weight properly) for landing. There were glass portholes on both sides of the hull. When we made contact with the water, it sounded like a buzz saw was attacking the bottom of the boat. We then noticed that as we slowed and sank deeper into the water, the portholes had turned sea-green. We were pleased to see the green turn back to normal daylight. Just then the bow wave shot us forward and the engines started up and we headed for the slipway. As we reached shallow water, the landing gear was locked in the down position, with engines doing the pulling and the plane waddled up the slipway, streaming seawater from every orifice. A few days later, we assembled on the slip way (the slip was the mooring spot for the plane/boat) for takeoff from the same stretch of water. The water was much rougher than when we landed. We taxied to the far end of the bay, and turned into the wind with both engines screaming at full throttle...we began to move, gradually picking up enough speed to allow us to take off. We could see a rocky shoreline at eye-level getting closer, and the sea seemed reluctant to let go of the hull. Eventually, we were free, but the rocky shore was getting very close. We cleared it by about twenty feet. A close escape. We landed on the runway at Gander. That gig was certainly different."¹⁴

¹⁴ Fallon, Jack "From the Top – Ellington to the Beatles" p.50

BED ROOM
LIVING ROOM
DINING ROOM

Our bedroom and home away from home, the barracks. A typical barrack block on this station. The living room, the canteen where we may sit and sip a coke or purchase other extras. Large quantities of cigarettes, chocolate bars, canned goods, apples and oranges are sold here. The dining room, the mess, where meals are served almost every hour of the day and night.

This full page spread in "The Gander," the base newspaper, shows the kind of buildings that served as home for the Streamliners during their stay in Newfoundland.

From top to bottom – the barracks, the "living room," and the canteen.



Miscellaneous Gander photos



Above: Bassist Jack Fallon has obviously mastered the art of reading his music, playing, and smiling at the camera all at once. The saxophone player at the extreme right is unidentified.

GANDER VARIETIES
" SECOND EDITION "

RCAF THEATRE MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1943
CURTAIN: 2015 HOURS

Overture - "One O'Clock Jump"	Sgt Bert Longstaffe and RCAF Gander Rhythm-makers
Introduction	Bob Harvie, Master-of-Ceremonies
Skit - "Problems Of a Private"	Cpl. Segal and Pvt. Compenella
Ballad - "Moonlight Becomes You"	Pfc. Justin Newman (acc. Eugene Hill at the piano)
Recitation - "Between Two Loves"	LAC Swann
Novelty - "Two Old Maids In a Feather Bed"	Gander Rhythm Makers - <i>the whole r.h. ></i>
Skit - "Radio Burlesque"	Pvt. Compenella, Sgt. Jones Cpl. Chiusano, Sgt. Jones
Ballad - "Can't Get Out Of This Mood"	LAC Os Ernke (acc. Eugene Hill at piano)
Skit - "Twentieth Century Ltd."	Miss Helchenbach, Sgt. Jones, Cpl. Segal
Novelty - "Der Fuehrer's Face"	Longstaffe's German Band - <i>recit fin p. 2</i>
Dance Routine	Miss Carter and Pvt. Mike Race
Song - "She Got It Last Night"	Sgt. Jones
"Minor Jump" and "Anvil Chorus"	Bert Longstaffe's Rhythm Makers
Movie	"Kings Over the Atlantic" - <i>part of</i>
God Save the King	

The program from a variety show in the Gander base's RCAF Theatre on October 4, 1943. It doesn't mention the Streamliners. If they played for it, it would have been one week after they arrived in Gander. The left column is the act, and the right column indicates who's performing each.



Not sure what the Cabot House is. But judging by the various stages of attire, and the facial expressions of enjoyment, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that alcohol may have been available inside!

The Newfoundland winter brought an unexpected challenge to the maintenance of RCAF planes in Gander. Don Hilton told daughter Nancy that one day, the base commanding officer had to issue a base-wide public announcement, asking RCAF personnel to refrain from drinking the de-icing fluid that was used to keep the wings of aircraft ice-free. Apparently, the personal alcohol choices of some were resulting in a shortage of the fluid needed to keep the warplanes in the air.



PHIL SPARLING WINTER 1943-44

As the winter turned to spring, and the spring into summer, the Streamliners perfected their craft. The hours and hours of rehearsals, dances, funerals and concerts, had produced an incredibly tight and swinging ensemble that was being noticed by the brass in Ottawa.

“To our great joy, the dance band, and ONLY the dance band, received an overseas posting. This was at the request of Martin Boundy, the conductor of the military band at Headquarters in London, England. The “Streamliners,” as we now called ourselves, apparently had gained a reputation, and Boundy’s dance band, which contained a lot of Toronto guys who knew Pat and Bill, and what we had been doing, put a bug in Boundy’s ear.”¹⁵



GEORGE LANE

One very good thing happened in Gander. Vocalist George Lane, from Windsor, Ontario, met the woman he would marry at a dance at the air base in Stephenville. Hazel Winsor, from Corner Brook Newfoundland, decided to accept an invitation to women in that community to attend the dance, and so, after she gathered up sisters and friends, they all took the train to Stephenville. And the rest, as they say, is history. George and Hazel were married in Windsor in September 1943.

In July 1944, the band departed for Uplands Air Base in Ottawa, where they began two weeks’ leave. Many went home for pre-deployment visits. Then it was back to Uplands and then to Lachine, Quebec, the clearing station for going overseas. Another train trip to Halifax, where they boarded the Empress of Scotland on August third¹⁶ for the week-long crossing to England. The next year-and-a-half would be filled with experiences that most musicians could never imagine.

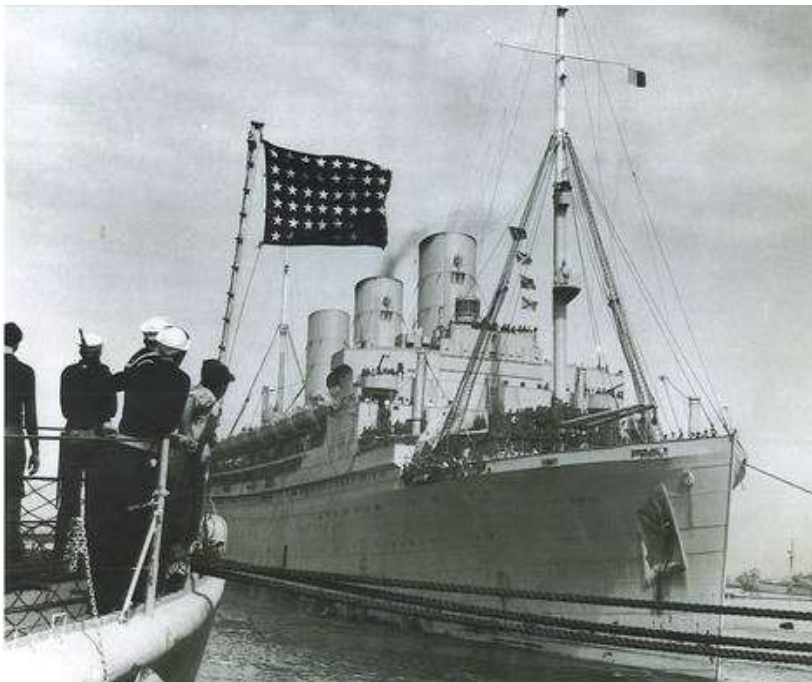
¹⁵ Sparling, Phil written memoir, June 2009

¹⁶ service record, Phil Sparling

Chapter 3

Overseas Posting

"I remember the trip overseas, and not kindly, at least for the first three days. Very sick; tossed coins with Bill Bebbington to see who would crawl up three decks to get some slop in order to have something to spew up. The last three days, we did concerts on deck; there is no truth to the rumour (traceable to a disgruntled Scot in Radar) that the U-Boat crews enjoyed them as much as the troops." - Phil Sparling memoir, 2009



EMPRESS OF SCOTLAND AS A WORLD WAR TWO TROOPSHIP

The ship that the Streamliners boarded for the voyage to England was named the *Empress of Japan* until 1942. Obviously, that name had to go (on the direct order of Prime Minister Winston Churchill) after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941. The re-branded *Empress of Scotland* sailed for a couple of days in good weather before hooking up with a convoy out of New York that had an escort – a welcome presence in the still-dangerous waters of the North Atlantic.¹⁷

"We gave concerts on deck, weather permitting, and the trip was quite uneventful till shortly after we parted company with the convoy. Then about midnight, somewhere off the Isle of Man, alarm bells started ringing! The ship made a violent change of direction and we were ordered to don life jackets. The alert lasted about 30 minutes, but it seemed like a lifetime. Everyone's heart rate just about went off the dial. It was a false alarm and there was relief all around."¹⁸

¹⁷ Fallon, Jack "From the Top - Ellington to the Beatles" p.50

¹⁸ Fallon, Jack "From the Top - Ellington to the Beatles" p.51

Talk about good luck. Nearly four years earlier, on November 9, 1940, the *Empress of Scotland* (at that time the *Empress of Japan*) came under attack from a German bomber not too far from the spot where the *Empress of Britain* had been fatally hit just two weeks earlier.

*“During the air raid, the captain and the quartermaster were manning the wheelhouse and steered the ship into evasive action. Because of this, the two bombs that hit the “Japan” deflected off the stern railing into the sea, causing little damage.”*¹⁹ The captain and quartermaster were decorated for their bravery.

But the *Scotland*, which would make it through the war unscathed, delivered the Streamliners safely to the Liverpool docks on August 11th, one week after they left Halifax. It was a grim and wet morning in Liverpool. They boarded a train for the 250-kilometre trip to Innsworth, Gloucestershire, where the weather had turned for the better.

It was a bewildering and busy time for the Canadians. *“Assignments to billets, many shows, dances, recordings and concerts, with the attendant loading, unloading, jolting in trucks to various area venues, and everywhere evidence of men and machines pouring into that incredibly small country inhabited by incredibly big-hearted people.”*²⁰ The band spent a week at Innsworth before going on to London, where they were greeted by a buzz bomb (V-1 flying bomb) alert. When the “all-clear” sounded, they were delivered to the Bedford Hotel on Southampton Row in London, where they would be billeted for the time being.²¹



Photo: A group of people stand outside the Bedford Hotel on Southampton Row to watch men at work beside a large crater. The damage was caused by a 50-kilogram bomb during a Gotha raid on the night of 24 - 25 September 1917. The Streamliners were billeted here when they arrived in London around Aug. 20, 1944.

(Courtesy British Imperial War Museum - Home Office WW1 Air Raid Damage Collection)

¹⁹ Pigott, Peter *“Sailing Seven Seas: A History of the Canadian Pacific Line”* Dundurn Press 2010 p.144

²⁰ Sparling, Phil - personal memoir, 2009

²¹ Fallon, Jack - *“From the Top: Ellington to the Beatles”* p.51

Band members travelled by trolley bus to their rehearsal rooms at the Finsbury Army Barracks at the corner of City Road and Old Street. Jack Fallon found the rubber-tired electricity-driven trolleys to be a very smooth ride.

“The only disruption was when the pole attached to the top of the bus lost contact with the overhead electric cable. The bus came to a halt momentarily, and the driver would hop off the bus and replace the pole on the power line and we were off on our silent, smooth ride.”²²

Squadron leader Martin Boundy, who oversaw scheduling for the overseas air force bands, had lots of work lined up for the Streamliners. He also informed band members that they would be getting a living-out allowance to make their own arrangements for accommodations. Phil Sparling: *“The guys in the Central Band helped us out there; I shared digs for awhile with Paul Grosney but later got my own pad right across from the British Museum. Spent money in the off-hours taking in the sights, and marvelling at the crowds who bedded down every night in the Underground. Later, when the V-1s and V2s started arriving, I envied them; if it hadn’t been for the uniform, I would have been right there. This is where we first heard the line that became so famous – ‘you chaps are all right, but there is one problem. You’re just like the Yanks – overpaid, oversexed, and over here!’ (always with a grin.)”*



FINSBURY BARRACKS, LONDON

By Ykraps - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22539691>

“Now the travel started. Seven hour train rides (standing, mostly) to bases in Cornwall and Devonshire and Wales; ferry from Stranraer across the Irish Sea to Belfast and various Irish camps mostly starting with “Bally;” many, many visits to Bomber Command bases in Yorkshire, including some American ones where we gluttonized on peaches and eggs and steak.”²³

²² Fallon, Jack - “From the Top - Ellington to the Beatles” p51

²³ Sparling, Phil - memoir 2009

Between August 21, 1944 and February 1, 1946, (the date of the band's last gig), there were at least 400 performances in the U.K. and in Europe, and probably more than a few others that occurred as a result of being "on call" on the few days a month in London when nothing was scheduled. The band's daily datebook/calendar records that in all that time, they flew in Dakota DC-3 transport planes on just thirteen occasions, including the two trips across the English Channel to the continent. Usually, travel was by train or truck. Nearly twenty of these playing occasions were for radio broadcasts, most of them in British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Overseas Services studios for programs such as "ENSA" and "A.E.F. Canada Calling."



Left: L to R: Pat Riccio, Billy Carter with Mel Smith on his back, and Jack Perdue horsing around at what appears to be the front of the Bedford Hotel on Southampton Row in London, where the band was first billeted when it got to London on or about Aug. 21, 1944.



Right: Claude Lambert, Jack Fallon in a purposeful stride on a London street.



L TO R: DON HILTON, FRANK PALEN, PHIL SPARLING, JACK FALLON, PAT RICCIO, JACK PERDUE, BILL BEBBINGTON, MEL SMITH (PARTIALLY HIDDEN), BILLY CARTER, CHARLIE OVERALL LOCATION: POSSIBLY IN FRONT OF BEDFORD HOTEL, LONDON

The Streamliners played with some very big names overseas, mostly on their BBC broadcasts. One of them was Stephane Grappelli, the French jazz violinist who went on to become one of the biggest international names in jazz. Others were major British stars, like trumpeter Nat Gonella, vocalist Gloria Brent, and singer/actress Anna Neagle. Guitarist Len Coppold recalled that the band also played with Vera Lynn, the singer whose wartime hits like "White Cliffs of Dover" were hugely popular.



Left: actress/singer/dancer Anna Neagle, a huge star in wartime Britain, was one of several major entertainment figures who performed with the Streamliners. BBC broadcasts were not only heard throughout the UK, but also by Allied troops fighting in continental Europe and southeast Asia.

R.C.A.F. STREAMLINERS DANCE BAND.
Recording, M.V. 4, Mon. Oct. 23/44
AEFP Trans. Wed. Oct 25/44,
1915-1945 EST

52064029

ANNOUNCER: This is the Royal Canadian Air Force calling all you men of the Allied Expeditionary Forces wherever you may be.

BAND: THEME (Fading and held under announcer)

ANNOUNCER: Yes, it's hello again from Sergeant Billy Carter and his Royal Canadian Air Force Streamliners, and a hearty welcome to all you Britons, Americans, and Canadians over there on the continent to join us for another thirty minutes of streamlined rhythm. As always, the band is here through the kind permission of the Air Officer-Commanding-in-Chief, R.C.A.F. Overseas, and once again we're able to say, "here's Britain's own lovely lady of song, Gloria Brent."

GLORIA: Thank you, Fletcher. Hello again, boys.

ANNOUNCER: And there you are. Now that we're all acquainted, let's on with the show, and over to the Streamliners.

Above: script from a BBC Streamliners' broadcast of Oct. 23, 1944. It's a recording made at the BBC's Maida Vale Studio #4 (M.V.4) for Allied service personnel fighting in Europe and beyond. The special guest is singer Gloria Brent, a wildly-popular vocalist in wartime Britain.

That the Streamliners were a very good band is supported by the reported praise from the legendary Glenn Miller, whose own military swing band was in the UK to help the American war effort. Miller had led what was probably the world's most popular big band before the war. At the time, he defined popular music. According to Streamliners' guitarist Len Coppold, Miller and his own bandmates were in the balcony of the Queensbury Club in London where the Streamliners were performing.²⁴ It was a few nights before he took off on a flight across the English Channel from which he would never return. According to Coppold, Miller and his bandsmen applauded and saluted the Canadians on stage. And

²⁴ Coppold, Len personal interview, Jan. 2020

he reportedly told an interviewer that the Streamliners “are the best band in Europe – next to mine!”

Glenn Miller Missing After Plane Crash in France

PARIS, Dec. 25. (UP)—Glenn Miller, famed American orchestra leader who had been conducting army air force bands since he entered the service in October, 1942, was listed officially as missing today after a plane in which he was traveling apparently crashed while en route from England to Paris.

Miller—Major Alton Glenn Miller—was director of the air force band in Paris at the time of his disappearance. The plane in which he was flying as a passenger left England on December 15 and Allied headquarters said no trace of the ship has been found since its take-off.

No members of his band were with the orchestra leader on the missing plane.

Lived in New Jersey

Miller lived in Tenafly, N. J., with his wife and two adopted children, Steven, 2, and a three-months-old girl, Jonnie Dee.

Mrs. Fred W. Burger, the band-leader's mother-in-law, disclosed at her home in Duarte, yesterday that

the war department had already notified her daughter.

Miller's mother, Mrs. Lou Miller, of Denver, is now believed visiting another musician son, Herbert, at an army camp near Sacramento.

To New Station

Mrs. Burger said that her daughter told her on the telephone from the Miller home in Tenafly that her husband last wrote her on December 14, saying that he was flying to a new station in France the next day and that his band was to follow him a day later.

Miller was born in Clarinda, Iowa, but grew up in Colorado. He worked his way through the University of Colorado by playing trombone in a college band. Later he was trombonist with Ben Pollack's orchestra, in which Benny Goodman played the clarinet.

He skyrocketed to fame with his own orchestra because of his distinctive arrangements, particularly of his theme song, "Moonlight Serenade." In October, 1942, he broke up the orchestra to go into the army.

Left – United Press report of December 25, 1944 reporting bandleader Glenn Miller as officially missing after an apparent plane crash over the English Channel ten days earlier. Not long before the fateful flight, Miller told an interviewer the Streamliners were the best band in Europe...next to his.



Left: the modern-day interior of the Prince Edward Theatre, formerly the Queensbury All Services Club. Len Coppold says Glenn Miller saluted the Canadians from this balcony, while Miller bandsmen applauded.

My dad Phil also told me that the band was very popular among all Allied service personnel overseas, finishing second to the Miller ensemble in a BBC straw poll.

On November 11, 2004, an article on the band appeared in Canada's National Post newspaper. It was written by Nicholas Kohler, the grandson of Streamliner piano player Lyle Kohler:

"All we did -- it was fantastic -- all we did was play jazz concerts at Canadian and American air force stations," said the group's guitarist, Leonard Coppold, 82, from his home in Florida. "All we did was play jazz."

For three years the Streamliners watched the Second World War unfold from the vantage of the bandstand, through the swaying, uniformed bodies of soldiers stolen away from horror by the band's booming rhythm. London...was also a place where they could break free from the constraints of army life. "We actually at night lived like civilians," Coppold recalled.

"We had civilian clothes -- shouldn't say that, we'll be arrested if you do that. A bunch of us played around London ... doing jobs and playing nightclubs."

Chock full of factories, and the late-night dance clubs that accommodated the workers even through the raids, there was no shortage of venues for the Streamliners to infiltrate with their Canadian-brand swing.²⁵

Rocket-Dodging in the 'Baby Blitz'

If the Streamliners felt any comfort in the fact that their overseas service was happening after D-Day and other German setbacks, they would immediately come face-to-face with the fact that Nazis were ahead of everybody else in developing fearsome weapons to counter their worsening military situation.

Although the band had not been in England during the 'Blitz' in 1940, they did arrive smack dab in the middle of what was known as the "Baby Blitz" in summer of 1944. The Germans, retaliating for the increasing frequency and ferocity of Allied bombings in Germany, began firing V-1 flying bombs ("doodlebugs" or "buzz bombs") at Britain in June 1944, two months before the band got to London (they arrived around Aug. 21 in the middle of air raid sirens going off). Two weeks later, on Sept. 8th, the V-2 rockets began arriving. And the V-2s, capable of Mach 5 speeds, could not be stopped, and there was no real defence against them. In the eight months ending in March, 1945, nearly 9,000 Britons were killed by V1s and V2s. Another 12,000 forced labourers died in their production. While many of the rockets and flying bombs were destroyed before impact, more than 24,000 civilians were injured in London and other cities.²⁶

²⁵ Kohler, Nicholas National Post, Nov. 11, 2004 "Band of Brothers" p1

²⁶ Duncan, George "Little-known facts about WW2" <http://members.iinet.net.au/~gduncan/index.html>

Drummer Don Hilton recalled one night he and Jack “Jake” Perdue had a close shave when they tried to figure out whether a buzz bomb was “in the neighbourhood:



DON HILTON

“I remember one night a flying bomb came over ... you’d hear the air raid siren, and then you would wait to hear the engine of the bomb. You’d be nervous, because if you heard the engine of the bomb getting close, you’d be waiting for the engine to cut out.... when it cut out, you knew it was gonna fall close to you. “I was sharing a room with Jake ...we were asleep. The air raid siren came.... we woke...we listened, and we thought, Oh, it’s not gonna come near us. Well, all of a sudden, it was near us. So I said, “what do you think that is, Jake?” He says, “I think it’s just a truck.” I said, “Jake, I don’t think that’s a truck.” He said, “Yes, it is, it’s only a truck.” So...we waited awhile longer...and the engine stopped! And I said...” that is like hell a truck, that’s a bomb! We’ve got to get the hell out of here! And we ran downstairs. It landed pretty close.”²⁷



V-1 FLYING BOMB, OR “BUZZ BOMB”

Len Coppold’s “buzz bomb” memories:

“It was a scene you couldn’t believe, because the whole city was blacked out. No lights, no car lights, nothing, you know? Here you’re in the black, either by yourself or in a group, and when you go into a hotel or someplace you have to go through about three different doors which are there to keep any light from going out into the street.”

²⁷ Hilton, Don personal interview 2016

“It was scary...really scary...when they got close (the V-1s), and that motor went off, you didn’t know whether they were about to explode on top of you or down the street a bit, and there would always be a big explosion. So you might get three or four of those coming over every night, and then you’d get a V-2.... I mean, they came in so high you couldn’t see them, you had no idea. It wasn’t soft and easy time for us. Or for anyone, especially



the Brits. My God, they suffered every night of the week, you know...they went down to their subways and stayed the night underground, and then first thing in the morning.... back to work. The Brits, I’m tellin’ you, they were so strong, and optimistic, too.”²⁸

LEN COPPOLD ON GUITAR BETWEEN FRANK PALEN (SAX) AND LYLE KOHLER
RAF CASTLE ARCHDALE NORTHERN IRELAND

Vera Lynn and V-2s

As an interesting sidelight on how casual choices can be a matter of life or death in wartime, there is the story of Edward Magnus and Dame Vera Lynn.

Vera Lynn was the “forces’ sweetheart” in the UK during the war, just as she had been everyone’s sweetheart in the 1920s and 30s. A famous actress and singer, she had been performing in public since she was seven years old.



VERA LYNN

One night, during the blitz, a young man named Edward Magnus and a friend walked past the Finsbury Park Empire Music Hall and noticed that Vera Lynn was on the bill. The place was almost sold out but they managed to buy two tickets and went in.

At about 8:15, “the theatre shook.” A V-2 rocket crashed into another part of town. It turned out to be Mr. Magnus’ neighborhood, including his home. Six of his family members were killed. In an interview after the war, he said:

²⁸ Coppold, Len phone interview January, 2020

“You will understand why I tell everybody that I truly owe my life to Vera Lynn.”

What this has to do with the Streamliners recalls an experience trumpeter Claude Lambert had around the same time in London. His son Dennis reported that Claude, heading toward a pub, reached an intersection, and, unsure of which way to go, turned left. He didn't find the pub, but soon afterwards a V2 crashed into the street on the right, destroying the entire block. Vera Lynn, by the way, as of this writing, is still alive, at 103.²⁹



THE LAST V-2 TO HIT LONDON - 135 PEOPLE KILLED



CLAUDE LAMBERT

I Could Eat a Horse!

During the war in London, there was food rationing, which sometimes meant some food choices we would be horrified by in North America in 2020. But the Streamliners were happy to partake in unusual culinary options, as Jack Fallon (who had remained in England) revealed fifty years later in this 1995 letter to his old bandmate Don Hilton:

“I look back with the fondest memory of you Don...we laughed for four years. Some of your best lines... “I godda get up in the morning and gedda Coke,” and you watching my hairline and Riccio’s wrinkled forehead. I thought of you all, about a month ago. I played a gig at our Old City Road army barracks; the place is full of ghosts. All that was missing were the rubber-tired electric trams we used to jump on at Theobalds Road, where Carlo served us with the best horse meat steaks.”

Before you gag...those Streamliners may have been ahead of their time on the horse meat. Consider this excerpt from a 2013 review in London’s Guardian newspaper, on the growing popularity of horse meat in Britain:

²⁹ Vera Lynn story submitted by Kevin Lambert, March 2020

“Could horse catch on? It is half the price of beef and undeniably delicious. I went to a steak tasting at Edinburgh's L'Escargot Bleu bistro...Chef and patron Fred Berkmillar had packed in 12 Scottish foodies, cooks and meat suppliers and gave us rump steaks to try. One was the best 30-day-aged Orkney beef, the other Comtois horse, farmed in the Dordogne. You could have confused the horse with beef, but its steak – juicy, tender, just slightly gamey – won the fry-off by 12 votes to none. And we were all the better for it: horse has lots of iron, little fat and lots of omega-3. It is healthier than beef, so long as you're not eating an old steeplechaser laced with phenylbutazone. It is not true, by the way, that "bute" is one of those horse painkillers with recreational possibilities.”³⁰

Concerts in the park

The Streamliners and other RCAF bands played park concerts in London's Lincoln's Inn Fields Park, to the delight of large crowds of Londoners besieged by the daily threat of German rockets.



LINCOLN INN FIELDS PARK – ACROSS THE STREET FROM RCAF OVERSEAS HEADQUARTERS. THE BAND OCCASIONALLY PLAYED DAYTIME CONCERTS HERE. BILL BEBBINGTON IS SOLOING ON TROMBONE.

³⁰ “How Britain Got a Taste for Horse Meat” The Guardian, London, 2013

Here's an excerpt from a postwar article written by Flight Lieutenant A.F. Tinsley of the RCAF Overseas Directorate:

“Thousands of Londoners listened with admiration to these concerts, which in no small measure helped cheer them up in the days when the buzz bombs were falling thick and fast. On seats grouped around the band, these Londoners ate their paper-bag lunches, basking in the pleasure of the sunshine and good music. British military bands did their part in these lunch-time concerts, but the sight of Canadians, in their blue uniforms and with “Canada” shoulder flashes, giving their time and energy to add a little happiness to the war-weary Londoners, was one which many of them will not soon forget. It might have made Hitler pause and think a little, could he have heard their red-hot rhythm echoing through the park, and have seen civilians and servicemen and women dancing happily during the alerts occasioned by his flying bombs. Only on receipt of an “imminent danger” signal did the bands stop playing – and then only because regulations demanded that they should. “



Battle of the bands – the Streamliners (standing, left) in a dual concert in London's Lincoln's Inn Fields Park with the dance band drawn from the RCAF Overseas Headquarters Band. The other air force ensembles in the UK during the war were the RCAF Bomber Group Band, the “R” Depot Band, and the RCAF Reception Centre Band. Squadron Leader Martin Boundy, of London, Ontario, was Director of Music, RCAF Overseas.

Occasionally the Streamliners were taken to gigs on Dakota DC-3 transport aircraft. As bandsmen sometimes got anxious at the thought of enemy aircraft suddenly appearing, trombonist Charlie Overall would take a long look out the window at visible fighter planes, wait a bit, and then announce, "it's OK guys, it's one of ours!" A lot of the time, travel was by train, and many times they'd be standing for hours all the way.³¹



³¹ Hilton, Don personal interview 2016

O CANADA, EH?

Canadian servicemen were sometimes fighting more than just Germans overseas. On occasion, they let their fists do the talking at dances attended by both Canadian and British military personnel.

For the first time in its history, Canada had declared war on Germany in 1939 a week AFTER Britain did, which was of course a symbolic milestone in Canada's development as a truly independent country. The per capita extent of Canada's commitment to the Allied war effort was as significant, if not more so, than any other country. So, Canadian servicemen were a little touchy over perceived slights against their country's honour.

A few days before his death in 2016, Don Hilton had yet another story to tell his daughter Nancy. In England, the end of nightly performances would HAVE to be capped with the playing of God Save The King (Britain's national anthem). Canadians in the crowd wanted to hear O Canada. But the protocol was strict. Nothing after "the King." Not to be denied, the Canadians would sometimes press the point, and of course, that would lead to an old-fashioned barroom brawl between the Brits and the upstart "colonials."³²

Momentary cracks in Allied unity notwithstanding, no fatalities were reported.



³² Hilton, Nancy email interview Mar. 31, 2020

It had been just four whirlwind months since the Streamliners had established their beachhead in England. They'd come a long way since enlisting as ground crew trainees, not ever imagining they might soon be playing big band swing for wildly appreciative live and radio audiences, or encountering Glenn Miller, or working with Stephane Grappelli, or Gloria Brent as they matured musically into an ensemble as good as any. Nor could they have truly appreciated the fear that went along with nightly rocket attacks. They were in their twenties. Talk about growing up fast. They had forged a strong bond - "sticking together" was a phrase I came across frequently researching this story.

Things were about to get more intense. Across the English Channel in Belgium and Holland, the first Canadian Army, with the help of British and Polish troops and at the cost of 6,000 Canadian lives, played the lead role in a November 8th victory that led to Holland's liberation in May 1945. It was for those and other Canadian warriors that the Streamliners were now called upon to entertain across the Channel, just forty days later.

And as they learned almost immediately - the Germans were far from done fighting, and Holland's liberation remained a work in progress.



Streamliners mill about a Dakota DC-3 that resembles a protective mother monster. They would board a Dakota on December 18, 1944 for the flight across the English Channel to Eindhoven, Holland, where enemy activity was still a reality.

Chapter 4

Under Fire

It must have been exhilarating. And unnerving. The Streamliners were now on the European continent, following close behind Canadian and Allied troops as they drove the Germans back to the east. Eindhoven, Holland had been captured by the Allies, but the Germans had provided stiff resistance and were still very active in the vicinity. The band would be in Eindhoven for the next eleven days, and half-a-dozen notations made in the band's daybook/schedule by its keeper are things like "city strafed" or "V1s and V-2s" or "airport bombed" or "bridge shelled."

The Military Background

The Streamliners found themselves on a mission to bring a taste of home to Canadian and Allied troops whose advance against the Germans was stalled in the fall of 1944. They were holding front-line positions for a few months until the final push into Germany could be planned and organized for early 1945.

"In mid-September 1944, the Allies launched Operation Market-Garden, a daring land and airborne attack behind enemy lines in the eastern Netherlands. The goal was to bring the war to a rapid end by cutting in half the German positions in Northwest Europe. The German resistance was determined, however, and the bold offensive failed. It soon became apparent that the conflict would drag on.

To maintain pressure on the German forces, the Allies needed a reliable way to keep the flow of vital supplies moving to the front lines of Northwest Europe. This meant a large seaport would need to be taken on the continent. The major Belgian port city of Antwerp was captured almost intact in early September 1944 but there was a complicating factor. Antwerp is located some 80 kilometres from the North Sea and is accessible only by the Scheldt river – a waterway that was still in enemy hands.

Much of this portion of the Scheldt runs through the Netherlands and the First Canadian Army led the way in fierce combat to clear the Germans out in the fall of 1944. Our troops would succeed in opening up the port of Antwerp to Allied shipping – a key step in the liberation of Northwest Europe – but it would come at a great cost. More than 6,000 Canadian soldiers were killed, wounded or taken prisoner in this bitter campaign.

The "Hunger Winter" - *With the realization that the conflict would stretch into 1945, Canadian soldiers took up positions near Nijmegen in the eastern Netherlands near the German border. The Allies would make careful plans for the campaign to end the war in Europe in the new year. But the delay would have serious ramifications for the Dutch people, who had already endured more than four years of brutal enemy occupation.*

The so-called “Hunger Winter” of 1944-1945 would be a terrible time for many in the country. Food supplies were exhausted and some people were reduced to eating tulip bulbs just to try to survive. Fuel had run out and transportation was almost non-existent. Tragically, thousands of Dutch civilians in the occupied portions of the nation would perish.

After three months of helping hold the front line in the Netherlands, in February 1945 the First Canadian Army took part in a fierce Allied offensive through muddy and flooded ground to drive the Germans from the Nijmegen front and back across the Rhine River. The major push to finally liberate all of Northwest Europe had begun.³³

This map locates the places in northwestern Europe where the Streamliners spent time during their first trip to the continent Dec.- Jan. 1944 - 45.



Map key: 1 - Eindhoven, Holland 2 – Nijmegen, Holland 3 – Brussels, Belgium 4 – Lille, France 5 – Ostend, Belgium 6 – Tilbury, England 8 – Paris, France

The Canadian musicians were playing for the troops extremely close to the front lines, where “you could practically feel the Germans’ breath,” in the words of Len Coppold.


³³ Veterans Affairs Canada, Historical Sheets, “The Liberation of the Netherlands” <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/historical-sheets/netherlands>



Left: the cover of the special A.E.F. permit that each of the Streamliners needed for their first tour of the war zone in Holland, Belgium, and France.

Below: the inside of the permit issued to trumpeter Bill Carter.

MILITARY PERMIT OFFICE	
Issued by Emis par	} LONDON
Date	11.12.44
Valid from Validité du	} 15.12.44 until au } 15.2.45
Destination	BRUSSELS
Object of Journey	TROOP WELFARE
Occupation	R.C.A.F.
Full name of Bearer Prénom et nom du Titulaire	} No. R.89371 Sgt. W.R. CARTER
Nationality Nationalité	BRITISH
Number and Type of Identity Document	} R.A.F. F.1250 (R) No. 12,80866
Ministry or Dept. supporting journey	} R.C.A.F. HQ (O)
Signature of Bearer du Titulaire	} <i>W.R. Carter</i>



Issuing Officer's Signature, Rank and
William D. 11th
For Supreme Commander, A.E.F.

Endorsements

[B44/533] 8/44 15000 W.O.P. 18829

Here is part of an account of one of the band's experiences during those eleven days in Eindhoven, as reported by Nicholas Kohler (grandson of pianist Lyle) on the front page of the National Post on November 11, 2004:

At the height of the Second World War's hellish Battle of the Bulge, a crack team of Canadian soldiers aimed their canvas-covered truck for Germany and started driving. Just south of them, in lower Belgium, the Bulge would eventually claim some 75,000 American troops, either killed, captured or maimed as the Germans staged a last-ditch counteroffensive against Allied lines in southern Belgium.

Yet, even as they neared enemy lines, the 15 Canadians carried no weapons. Instead, under white knuckles, they clasped the black cases containing the gleaming tools of their trade. Their mission lay in an abandoned church tucked deep in the dark Dutch countryside. It was the rain-sodden night of Dec. 22, 1944, and reports said the Germans had just dusted the area with paratroopers.

"We were told to watch for trouble," the late Pat Riccio, the group's leader, told a reporter more than 20 years ago. "We were also asked if we carried weapons. I said that I had my clarinet. But you can't kill a guy with a clarinet."

As shells and bullets whirred by the aptly named Grave Bridge in Nijmegen, Holland, Mr. Riccio's gallows humour could not hide the fact that the men, members of the RCAF Streamliners dance orchestra, believed they would die amid the mortar and gunfire. Hitting the lip of the opposing bank as shells bombarded the bridge, they quickened the pace and soon, in that abandoned church, they unpacked the cases.

The piano was already waiting, beat up and out of tune. Even as the 15 men of the RCAF Streamliners -- now collected into a phalanx of brass, bass, piano and drum -- burst into their opening tune, the troops kept their rifles close, swaying at the dreaded front to the tunes of home: I Can't Get Started, Stardust and Body and Soul.

"We played to troops who were very much on the alert. They were heavily armed and each time the church doors opened, everyone would look around and point their rifles at the door -- just in case it was Germans," said the band's drummer, Don Hilton."

Nijmegen bridge - Len Coppold (pro: Ny-MAY-gun)

"It was total darkness, and a little narrow road coming up to the Nijmegen bridge. Anyway, we were stopped. We didn't know who stopped us...Germans, or Japanese (chuckle) Americans, Canadians, whatever. We were all in the back of the truck, and it was cold as hell, and then the tarp suddenly opened. The guard said, "who are you, who are you?" We all said "we're Canadians, we're Canadians" and he said, "alright, stay still, don't move, stay where you are!" We did! And then they escorted us across the bridge. Why the heck we were doing that was sorta crazy...because the Germans were just on the other side, you know...so we had to play for a Canadian group that were there...and

Brits...and we shakily played the gig and we were watching the front door to see who was coming in and who was going out. So, we got through that, but we were pretty happy to go back the other way on the Nijmegen bridge. It was a pretty scary night."



COURTESY ERENOW.NET

"Under New Management"

An Allied soldier mans an anti-aircraft gun at the Grave Bridge near Nijmegen, Holland, shortly after its capture from the Germans in November 1944. Don Hilton said the bridge was under enemy shellfire the following month, as frightened band members made their way to a forward defence post to play for Canadian soldiers close to the front lines.

Don Hilton told me that when the flaps on the back of that truck went up on that cold and rainy December night, it was British troops who were pointing bayonets at them, demanding to know who the musicians were. Once they figured it out, they told them to be careful of the Canadian soldiers at the next defence post where the gig was, because they had "nervous trigger fingers." Hilton said all the soldiers in the audience pointed their guns at the door whenever it opened. "The Germans got to listen to the concert because they were only 250 yards away," he said with a grin.

Eindhoven/Nijmegen - Nancy Hilton (as told to her by Don Hilton)

"They were playing at, I'm pretty sure it was an American base (the band had been lent out to the Americans that night)...and at the end of the night, it was suggested they should stay, I'm pretty sure because they were warned there was enemy activity in the area. And they were told to just stay in the infirmary, and not head back to the barracks where they were staying, because there was nobody in in the infirmary that night. So that's where they slept for the night, is my understanding. When they woke up around 5 the next morning, they looked out the window and saw that the airfield (where their barracks was) was essentially a smoking ruin, and that the barracks itself had been wiped out in the bombing."³⁴

³⁴ Hilton, Nancy personal interview Feb. 2020

Nijmegen - Len Coppold

“It was New Year’s Eve 1944 and we were posted to Nijmegen...we were playing for Canadians and Brits around the Arnhem area. So, we were put up in a little hospital on the grounds of an airport outside Nijmegen. And our quarters were pretty pleasant. It was a Sunday morning, as I recall.... all of a sudden, we heard thundering and bullets and shots and aircraft zooming in and zooming out and then going after the aircraft on the tarmacs. And the Germans destroyed about 50 aircraft that never got off the ground. Even though we were protected, it was a bit of a shocking New Year’s Day for us. The team was altogether, and stuck together, glad we were all still alive and everyone was OK. The Germans killed a lot of crew people and groundcrew at the airport.”³⁵

Nijmegen – Jack Fallon

“On January 1st 1945, a German Messerschmitt Me.109 gave us a wake-up call. The ground crew personnel, who would normally have been on duty, were sleeping off the effects of the New Year’s Eve celebrations, the band included. I awoke to the sounds of planes strafing the airfield and surrounding buildings. One plane went for a row of Mustangs (Allied fighter planes), lined up on the airfield. No one was expecting an attack, and the planes were not dispersed around the airfield. Most of them were destroyed.”

“One Me.109 making a low-level attack was brought down by a partridge that lodged in the plane’s engine air-intake. I reached ground level in record time, and was amazed to find Jake Perdue, fully dressed. He’d reached the ground floor ahead of me.”

“During the air raid, an airman in our barracks was awakened by a noise that seemed to come from the metal cabinet at the head of his bed. He looked in the cabinet and all seemed normal, so he went back to sleep again. Later, he discovered that a shell had gone right through the cabinet. He had a lucky escape.”³⁶

Author’s note: The Germans launched last-gasp air attacks all over Belgium and Holland on Jan. 1, 1945

³⁵ Coppold, Len phone interview Oct. 2019

³⁶ Fallon, Jack “From The Top – Ellington to the Beatles” p53

Beer Break!

One night during our stay in Eindhoven, two of our lads, Bill Carter and Fraser Lobban, decided to bring a barrel of beer back to our barracks. It was “spirited out” the back door of the airmen’s mess, and the two lads proceeded to roll the barrel across the parade



BILL CARTER AND FRASER LOBBAN

square and up the stairs to our barracks. Manipulating the barrel up the stairs one step at a time was hard work. Near the top of the stairs, the boys stopped for a breather and relaxed their grip. At that moment, the barrel began bouncing down the stairs, gathering momentum with each step. Near the bottom, the pressure in the barrel had built up nicely with the pounding it was receiving, and it exploded with a loud bang, spraying all its contents in all directions, soaking the two participants. There was no heating in the barracks, and there was no beer, so it was early to bed for all concerned.³⁷

Capture me. Please?

One of the most interesting stories told by Don Hilton had to do with a couple of “lost” soldiers who claimed to be American – but who really may have been German paratroopers looking for a quick way out of Hitler’s Wehrmacht (army). The tale is re-told here by Don’s daughter Nancy.

“Two soldiers claiming to be American came on to a Canadian base, and their story was that they had become separated from and had lost their unit. They walked into the mess and sat down...Don was on the bandstand. They indicated to Don that they knew him from Toronto...that they were from upstate New York, and had come over to Toronto with a sports team, and they’d gone out to drink in a place where Don had played and they’d seen him several times.”

“They shared stories with Don, and they bought him drinks, and eventually the night came to an end, and the band left, and these lads were heading off the base to see if they could find their unit. As they were leaving the base, whoever was in the guard house said, “don’t go, there’s been a lot of German paratrooper activity around here, and it’s not safe....so just sleep in the guardhouse tonight, and tomorrow you can go out and find your unit.” So, they did.”

“In the middle of the night, they started speaking German! And so the Canadian guards recognized that they were really a couple of the German paratroopers that had landed,

³⁷ Fallon, Jack From The Top – Ellington to the Beatles” p53

and my dad always felt that they had intentionally gotten caught, that they were probably young lads who were possibly born, or at least brought up in the United States.”

“Don’s idea was that prior to the United States getting into the war, their families would have sent them to Germany to fight for the Fatherland, and then they really got caught between a rock and a hard place when the Americans came into the war. And I don’t think they had a great allegiance to the madman (Hitler) who was running things at the time, and were quite happy to try to get home again, and were happy to be captured by Canadians. Much better than Russians!”³⁸

Feeding the Hungry



Left: British soldiers serving food to Dutch children at a St. Nicholas Day party on Dec. 7, 1944.

public domain photo

The winter of 1944-45 was known as the “Hunger Winter” in northwestern Holland. A famine, brought on by a German blockade of food coming from other parts of the country, killed between 18,000 and 22,000, many of them elderly men. Nancy Hilton says Don told her the Streamliners helped out as best they could:

³⁸ Hilton, Nancy personal interview Feb. 2020



“Don told me that all of the boys in the band would put extra food on their plates that they wouldn’t eat, and when they went to the garbage cans to clear off their plates, they would feed it to the young Dutch kids who were standing there. So many of them were just starving during this war because the Germans had come through and burned everything they hadn’t taken for themselves.”³⁹

Left: Phil Sparling with Dutch boys amid what looks like war wreckage during Holland’s “Hunger Winter” 1944-45

The Gig from Hell

The band left Eindhoven and headed for Belgium (Diest, Brussels) and then moved on to Lille, France.

“We played at a French army club, and the reception we received matched the weather at the time - dull, and (they) weren’t very interested. It was one of the worst winters in northern Europe in years. We were billeted in a chateau, and this building had a major flaw. The windows were missing, and there was as much snow inside as out...we were very glad to get back to Brussels, where we did a number of shows at the 21 Club.”⁴⁰

Back to England

On January 16th, the band travelled to Ostend, Belgium, on the English Channel shore, and got on an LST (landing ship, tank) boat for the ride back to Tilbury, England. They arrived on January 18th, and were put to work right away doing broadcasts and touring service camps and bases, usually by train, sometimes by truck, and once in a while on a Dakota.

³⁹ Hilton, Nancy email interview Mar. 2020

⁴⁰ Fallon, Jack “From the Top – Ellington to the Beatles” p54



Left: the band finished its first trip to the continent aboard an LST (landing ship, tank) boat like this one. It crossed the Channel from Ostend, Belgium and docked at Tilbury, England on Jan. 18, 1945. (see map p. 47)

STREAMLINERS BACK FROM MONTH'S TOUR

The 15-piece RCAF Streamliners Dance Band has returned to Britain after a month's tour of RCAF and Allied stations and units on the continent. The band, led by Sgt. W. R. Carter, Goderick, Ont., trumpeter, was cordially received wherever they appeared in France, Belgium and Holland. In all they made some 50 appearances.

The tour was not without its exciting incidents, among which was a close-up view of a bombing by German Me.262 jet-propelled planes. They saw many flying bombs overhead and watched a number of V-2 rockets streak skywards. On one occasion the band had to cross the Nijemegeh Bridge while under German shell fire.

This article appeared in the RCAF newspaper shortly after the band's first tour of the continent. It refers to the Streamliners having a "close-up" view of German Messerschmitt Me.262 jet fighters or fighter-bombers. The Germans were the first to use jet planes in warfare, and had introduced them just before the band went to Holland. It's not clear where the Streamliners "encountered" them. Len Coppold's description of the New Year's attack sounds as if it could have been then, but Jack Fallon says in his book the planes involved there were conventional Messerschmitts (no jet engines).

For the next eight months, the Streamliners would tour the length and breadth of the UK once again. The venues included theatres, military bases, and service camps, park concerts, and other war-related public functions.



Left: the Streamliners played at London's Stage Door Canteen at 201 Piccadilly on May 3, 1945, just six days before VE Day. It was one of eight Canteen locations in the U.S, Paris, and London providing entertainment to Allied service personnel. In one show in September 1944, Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire "dropped by" and performed. It closed shortly after the war.



Left: a modern-day picture of what was once an American military hospital at Nocton in Lincolnshire, where the band played for hospitalized GIs on four occasions: Apr. 28, May 6, May 31, and July 4 (U.S. Independence Day), 1945.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Now3d>



They liked the Streamliners here!

The Monseigneur News Theatre in Piccadilly, London. The band played here 14 times according to the daybook/schedule.

Photograph taken Jan 1939 © Historic England Archive ref: bb87/03863

Below: The modern-day Prince Edward Theatre in London. During the war, it was the Queensbury All Services Club, where Glenn Miller and some of his band members saluted the Streamliners as they performed.





The Streamliners played four times at the historic Criterion Theatre (est. 1845) in Piccadilly Circus in London.

2016 photo

Other performance locations prior to V.E. Day (May 9, 1945): (modern-day photos)

Connaught Rooms Hotel Apr. 22, 1945

Grosvenor House Hotel Jan. 26, 1945



Morris' Ballroom, Shrewsbury Mar. 1, 1945

1930s photo

Victory in Europe Day, May 8, 1945

GODFREY DAVIS
CAR HIRE SERVICE
1, BELGIAN ST., LONDON, E.C. 4
Tel. 3111

The Daily Telegraph

4 A.M.
and Morning Post

TAYLOR'S
WANT TO BUY
TYPEWRITERS
ADDING AND CALCULATING
MACHINES, SAWS & STEEL
FURNITURE
74, Abchurch Lane, London, E.C. 4
Tel. 3111

GERMANY CAPITULATES!

Today is VE Day: "Complete and Crushing Victory"

THE KING AND PREMIER TO BROADCAST

Unconditional Surrender Signed at Gen. Eisenhower's H.Q.

40 a.m. CEREMONY IN RHEIMS SCHOOLHOUSE

This is VE-Day. The war in Europe is over. After five years and eight months "complete and crushing victory" has, in the words of the King-crowned Britain's unrelenting struggle against Nazi Germany.

Germany has surrendered unconditionally to Great Britain, the United States and Russia. Resistance has ceased in all areas where the German Government is still in touch with its remaining forces.

The Ministry of Information last night issued the following statement:

GERMAN NATION TOLD OF SURRENDER

KIRSIK ON 'THIS TRAGIC MOMENT'

The Nazi news the German news broadcast of May 8th... (text continues)

King Thanks Eisenhower

Mission Fulfilled

The King last night... (text continues)

ALLIED FLEET OFF OSLO, SAYS STOCKHOLM

"LANDING EXPECTED AT ANY MOMENT"

GERMANS' SURRENDER

From W. E. HENDE, Daily Telegraph Special Correspondent, STOCKHOLM, Monday.

The Germans in Norway have capitulated in accordance with the announcement by Gen. Eisenhower, the British Foreign Minister, of an unconditional surrender of all forces.

An Allied naval force of 38 ships has been directed at the entrance to Oslo Fjord, said Swedish radio tonight, quoting telegrams reports from the Norwegian capital. Later reports said they were actually in the fjord.

"There are no reports," the radio added, "that troops have been landed, but it is expected that this will take place at any moment."

The warships were expected to reach Oslo tonight. The Swedish Admiralty warned Swedish fishing boats to withdraw immediately into Swedish waters in case of aerial attacks.

The news of the surrender was received in all parts of the British Isles. Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and the Netherlands, which, under their leadership, have fought bravely to their end of variable and restless victory.

I would ask you also to convey a special message of congratulation to my own forces now under your command. Throughout the

MILE-LONG CROWD OUTSIDE THE PALACE

Big Procession From Strand

V-BONFIRES IN WEST END

A procession with a very long... (text continues)

CROWDS IN NEW YORK STOP TRAFFIC

CITY ANKLE-DEEP IN PAPER

FROM ALL THE IMMEDIATELY... (text continues)





WAR-WEARY LONDONERS REVELLING ON "THE STRAND"

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

"I remember joining the giddy mobs on VE Day, and surging down the Strand to the Palace and cheering the Royals who appeared at intervals all day. They wept; we wept; the gods wept. Our work lessened a bit; we had time to go down to Archer Street and mingle with British musicians, and accept gigs at places like the Astoria Ballroom (24 hours a day, revolving bandstand) and Hammersmith Palais with some very good bands whose leaders I cannot now recall, although they were very well-known then."⁴¹

⁴¹ Sparling, Phil memoir 2009

The Streamliners would have been able to take part in the celebrations surrounding the war's end, and take gigs with other bands, since they had no performances on their own schedule for a week between May 8 (VE Day) and May 15th. On May 16, they were back in business, playing at military bases, public functions and recording in BBC studios.

RADIO

TO-NIGHT

203.5 Metres, 391.1 Metres, 449.1 Metres, 48.54 Metres

6—News, War Commentary. 6.15
 —Training for Industry: Dr. H. W. Webb. 6.30—Command Performance: 7—Douglas Houghton. 7.15—Marius Goring in William Penn. 7.45—King David: Symphonic Psalm, by Honegger, after a drama by René Morax. 9—News. 9.30—Wilfred Pickles in Piccadilly. 10—Paula Green. 10.15—Story. 10.30—News (Gaelic). 10.35—Gaelic Programme. 11—Tatiana Makushina, soprano. 11.20—Gramo: Dance Tunes. 12—12.20—News.

GENERAL FORCES

296.1 Metres, 342.1 Metres

6—News. 6.15—Gramo: Forces Favourites. 7.10—Archbishop of Canterbury speaks to the Forces. 7.15—Over to Mulligan's. 7.45—Sportsmen's Corner. 8—News. 8.10—News from Canada. 8.15—Round The Halls: Hippodrome, Belfast. 8.45—Hallé Orchestra. 9.30—Fred Allen Programme. 9.58—News Headlines. 10—Dance Orchestra. 10.30—Orchestra. 10.58—News Headlines.

FOR THE A.E.F. 514 Metres

6—News. 6.5—To-day's Front Line. 6.15—Swing Sextet. 6.30—G. I. Journal. 7—News Headlines. 7.15—R.C.A.F. Streamliners. 7.45—Strings with Wings. 8—News. 8.15—Orchestra and Chorus. 8.30—British Band of A.E.F. 9—News. 9.5—Orchestra: Alec Templeton, piano. 9.30—Fred Allen Programme. 10—News Headlines. 10.1—Stardust. 10.30—Mildred Bailey Show. 10.59—News Headlines.

A typical column in British newspapers in the 1940s, detailing program scheduling for radio listeners. This one is from the Gloucester Citizen in March of 1945. The Streamliners program, under the "For the A.E.F." (Allied Expeditionary Force) listing, was scheduled for 7:15 – 7:45pm. Streamliners' broadcasts were heard by Allied forces not only in the U.K. and in Europe, but all over the world.



Left: the unchanged entrance to the B.B.C.'s Maida Vale Studios in London, where the Streamliners recorded broadcasts on thirteen occasions during their time overseas. One other recording session was done at the Marylbone studio.

John Andrew/Detail of Maida Vale Studios CC BY-SA 2.0

Below, a 1947 photo of B.B.C. Maida Vale's Number One Studio. If this wasn't the studio the band recorded in, it would have been very similar.

(BBC)



JOYOUS OCCASION

Canadian Airmen Have Farewell Dance

This country owes a great debt of gratitude to the Royal Canadian Air Force, especially for its achievements in the darkest days of the war.

It was therefore fitting that, at the farewell dance of members of the R.C.A.F. stationed in the area, held at the Winter Garden, Penzance, on Monday evening, a visit should have been paid by the Mayor of Penzance (Ald. Robt. Thomas), who was introduced to the senior officers present, and then chatted to many of the men.

The occasion was essentially a Service one. Almost all the men were Canadians, though one noticed a few members of the British Forces. The girls included a large percentage of W.A.A.F.s, with a sprinkling of Wrens.

Music was provided by "The Streamliners," an R.C.A.F. combination from London, who justified their high reputation by a memorable performance, ranging from the most romantic waltz to the "hottest" of "hot swing." At one point they became so "hot" that the dancers stopped in sheer amazement to watch their performance.

It was a joyous occasion, despite the impending severance of many friendships, and one of which every person present took the fullest advantage.

A word must be said for the cartoons around the walls of the lounge, and for the lighting and decorative effects generally, which added greatly to the success of the evening.

The staff of the Winter Garden worked very to see that everything was in order and that these boys who had given their aid to this country had a farewell at Penzance which they would long remember after they had got back to their homes.

This article appeared in the newspaper in Cornwall, England after the Streamliners played a farewell dance on August 23, 1945.

"W.A.A.F" stands for "Women's Auxiliary Air Force." By 1943, there were 182,000 WAAF volunteers performing tasks that freed up air force personnel for front-line roles. The women compiled weather reports, maintained aircraft, served on airfields, and worked in intelligence.

Similarly, 74,000 WRENS (Women's Royal Navy Service) played a major role in the planning and organization of naval operations.



The Streamliners played at Seymour Hall in London eleven times. The last occasion was on September 19th, 1945, about a month before they would leave on their second and final tour of Belgium, Holland, France, and Germany.



One of the last performances the band gave before embarking on its second tour of Europe was at the Town Hall in Peterborough, about an hour-and-a-half train ride from London. It was a fundraising dance for the local Y.W.C.A on October 9, 1945.

notfromutrecht

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Below: the "contract" for military approval of the appearance by the RCAF Streamliners for the Y.W.C.A. dance in Peterborough on October 9, 1945: (Library of Canada Archives)

19 September, 1945

Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief,
R.C.A.F. Overseas Headquarters,
20, Lincoln's Inn Fields,
London, W.C.2

Att'n S/L Boundy.

R.C.A.F. "Streamliners"
Visit to Peterborough, Oct. 9th.

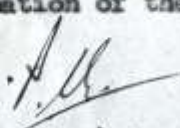
1. To confirm telephone conversation of even date (F/O Worthylake - F/L Ward) the following itinerary is submitted:

- (a) The referenced Band will leave London (King's Cross Station) at 1600 Hours on October 9th and will arrive at Peterborough at 1735 Hours.
- (b) A representative of the Y.W.C.A. will meet the Band at the Railway Station and transport equipment and personnel to billets arranged by the Y.W.C.A.
- (c) The Y.W.C.A. will arrange for a meal upon arrival.
- (d) Sgt. Carter, N.C.O. i/c of the Band will be instructed upon arrival of the details of the engagement by Mrs. Clark of the Y.W.C.A.
- (e) It is understood that the Band will play a dance at the Town Hall, Peterborough, on the evening of October 9th.
- (f) The Y.W.C.A. will make complete arrangements for transporting equipment to and from the Town Hall and to the Railway Station on October 10th when the Band will either entrain for York or London.

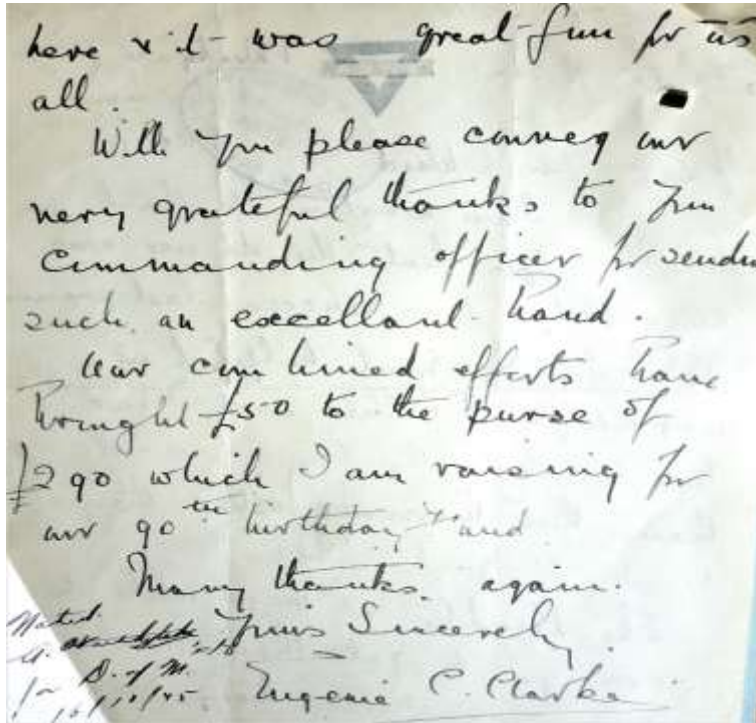
2. It is understood that the Band consists of fifteen men with Sgt. Carter in charge.

3. Early confirmation of the above will be appreciated, please.

c.c. Mrs. Clark, Y.W.C.A.
c.c. Supervisor Belkovich.


(P.G. Evans) Squadron Leader
Officer Commanding,
No. 1 District Headquarters,
R.C.A.F., London, W.C.2

The morning after the dance, a woman representing the Peterborough Y.W.C.A. wrote a thank-you letter to RCAF Headquarters in London to say that all of the conditions of the “contract” had been met, and that the evening had been an ‘outstanding success.’ The note continued:



here & it was great fun for us
all.
Will you please convey our
very grateful thanks to your
Commanding officer for sending
such an excellent band.
Our combined efforts have
brought £50 to the purse of
£290 which I am raising for
my 90th birthday fund.
Many thanks again.
Yours Sincerely,
Eugenie C. Clarke

*Mailed
10.11.45
10.11.45*

“Will you please convey our very grateful thanks to the commanding officer for sending such an excellent band. Our combined efforts have brought 50 pounds to the purse of 290 pounds which I am raising for our 90th birthday fund. Many thanks again.

Yours sincerely

Eugenie C. Clarke”

Library of Canada Archives

Just one week after the Peterborough dance, the Canadians were flying over the English Channel in a Dakota once again to a devastated and occupied Germany, where they would begin another six-week tour of western Europe. In the midst of dozens more performances, they would see for themselves the shocking evidence of Nazi brutality, and the unimaginable size and scope of an underground “city” the Germans had established to build and repair submarines.

Chapter 5

Witnessing Horror's Wake

On October 17th, the band flew to Schleswig-Holstein, the northernmost of Germany's states, and the focus of operation for Canadian forces in the postwar period. More than 40 shows were squeezed into a five-country, 45-day tour that ended on November 29th. The map below indicates each of the locations where performances happened.



Key: 1 Schleswig-Holstein 2 Kiel 3 Isle of Sylt 4 Westerland Sylt 5 Rendsburg 6 Haderslev (Denmark) 7 Aabenraa (Denmark) 8 Hamburg 9 Schleswig 10 Zaventem & Brussels 11 Celle 12 Belsen 13 Oldenburg 14 Groningen 15 Hilversum 16 Amsterdam 17 Paris

Kiel sub pens

About a week into the tour, the Streamliners played in the city of Kiel, the capital of Schleswig-Holstein, and also home to an incredibly well-fortified and elaborate underground German submarine base. Guitarist Len Coppold says the musicians couldn't believe their eyes:

"We were playing in Kiel for two or three days, and as a courtesy we were asked if we'd like to see the German submarine facilities that the Germans had built here. Of course, we were eager, yeah."

"So this German base had been a heavily fortified area, because not only were they repairing submarines there, but they were building them, too. And it was one of the biggest submarine bases the Germans had. They rebuilt under the city of Kiel which had been bombed ninety times in four years. Kiel was levelled, pretty well."



"Anyway, we went down into the bunkers, and my God...it was a city! A huge city with 7 or 8 submarines being restored...maybe another 12 under repair...and another 6 or 7 being built from scratch. Imagine how big the city was. I mean, miles long. Long, long, long tunnels that came out to the sea where the subs would come in and exit....and well protected of course, even though Kiel was being relentlessly bombed above. We were just mesmerized by the space and equipment. Things coming out of the walls to lift this, or lift that ... it was just amazing to see

*this. And they had quarters for maybe about 700 workers...labourers from Poland and Russia who were forced to work there."*⁴²

⁴² Coppold, Len phone interview Oct. 2019

Drummer Don Hilton told his daughter Nancy the defeated Germans couldn't have been prouder to show the Canadian musicians around:

“Don remarked on how well-received the band was by the German submarine captains. They were very proud of what they had and they wanted to show them around, and they weren't reluctant in any way shape or form to show them their submarines and how they were cared for. And during that time Don managed to purchase a pair of German binoculars he'd bought from someone on the German submarines.”⁴³



RCAF Streamliners performing in Kiel, Germany - Oct. 21, 1945

Trombones l to r: Charlie Overall, Bill Bebbington, Mel Smith **Trumpets** l to r: Fraser Lobban, Bill Carter, Claude Lambert **Saxes** l to r: Phil Sparling, Pat Riccio, Bob Burns, Jake Perdue, Frank Palen **Drums:** Don Hilton **Bass:** Jack Fallon **Guitar:** Len Coppold
Not seen: Lyle Kohler (piano) George Lane (vocalist)

⁴³ Hilton, Nancy personal interview Feb. 2020

Don Hilton wasn't the only band member who managed to pick up German war memorabilia on this tour of Europe. Billy Carter came home with a German army helmet, according to his grandson Jordan:



“After the war there were German soldiers stuck in many parts of Europe trying to get home and they had no money. My grandpa met this German officer and the guy was so desperate for smokes that my grandpa traded him a carton of cigarettes for his helmet and Mauser officer’s pistol. He also ended up with some German submarine binoculars (not sure how he got

those). I think right at the end of the war there was lots of trading going on, guys trying to bring some stuff home to show their friends.”⁴⁴

Jordan’s dad played with the helmet as a kid (he painted the swastika on it that is still slightly visible), and so did Jordan. A unique piece of family history! Then there’s the German officer’s knife that vocalist George Lane bartered for. According to daughter Kim McCreight-Lane, he got it in a bar from a German officer for a pack of cigarettes.



GERMAN OFFICER'S KNIFE AND SHEATH

⁴⁴ Carter, Jordan email interview April, 2020

Between Nov. 5th and Nov. 15th, the Streamliners played in the German city of Hamburg five times. Hamburg had been the target of sustained Allied bombing throughout the war because of its military and industrial importance. It was, in the words of my dad Phil, “nearly all rubble.” It’s estimated that 40,000 civilians died. In July 1943, the largest aerial bombing in history up to that point had resulted in a firestorm more devastating than the after-effects of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, according to an official assessment of bombing damage.



THE RESULTS OF THE BOMBING OF HAMBURG

In the photo below, the Streamliners are playing at the opening of the Canada Club in Hamburg. It was a hostel for service personnel on leave. (at the microphone – unknown)





Above: exterior of the postwar Canada Club in Hamburg. While the Club is long gone, The Hotel Phonix is still there today (below).



A Visit to Hell

The day after their last gig in Hamburg, on November 16th, the band travelled to Celle, Germany. The next day, they would take time to visit Bergen-Belsen, the German concentration camp just a short distance from Celle. It had been liberated by British and Canadian troops seven months earlier. Prior to its liberation, 20-thousand Russian prisoners of war had died there, in addition to 50,000 other inmates, many of them Jews. There were no gas chambers at Belsen; they died of Nazi brutality, disease, and hunger. At the time of liberation, there were 60,000 in the camp, all of them desperately ill and starved. Anne Frank, the teenaged diarist who chronicled her family's life while hiding from the Germans, died at Bergen-Belsen a month or so before the Allies got there.

By the time the Streamliners visited, the actual camp had been burned down deliberately to prevent the spread of even more disease, and the site was now the Bergen-Belsen Displaced Persons facility, established to care for and eventually resettle the survivors, many of whom simply had no place to go. It was in operation for six years until 1951. The Streamliners may have been selected by either British or Canadian senior officers to act as official witnesses to the Belsen scene at that time. There were still thousands of survivors there, as Allied medical personnel were still involved in a massive effort to look after them. According to guitarist Len Coppold, all of the band members were present.

Bergen-Belsen - Len Coppold

"We were playing in Celle for the Canadians. Celle is about 7 or 8 miles from Belsen. We were there for two nights. A senior officer...I can't remember if he was Brit or Canadian...said 'we want you to come to see Belsen.' He said, 'I want you all to see first-hand.'"

"So, the whole team went out, and my God, when they opened the gates, it was...deplorable, deplorable. I mean there were people who died in '43, and they were still lying there...skeletons. Never moved. The stench of the place ... AHH! Couldn't believe it. At one point there were 60,000 prisoners in the camp. The British and the Canadians were trying to care for the survivors. What you saw figures (the living survivors) ... they were everywhere. Lying down, or on their knees, with dirty, dirty clothes, the stench again...couldn't compare with anything. I'll never forget it."

"We went through areas where women were kept in what looked kind of like a stable...crowded to death, you know...and then there was a section where there was nothing but clothing...all their clothing and personal items in stacks, you know...I never saw one child among the living survivors, but we saw a lot of kids' clothing, some of it"

stuck in the fences. It was just unbelievable. It hit me so hard...I couldn't help but want to remember it."

"The Canadians and the Brits made the German guards bury the dead who were still all over the area." Later on, "I think they shot some of those guards, they were so taken aback with what had happened."⁴⁵

Don Hilton: *"We were actually picking up bones – human remains. And the mass graves, with little wooden crosses and signs saying how many bodies had been shovelled in. 1200. 800. 500. It was quite the experience."*



Bill Carter stands beside one of the mass graves. The sign indicates how many bodies were buried in this grave eleven days after Bergen-Belsen was liberated by Canadian and British forces. (Streamliner photo)

⁴⁵ Coppold, Len phone interview Oct. 2019



Sign posted at the Bergen-Belsen site when the Streamliners visited on November 17, 1945.

(Streamliner photo)



A crematorium furnace. There were no gas chambers at Bergen-Belsen. Bodies were cremated after inmates had died of starvation, disease, or brutality. This furnace would have been housed inside a building that would have been purposely burned down by the liberating forces in an effort to prevent the spread of even more disease.

(Streamliner photo)



Above: close up of a crematorium furnace.

(Streamliner photo)



Another mass grave containing the remains of 5,000 prisoners who were buried on April 23, 1945.

(Streamliner photo)

Author's note: All of the Bergen-Belsen photos came from the scrapbooks of Bill Carter and Don Hilton. I've significantly enlarged and enhanced them to increase their "viewability."

About a week after the sobering experience at Bergen-Belsen, the Streamliners found themselves back in Brussels at the 21 Club. They played there more than half-a-dozen times during their two tours of the Continent. The picture below was taken in November, 1945.



Playing jazz on the Continent and at the 21 Club was an interesting musical experience for the Canadians. Jazz in Belgium was banned by the occupying Nazis, and so it was forced underground. But it flourished in its imprisonment. Belgian musicians continued to record, and new bands popped up frequently. Because the Germans shut off the influence of any American jazz, the Belgian public was crazy for jazz by homegrown musicians, who became quite creative in getting their music to the public. I recall my dad expressing real admiration for Belgian bands he heard at 21 Club. I remember him saying that one band in particular “cut us to pieces.” (That’s a musician’s way of saying the other band was a lot better!)

The Streamliners’ exposure to jazz in Europe was one of the subjects of an article by Bill Mead in *Jazz Panorama*, a Toronto jazz magazine published between 1946 and 1948.

“During all this time on the continent they were able to jam with local cats and talked with many hungry jazz collectors who were interested in everything and everybody in jazz. They found the musicians on the Continent much more serious about jazz than the

English, who seemed to do too much classification of the music and were on an everlasting Dixieland kick.”

“When they take in a jazz session on the Continent, they go with the same attitude as a musician goes to a symphony concert in this country. They study the tonal qualities, the beat, the chords – they never talk, pound their feet, or clap their hands, but just sit there and drink in every note. When the bash ends, they discuss it with the sincerity of a man discussing a book or a play.”

“In Brussels at the 21 Club, the Streamliners played opposite some home-grown talent, Ivan D’Bei and his band of five reeds, three rhythm and three brass. The band played some very modern stuff which they got from any disc they could manage to obtain.”

“Their arrangements jumped but the brass played very quiet. They were amazed when they heard the Streamliners’ brass section and dumbfounded when they were told American (navy?) bands played much louder.”

“During the occupation, these resourceful characters changed the American standards they had and said they were of French origin, or called them French folk music. They had a very solid arrangement of the King Porter Stomp which they called, if you can imagine, ‘The Bird of the Stars’.”⁴⁶

The second European tour was near its end. A few days before their return to England, they got on a train in Brussels for Paris – a trip described by Jack Fallon as one of his worst ever.

“It was freezing cold when we left Brussels. There were no windows in the carriages, and it seemed to take forever. Arriving in Paris, we were taken to the Palais D’Orsay, a five-star hotel. This was luxury on a grand scale, but we were so shattered to experience it that we went straight to bed. The last thing I remember before I drifted off were two elderly chambermaids fluffing up the pillows and quietly leaving the room. I awoke late the next afternoon. The hotel was located on the Seine, and the surroundings were ideal. The experience went some way to soothing the pain of that train trip from Brussels.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Mead, Bill *Jazz Panorama* (Toronto 1946-1948) “Streamliners Invaded Europe with Jazz”

⁴⁷ Fallon, Jack “From the Top – Ellington to the Beatles” pp. 56-57



Above: Jack Fallon wrote the band stayed at the five-star Palais D'Orsay Hotel in Paris at the end of their second trip to the continent. It was apparently part of the same building that housed the D'Orsay Museum on the Seine River.

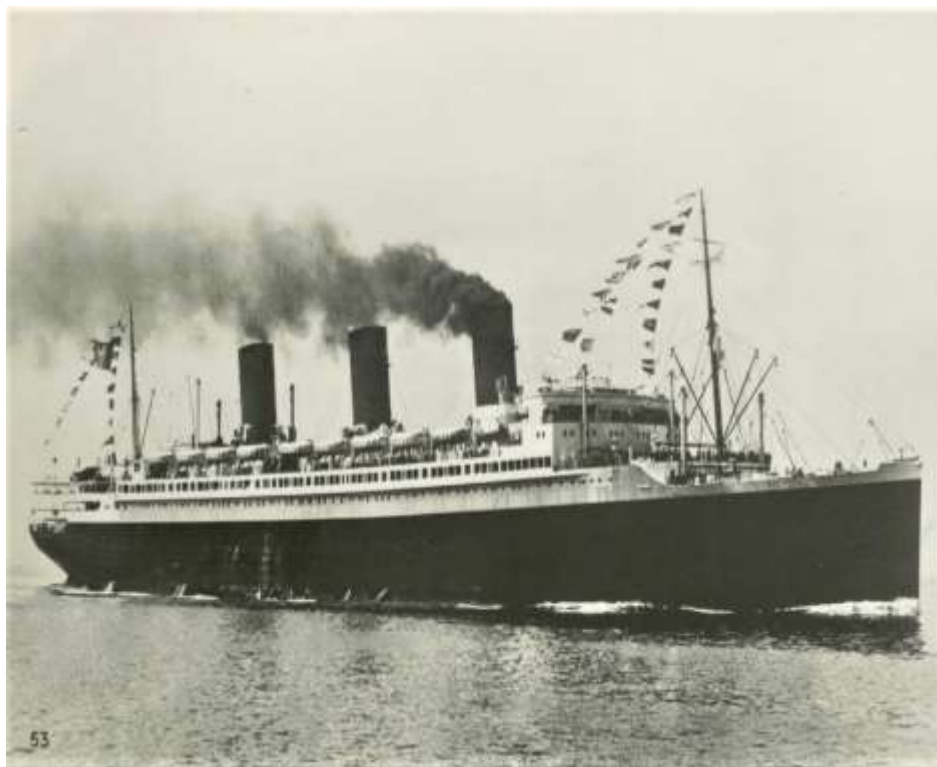
Below: Inside the resplendent Palais D'Orsay Hotel. The function is unidentified in this photo that appears in Bill Carter's photo album. (The Streamliners do not appear in this.)



On November 29th, the band went back to Brussels, and then flew back to England on a Dakota the next day.

It was pretty much over now. The band would play for another two months – a few more military bases, a few civilian gigs in London, and then the RCAF Streamliners played their last show at RAF Topcliffe on January 31st, 1946.⁴⁸

“Well, as the guy with billboards in Piccadilly Circus proclaimed, “the end is nigh.” We found ourselves trooping up the gangplank of the “Ile de France,” destination Canada.”



ILE DE FRANCE

“Bill Carter was full of big plans for the band, but ever I could see the obvious difficulties; Riccio kept his own counsel, and Jack of course, had already “deserted.” It was time to savour the improbable success we had enjoyed, time to sweep it all under a mat, and get on with the rest of our lives. The twanging of all those guitars soon swept the big bands away

with Pat and Bill and Claude and Jack. I had already decided to go back to school; apparently it never occurred to anyone else. That was one of the few really smart things I ever did.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Fallon, Jack “From the Top - Ellington to the Beatles” p.58

⁴⁹ Sparling, Phil memoir 2009

They didn't all come home at the same time. My dad's service record indicates he was actually on his way home in mid-January. Charlie Overall left on Feb. 2. Claude Lambert, Don Hilton, Len Coppold, and Bob Burns stayed on for awhile and took gigs for as long as they could. Burns was posted back to Canada, but would come back to England and forge an impressive career in jazz there. One Streamliner – bassist Jack Fallon – took his discharge in England and decided to stay for good, because "I was getting so much work."⁵⁰



⁵⁰ Fallon, Jack, "From the Top – Ellington to the Beatles," p.58

Chapter Six

After 'the Dance'

And so it was over.

Five years since those days in St. Thomas, when mechanics-in-training Bill and Phil and Jake got together with Fraser and Jack and Pat and Don and Claude and Charlie to form the RCAF St. Thomas Technical Trades School dance orchestra. Five years, covering pretty close to a lifetime's worth of music, camaraderie, fear, good times, uncertainty, and service.

So what do you do now?

Jack Fallon

Well, if you're 32-year-old Jack Fallon, you decide to stay in England because a lot of people are offering you money to play music! And what a decision THAT turned out to be. What follows are excerpts from Jack's obituary published in the Toronto Globe and Mail after his death at the age of 90 in 2006.



In swinging London of the early 1960s, as an agent he booked a newish group called the Beatles for a concert, earning them 30 pounds. It was eight months before the Fab Four's first big hit. Another group of 'polite and neatly dressed' young men came looking for work, and he was also able to book the Rolling Stones for 15 pounds.

Mr. Fallon encountered the Beatles a few years later when he was hired to work on the White Album. At the Abbey Road studio, with Ringo Starr on piano, and Paul McCartney at the controls, legendary producer George Martin had marked out twelve bars of a violin solo that Mr. Fallon played for Ringo's

'Don't Pass Me By.' Apparently, Mr. Fallon was paid 11 pounds for the work.

"Jack was one of a very talented group of Canadian musicians, including Bob Farnon and Bob Burns, that made the British scene as exciting as it was," said Pip Wedge, a retired CTV executive who once worked in the English music scene. "They brought with them a

new type of music that was being played in the United States by the likes of Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker and Miles Davis.”

Mr. Fallon played with dozens of musicians and recorded the landmark album ‘To Be or Not to Bop’ and ‘Consternation’ with jazz piano legend George Shearing. Well-known for bebop, Mr. Fallon became a first-call musician who worked tours and nightclubs, all the while keeping up with the boppers’ advanced harmonic concepts. “I could just about busk any tune, and come close,” he once wrote. “If I was having trouble, I could always have a coughing spell.”

**Sarah Vaughan
booked for
a second Albert Hall concert**



Sarah Vaughan, pianist John Malachuk and bassist Jack Fallon record their February 7 World Of Jazz programme.

SO terrific has been the demand for tickets for Sarah Vaughan's concert at the Albert Hall tomorrow (Saturday) that a second date has been fixed at the same venue. This will be on February 22. Supporting bill had not been fixed at the time of closing for press, although negotiations were taking place with the Ronnie Scott group.

**Don Enrico back
to share Churchills
with Frank King**

Latin-American bandleader and bassist Don Enrico returns to the limelight next Monday when he opens opposite Frank

ooting as Sunday cinemas. Ted Heath told the MM: it is. Admittedly, we've authorities. But if the laws presentations—funny hats, of art that remains in our

All tickets for tomorrow's concert, except for a few cheaper seats and some standing room, are already sold. Sarah visited the Stork Club on the night of her arrival, and was persuaded to sing. She was heard on the BBC's In Town Tonight last Saturday, and on Sunday was presented to the audience at Maurice Kinn's Is This Jazz? concert at the Albert Hall, but did not sing.

In the 1940s, he played with some of the best-known bands, including those of the wildly popular Ted Heath, Harry Parry, and Tito Burns. Mr. Fallon often worked freelance and his beat can be heard on early British jazz recordings by ensembles such as the Esquire All-Star Sextet and the Steve Race Group.

A musicians' union ban on full orchestras entering Europe meant that Duke Ellington arrived in the U.K. in 1947 as a solo entertainer, taking with him only singer Kay Davis and dancer-trumpeter Ray Nance. He picked up Mr. Fallon's trio, with drummer Tony Crombie and guitarist Malcolm Mitchell, for a variety show at the Palladium that would go on to tour the Continent. Mr. Fallon didn't know why Duke Ellington hired him especially. “I'm not sure why, but he took a fancy to

me,” he later commented in his typically understated way. “Maybe it was because he could understand my Canadian accent more than the others.” In the same variety show, the trio also backed singers Hoagy Carmichael and Maxine Sullivan. Later that year, they joined Gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt and jazz violinist Stephane Grappelli for a tour

of Scandinavia. It seemed he was first on call to accompany touring U.S. artists including Ella Fitzgerald, Carmen McRae, Sarah Vaughan and Lena Horne.



Although the 1950s marked the coming of age of jazz in Britain, Mr. Fallon also led 'Sons of the Saddle', a cowboy-style group that played for years on the BBC program 'Riders of the Range.' He accompanied Tex Ritter and occasionally toured with Johnny Duncan and the Blue Grass Boys, recording the 1957 hit 'Last Train to San Fernando.' He also toured with U.S. bluesman Big Bill Broonzy and folksinger Josh White. In 1952, Mr. Fallon opened his

own booking agency, *Cana Variety*, and continued to cross paths with such big names as Bob Hope, Noel Coward, Marlene Dietrich, Spike Milligan, Eric Clapton, Tennessee Ernie Ford and Shirley Bassey.⁵¹

Bob Burns

Saxophonist/clarinetist Bob Burns of Toronto joined the Streamliners after they went overseas. He was a member of the RCAF Overseas HQ band when he was seconded to



the Streamliners sometime around January of 1945. After an initial postwar re-posting to Canada, he returned to England and enjoyed an impressive decades-long recording career, working with Roy Eldridge, Benny Goodman, Barbra Streisand, Guy Lombardo, The Manhattan Transfer, Mildred Bailey, Ralph Sharon and Ted Heath. One of the many soundtracks he's featured on is

Henry Mancini's 'Charade' in 1963. Bob Burns was the second ex-Streamliner to record with the Beatles.

⁵¹ Globe and Mail, Toronto – obituary, "Jack Fallon, musician 1915-2006" June 17, 2006 p. S11

In December 1966, Burns was one of three first-call British studio reed players to record the clarinet parts on the Beatles' recording of "When I'm 64" on the Sgt. Pepper album. Burns was described by the author of an article in "The Clarinet" magazine about the three players:

"I consulted with the great British saxophonist and composer Paul Harvey. He knew all three, remembering that Bob Burns was "definitely the most colorful character of the three." Harvey praised his playing, not only as tenor sax soloist on Ravel's Bolero with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra but also as tenor sax in a concert with the Benny Goodman Band."

Bob Burns continued to play in small groups in clubs in the U.K. through the 70s, and returned to Canada in the late 1980s, where he died in 2000. ⁵²

Pat Riccio

The "guy who made it all happen," Streamliners' leader-arranger Pat Riccio was a leading force in jazz in Toronto after the war. He played in, or wrote arrangements for all the great Canadian big bands – Bert Niosi, Mart Kenney, Art Hallman, and others. He also wrote for CBC programs. As a saxophonist, Riccio won polls conducted by CBC radio's 'Jazz Unlimited' in 1947 ('best alto') and 1949 ('best baritone'). He later led big bands and small jazz groups in nightclubs, ballrooms, and concert halls in the Toronto area, and performed with CBC concert parties in Europe and the Middle East. He led his own big band, whose home was the Jubilee Pavilion in Oshawa for several years. His small group recordings included one in 1965 with American jazz musicians Teddy Wilson (piano) and Ed Thigpen (drums).



Pat Riccio (sax) playing with legendary Americans Ed Thigpen and Teddy Wilson in 1965. Doug Willson is the bassist.

⁵² Reeks, John – "Rock 'n Roll Clarinets!?" – "The Beatles' Use of Clarinets on Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" "The Clarinet" magazine – June, 2018

Riccio's son Pat Riccio Jr. played piano in his teens with Bobby Kris and the Imperials, worked during the 1960s in CBC Halifax pop music shows, and was music director for Canadian superstar Anne Murray from 1975 to 1987.⁵³

Don Hilton



Shortly after the war, a columnist in Jazz Panorama magazine called the Streamliners' Don Hilton "the best drummer in Canadian music. He has a wonderful beat and a great sense of taste which most percussionists lack."

In the late 40s, he was the drummer in the house band at one of Toronto's first swanky jazz nightclubs, a place called Club Norman. Major jazz artists, including mega-stars like Oscar Peterson and Art Tatum would appear, and Hilton and the regular bass player would accompany them. One night, Peterson was appearing, and after the show, former CKEY radio announcer Keith Sandy arranged a gathering for a select few in the radio station studio. It was a

night Don Hilton never forgot:

"I remember it was a very hot night – no air conditioning then – but me, my bass player and Oscar jammed until daylight. All night long. One of the greatest experiences I ever had musically. He played beautifully, of course, but he would play blinding tempos. Pretty tough on a drummer. Too tough for me (laugh)! He was very pleasant, but very demanding to work with. He could do so much and he thought anyone playing with him should do just as much. I think I did quite well, but some of the tempos were a little hard to handle."⁵⁴

Hilton also loved playing with piano superstar Art Tatum at Club Norman:

"We didn't play with him a lot... he did a lot of solo piano work. But I sat with him beside the bandstand on a break, just chatting. He paid me the greatest compliment, considering where it was coming from. He said, "Don, you have a great beat." That was like it came from God. I couldn't believe it!"

⁵³ Canadian Encyclopedia

⁵⁴ Hilton, Don personal interview 2016

“Every piano player in Toronto would be there every night to hear him. After he finished, someone would come up to him and say, “Art, how do you do that?”

“It’s easy,” he said, “just practise.” “You can do it,” he said, “anyone can do it. You just have to practise.” He wasn’t taken with himself at all. Just a beautiful person.”

Hilton also recalled backing a very young Harry Belafonte at Club Norman, at a time he was trying to establish himself as a jazz singer, before he adopted a more Caribbean musical identity. *“Nice young guy. He was about 22 or 23. He liked to hang out with the band.”*

He was also drummer on CBC TV’s “The Juliette Show” from the mid 50s to the mid 60s.

I asked Don in 2016 what it was about the Streamliners that made them as good and as successful as they were.

“The success of the Streamliners was the fact that we were posted to Gander for ten months. All we could do was rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. That’s how we got to be good. We were not all TOP personnel. But just constantly going over it, and over it, and over it. It was well-rehearsed. It was tight. Tight band.” Yeah.”

Bill Carter



In Toronto right after the war, Pat Riccio described Bill Carter as “the best horn man in Canada.” Probably my dad’s most frequently-volunteered Streamliner comments were how incredibly impressed he always was with Pat Riccio’s arrangements and “Billy” Carter’s trumpet-playing.

But while a career as a full-time professional musician did not happen for him, he was a musician of choice for Henry Mancini. Billy’s grandson Jordan Carter told me his grandpa’s postwar story in an email interview:

My grandpa Bill had a few jobs after moving to the U.S. in 1953. He worked as a trucking dispatcher for maybe 10 years,

then tried his (bad) luck at selling life insurance for a couple of years before finally settling down as a postal carrier for the United States Postal Service, which I think he did from roughly 1966 until 1982. He was a special delivery driver in the USPS.

Musically he played regular gigs up until he died in 1988. To my grandma's displeasure, most weekends he'd try to play a wedding or some sort of event. Usually in a group of two or three guys (maybe a drummer and a bass), but he was in several bands at least earlier on. He worked with Henry Mancini when he came to Portland... my grandpa would help put the band together to play Mancini's music at his Portland shows. He loved my grandma, but music was his other love, and there was no way he could not play.

The story goes when the guys got back from the war and a couple stayed in England to play music, my grandma knew that music would take over Bill's life if he stayed around his music buddies. He exclusively played music after the war for a few years, but my grandma had two small kids and music was so demanding, taking up evenings and weekends, she knew it wasn't good for her or the kids long-term. It's kind of sad to think about now, but my grandma knew that the only way to get Bill away from his friends and a life of him being consumed by music, parties, etc., was to move out of Ontario. My grandma's sister had moved to Seattle with her husband, Bill Hubbard (from the TTS band days), a couple years after the war. So in 1953, my grandparents disappointed their parents in Ontario and loaded up the car and drove to Seattle to check it out, with no intention of returning. But I don't think my grandma really wanted my grandpa being too close to Bill Hubbard either (he too liked music and his booze!), so she suggested they take a ride down to Portland to check it out... which is where they settled for the rest of their lives!⁵⁵



Bill Carter made friends easily!

This picture was in his wartime photo album, taken sometime during the band's second trip to the Continent in Oct.- Nov.1945, six months after the war's end. The band played many gigs in Germany, and had some bartering sessions with German soldiers who were willing to trade photos and personal effects for cigarettes.

⁵⁵ Carter, Jordan email interview January, 2020

Fraser Lobban



Fraser Lobban, originally from Owen Sound, Ontario, returned home and married Yvonne Robinson in Windsor in 1946. She told me in a phone interview in late 2019 that Fraser continued to play in bands - "that was his second, or first, love, I don't know which!"

"We moved around a lot...he played wherever we were. He played in a dance band in Owen Sound, and then we were in Toronto for a bit. I know he filled in on a couple of occasions with Bert Niosi's band and Mart Kenney."

Fraser directed and played in the Port Credit Drum and Trumpet Band, and also played in Shriners bands in

London and Windsor (and Florida in retirement) as his work with various printing companies took him to different cities. He died in 2000.

Mrs. Lobban also recounted an overseas story Fraser told her about the band having been issued blankets for an overnight stay somewhere in England, probably London. The story goes the blankets were in such rough shape that they refused to stay there. Whether the problem was bedbugs, or whatever, she's not sure. In any event, news the next morning was that a V-1 or a V-2 had hit the building where they were to have stayed.



Claude Lambert

The following account of Claude Lambert's postwar life is written by his son Kevin.

My dad, having met my mother at a gig in Windsor, married her in 1946. They went to Los Angeles, looking for big band jobs. As we now know, this was the absolute worst time for that; it would be like investing in a carbon paper company today. One of my strongest childhood memories is hearing him speak sadly about the breakup of the big bands. He would snarl about rock & roll, how it was to blame and how it had forced him to take a day job.

Not only was there no music work for him in Los Angeles, the city was flooded with hungry, discharged vets, some of whom had finished high school, gone to college,

and possessed actual life skills. Up against that, there wasn't any kind of work for him in Los Angeles. They returned to Detroit, where my mother had grown up. There, my dad found some gigs. There were a couple of island amusement parks, which ferried the merrymakers along the river, and every boat had a live band. To a working musician, this sounds idyllic, and it probably was, but I would think that most of the guys, after years of tight arrangements and getting inside a groove with 15 other players, would find the music they had to play kinda pedestrian, even depressing. My dad was gigging on one of them when I was born.

From then on Detroit was his home, for the rest of his life. Detroit was and is a great city, but it was an oversized company town. If you lived in Detroit, your prosperity was dependent on that year's car sales. Even if you didn't actually work in the factory. My dad became a salesman for Victor Adding Machines, a company that made paleo-technological calculators. They were about the size of a microwave oven and three times as heavy. This was 1950s state-of-the-art tech; they would add, subtract, multiply and divide, nothing else. On weekends he would play--usually quartets or quintets. at corporate events, weddings, birthday parties, even at a couple of the few remaining night

clubs. He got a lot of gigs in Moose Lodges. The Loyal Order of Moose, a Midwestern fraternal organization that helps needy families, also rented out its lodges for private events, and these events often hired bands. The material would invariably be swing-era standards or Dixieland. He played in those so often I grew up thinking that they had him on salary. I think the Union scale at the time was \$25 a night.

In the 1960s he went to work for an industrial film company, again in sales. He had a gift for conversation, which led him into sales, and he was lucky enough to be in a place and time where he could take advantage of it. He did well there, to the point where he founded his own industrial film company in the 1980s. That one, however, bumped up against one of the endless automotive recessions that Detroit became a buzzword for. But he was able to hold onto his house, raise four kids and look back upon a life of amazing accomplishment, practically unthinkable in the world of today. He died in the late 1980s.

Two of his four children became musicians; my brother Tim and myself. We are both still gigging.

Lyle Kohler

Details about Lyle Kohler's postwar life have been supplied by his son Richard.



Lyle worked his way through Queens University playing piano in Kingston speak-easies. Grad, 1935.

He volunteered for the army as lieutenant but switched to the RCAF as a pianist in the Streamliners after he had caught his thumb in the hammer of a sten gun he was demonstrating to his platoon.

I do remember he often opted not to go to the shelters during air raids in London preferring to sleep in the bathtub and playing the odds he'd be a statistical survivor.

Post-war, he was a manager in the Canadian Government's office of tourism that included directing 11 European offices while based in London in the sixties/seventies — during this period he was brought into the Canadian diplomatic corps.

Prior to that, based in Ottawa, he pursued an active musical career as a hobby. He played piano with many popular dance bands in the Ottawa area including George Whitehead's Band of Renown. For several years in the fifties he was part of a weekly jazz radio program broadcast nationally from the CBC's Chateau Laurier studios; it was called the Buff Estes Sextet. He accompanied many international singers when they visited Ottawa, the Kirby Stone Four and Johnny Mathis.

Upon retirement in 1974, he played again with bands in Ottawa and settled into a regular gig as the resident piano-bar maven at Friday's Steakhouse from 1975 for about 10 years.

Lyle's daughter Miche:

"Mom never forgave Dad for giving up his position as a commissioned officer in the army just so he could join the RCAF, specifically the Streamliners!"

"A memory I have of Lyle, who played with some of the greats when they appeared at various clubs in the Ottawa region took place shortly before his death in 1990."

"Dad and I went to the National Arts Centre to hear Stephane Grappelli, and after the show Dad suggested we go backstage to see him. I was a little taken aback, and asked, "Are you sure?" Dad assured me that he and Grappelli knew each other. So we went backstage, and there were quite a few people milling about. We waited awhile, and I was getting nervous because my father was very frail by this time. He asked somebody if Stephane could be told that Lyle Kohler was outside. To our delight, Grappelli was informed; suddenly he raced out of his dressing room, crying "Lyle!" He literally lifted Dad off the ground, and hugged him with joy and great affection. It was a wonderful moment."

Phil Sparling



Discharged in February 1946 at the age of 23, Dad went back to school. He finished high school and university, got his teaching degree, and became a high school French and Latin teacher. He played oboe in the London, Ontario Symphony under Martin Boundy, who'd been in charge of all the air force bands overseas. He wrote the school song at Strathroy Collegiate, led the Glee Club and directed *Finian's Rainbow* at London Central. He must have played at every dance hall in southern Ontario with Lionel Thornton's Casa Royal Orchestra; I never remember him being home on Friday or Saturday nights. Before that, society bands in Toronto (Norm Harris, Frank Bogart,

Bobby Gimby and Luigi Romanelli at Casa Loma and the King Edward Hotel), and two summers at the Manoir Richelieu resort upstream from Montreal and Quebec City on the St. Lawrence River.

In London while teaching, he'd play with the circus and the Ice Capades when they came to town, and all the grandstand shows at the Western Fair when touring stars filled out their full-time rhythm sections with local horn players.

And then, in the early 1980s, he quit. He was in his early 60s. Never played another note. Just had enough, I guess. His musician friends all tried to get him to change his mind, but he wasn't having any of it. He never regretted it, at least not that I ever saw. In retirement, life was about grandkids, golf, the horse track, and crosswords. He wasn't a traveller. When we asked if he'd ever like to go back to the U.K. or Europe, he'd say "no thanks, the last time I was there somebody tried to kill me." He died in 2010.

His influence on me was almost total. I'm still a gigging musician, a retired teacher, a golfer, and I don't get to the track nearly as much as I'd like. He took me with him on gigs, and to the track when I was nine or ten. He told me if I ever got lost, just make sure I got to the \$2 window. He'd be there. He was. I miss him. A lot.

Len Coppold



Look at Len Coppold. In the groove in 1944, just as he still is on the guitar today! He's a big reason I undertook this project. His joy for music and willingness to share what he knows finally got me to move ahead with it.

At this writing, Len has just turned 98 and literally, he is not missing a beat.

Originally from Montreal, he played with the great Johnny Holmes band in 1941 in Montreal, where he played alongside another young guy by the name of Oscar Peterson. Len missed out on the St. Thomas and Gander beginnings of the band, joining the Streamliners sometime around when this picture was taken - perhaps on this very night at RAF Castle Archdale in Northern Ireland. Now living in Florida, Len worked for twenty-six years for the C.A.R.E. organization delivering medical supplies to developing countries.



Len Coppold - still making music in 2020.

Photo circa 2011 supplied by Matt Heister

RCAF STREAMLINERS

OVERSEAS DATEBOOK/CALENDAR

Aug. 21, 1944 – Feb. 1, 1946

An 18-page copy of a personal RCAF Streamliners' overseas "calendar" was mailed to me by trombonist Mel Smith from Saskatchewan sometime around 2005.



However, it is hard to read in places, and this is my attempt to make it easier to understand. In many cases, the calendar does not indicate the exact venue where the band played. So, I've attempted to highlight which of the locations were probably military bases or stations and where the band is *most likely* to have PLAYED – often RAF bases where the RCAF operated. I do know the band did occasionally play at bases where U.S. military personnel were stationed, but none were indicated in the

copy of the original handwritten calendar sent to me by Mel Smith. So, on my own, I have indicated the locations on the calendar where I have determined that US military personnel were stationed.

Also, it doesn't appear to be *just* a record of the places they played, but rather a day-by-day account of the places where the band members WERE, every day, for about a year-and-a-half. For example, there are some days where the notation is simply "London" – no specific venue mentioned. My guess is at least some of these were days the band was back at its home base in London, rehearsing, packing, getting a day off here and there, etc. I know some of the guys played other, non-military gigs when they had downtime in London, so these would have been occasions where that may have been possible.

Date	Location	Comments
Aug. 21, 1944	London, Cartwright Gardens	
Aug. 22	Warwickshire, BBC Studio	Dakota flight
Aug. 23	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
Aug. 24	London, Concert Hall	
Aug. 25	London, Paris Cinema	
Aug. 26	Honeybourne	Dakota
Aug. 28	London, Aeolian Hall	

Aug. 29, 1944	London, 200 Oxford St.	
Aug. 30	Knightsbridge (London)	
Aug. 30	London, Criterion Theatre	
Aug. 31	London, Aeolian Hall	
Sept. 1, 1944	Honeybourne (London) RAF	Dakota
Sept. 2	Wellesbourne, RAF	Dakota
Sept. 3	Stratford-on-Avon	
Sept. 3	Long Marston, RAF	Dakota
Sept. 4	London	
Sept. 5	SCOTLAND , Stranraer RAF, RCAF	
Sept. 5	NORTHERN IRELAND , Larne RAF	
Sept. 5	N. Ireland, Belfast USAF	
Sept. 6	N. Ireland, Ballykelly	Dakota
Sept. 7	N. Ireland, Limavady, RAF, RCAF	
Sept. 7	N. Ireland, Antrim USAF	
Sept. 8	N. Ireland, Aldergrove USAF	
Sept. 9	N. Ireland, Belfast USAF	
Sept. 10	N. Ireland, Belfast USAF	
Sept. 11	N. Ireland, RAF/USAF Nutts Corner	
Sept. 12	N. Ireland, RAF Bishops Court	
Sept. 13	N. Ireland, RAF Killadeas	
Sept. 14	N. Ireland, Enniskillen	
Sept. 15	N. Ireland, RAF Castle Archdale RCAF	
Sept. 16	N. Ireland, St. Angelo RAF	
Sept. 17	N. Ireland, Castle Archdale RAF RCAF	
Sept. 18	N. Ireland, Castle Archdale RAF RCAF	
Sept. 19	N. Ireland, Belfast, USAF	
Sept. 19	N. Ireland/Scotland, Larne-Stranraer RAF, RCAF	
Sept. 20	London	
Sept. 21	London, Lincoln's Inn Fields Park	

Sept. 22, 23, 24, 1944	London (unintelligible) Thames River	
Sept. 25	London, Fortune Theatre	
Sept. 26	London, Fortune Theatre	
Sept. 27	London, Knightsbridge	
Sept. 28	London, Lincoln's Inn Park	
Sept. 30	London, Damhead Hall	
Oct. 1, 1944	Warrington (near Liverpool)	
Oct. 2	London, BBC Maida Vale Studio	
Oct. 3	London, BBC Maida Vale Studio	
Oct. 5	London, BBC Maida Vale Studio	
Oct. 6-8	London	
Oct. 9	Warwickshire, RAF Gaydon	
Oct. 10	Warwickshire, Stratford	
Oct. 11	Warwickshire, RAF Wellesbourne	
Oct. 12	London	
Oct. 13	London, BBC, Maida Vale Studio	
Oct. 14	London, Queensbury Club	
Oct. 15	Yorkshire, RCAF East Moor	
Oct. 16	Yorkshire, RCAF Dishforth	
Oct. 17	Yorkshire, RAF Wombledon (6Grp RCAF)	
Oct. 18-19	London	
Oct. 20	Yorkshire, RAF Croft (6Grp RCAF)	
Oct. 21	Yorkshire, RAF, RCAF Leeming	
Oct. 22	London	
Oct. 23	London, BBC Maida Vale Studio	
Oct. 24	London	
Oct. 25	Erith	
Oct. 26	London	
Oct. 27	London	
Oct. 28	London	
Oct. 29	Gloucester, Innsworth RAF, USAF	
Oct. 30	Gloucester, Innsworth RAF, USAF	
Oct. 31	Gloucester, Innsworth RAF, USAF	
Nov. 1, 1944	Gloucester, Innsworth RAF, USAF	
Nov. 2	London	
Nov. 3	RAF/USAF Great Dunmow	

Nov. 4, 1944	London	
Nov. 5	London	
Nov. 6	London	
Nov. 7	RAF Windrush	Dakota
Nov. 8	Broadwell RAF	
Nov. 9	Blakehill Farm, RAF, RCAF USAF	
Nov. 10	London	Dakota
Nov. 11	London, Wimbledon	
Nov. 12	London	
Nov. 13	London	
Nov. 14	RAF Lyneham	
Nov. 15	Holmesley South RAF, RCAF USAF	Dakota
Nov. 15	Bournemouth	
Nov. 16	London	
Nov. 17	London	
Nov. 18	London, Queensbury Club	
Nov. 19	London	
Nov. 20	Lincoln	
Nov. 21	London, BBC Maida Vale Studio	
Nov. 21	London, Criterion Theatre	
Nov. 22	Gloucester	
Nov. 23	London	
Nov. 24	Yorkshire, RAF Middleton-St. George RCAF	
Nov. 25	Yorkshire, RCAF 6Grp HQ	
Nov. 26	Yorkshire, RAF, RCAF Skipton	
Nov. 27	London	
Nov. 28	London, Criterion Theatre	
Nov. 29, 1944	London, Seymour Hall	
Nov. 30	Yorkshire, RAF, RCAF Topcliffe	
Dec. 1, 1944	Yorkshire, RAF Dalton	
Dec. 2	Yorkshire, RAF Linton-on-Ouse RCAF	
Dec. 3	Yorkshire, RAF Linton-on-Ouse RCAF	
Dec. 4	London	
Dec. 5	London	

Dec. 6, 1944	Bournemouth	
Dec. 7	Bournemouth	
Dec. 8	London	
Dec. 9,	London	
Dec. 10	London	
Dec. 11	London	
Dec. 12	Blakehill Farm RAF, RCAF, USAF	
Dec. 13	London, Monsigneur Theatre	
Dec. 14	London	
Dec. 15	Slough	
Dec. 16	London, Harrodian Club	
Dec. 17	London	
Dec. 18	Holland, Eindhoven	Dakota flight for first tour of the continent
Dec. 19	Holland, Helmund	
Dec. 20	Holland, Eindhoven	St. Joseph's Hospital – V1 and V2 rockets
Dec. 21	Holland, Eindhoven	played at forward defence post
Dec. 22	Holland, Nijmegen	bridge shelled
Dec. 23	Holland, Eindhoven	airport bombed (first use of jets by Germans)
Dec. 24	Holland, Eindhoven	airport strafed, 90 paratroopers captured
Dec. 25	Holland, Eindhoven	city strafed
Dec. 26	Holland, Eindhoven	
Dec. 27	Holland, Eindhoven	
Dec. 28	Holland, Eindhoven	
Dec. 29	Holland, Eindhoven	
Dec. 30	Holland, Eindhoven	
Dec. 31	Belgium, Aalst	airport raided, 50 aircraft destroyed
Jan. 1, 1945	Belgium, Aalst	
Jan. 2	Holland (?) Malcolm Club (recording)	
Jan. 2	Holland, Valkenswaard	
Jan. 3	Belgium, Diest RCAF	
Jan. 4	Belgium, Zaventem	

Jan. 4, 1945	Belgium, Brussels	
Jan. 5	Brussels	
Jan. 6	Brussels	
Jan. 7	Brussels	
Jan. 8	Brussels	
Jan. 9	Brussels	
Jan. 10	France , Lille	
Jan. 11	Lille	
Jan. 11	France, Lesquin	
Jan. 12	Lille	
Jan. 13	France, Foyer de Soldat	
Jan. 14	Lesquin	
Jan. 14	Belgium, Brussels	
Jan. 14	Brussels, 21 Club	
Jan. 15	Brussels, Radio Station R.N.B. Hotel du Rhin	
Jan. 15	Brussels, Metropole Hotel, 21 Club (recording)	
Jan. 16	Brussels	
Jan. 16	Belgium, Ostend	
Jan. 16	Belgium, Blankenberge	
Jan. 17	Blankenberge	
Jan. 17	Ostend	
Jan. 18	By LST (landing ship - tank) boat back to England	left from Ostend, Belgium docked at Tilbury on the Thames River
Jan. 18	London	
Jan. 19	London	
Jan. 20	London, Queensbury Club	
Jan. 21	London and Cambridge	
Jan. 22	London	
Jan. 23	London	
Jan. 24	London	
Jan. 25	Bournemouth (US)	
Jan. 26	London, Grosvenor House Hotel	
Jan. 27	London	
Jan. 28	London	

Jan. 29, 1945	Scotland , Aberdeen	
Jan. 30	Scotland, Forglen by Turriff	
Jan. 30	Scotland, Haughs of Meaggie	
Jan. 31	Scotland, Forglen by Turriff	
Feb. 1, 1945	Scotland, Aberdeen	
Feb. 2	London	
Feb. 3	London	
Feb. 4	London	
Feb. 5	London	
Feb. 6	London, Aeolian Hall	
Feb. 7	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
Feb. 8	London	
Feb. 9	London, Knightsbridge	
Feb. 10	Wrafton	
Feb. 11	London	
Feb. 12	East Grinstead	
Feb. 13	London, BBC, Maida Vale Studio	
Feb. 13	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
Feb. 14	London, Seymour Hall	
Feb. 15	London	
Feb. 16	Great Dunmow, RAF, USAF	
Feb. 17	Wellesbourne, RAF	
Feb. 18	Leamington Spa	
Feb. 19	Leamington Spa	
Feb. 20	London	
Feb. 21	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
Feb. 22-26	London	
Feb. 27	London, BBC, Maida Vale Studio	
Feb. 28	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
Feb. 28	London, Seymour Hall	
Mar. 1, 1945	Shrewsbury, Morris's Ballroom	
Mar. 2	Wheaton Aston	
Mar. 3	Birmingham	
Mar. 4	London	
Mar. 5	London, Seymour Hall	
Mar. 6	London, Romelli's Place	
Mar. 7	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
Mar. 8	London	

Mar. 9, 1945	London	
Mar. 10	Witham	
Mar. 11	London	
Mar. 12	Bournemouth RAF	
Mar. 13	London, Queensbury Club	
Mar. 14	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
Mar. 15	London, Knightsbridge	
Mar. 16	London, Seymour Hall	
Mar. 17	East Grinstead	
Mar. 18	London	
Mar. 19	Gransden Lodge, RAF, RCAF	
Mar. 20	Gransden Lodge, RAF, RCAF	
Mar. 21	Wyton, RAF	
Mar. 22	Balderton, RAF, RCAF	
Mar. 23	Loughborough, RAF	
Mar. 24-26	London	
Mar. 27	London, Criterion Theatre	
Mar. 28	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
Mar. 29-30	London	
Mar. 31	Slough	
Apr. 1, 1945	London	
Apr. 2	Gransden Lodge, RAF, RCAF	
Apr. 3-5	London	
Apr. 6	Barnstaple	
Apr. 7	Wrafton	
Apr. 8-9	London	
Apr. 10	London, BBC, Maida Vale Studio	
Apr. 11	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
Apr. 12	London, BBC, Maida Vale Studio	
Apr. 13	London, BBC Maida Vale Studio	
Apr. 14-16	London	
Apr. 17	London, BBC, Maida Vale Studio	
Apr. 17	London, Seymour Hall	
Apr. 18	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
Apr. 19	London, Seymour Hall	
Apr. 20	London, Connaught Rooms	
Apr. 21	Bournemouth	
Apr. 22	Bournemouth, Regent Theatre	
Apr. 23	Bournemouth	

Apr. 24, 1945	London	
Apr. 25	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
Apr. 26	Lincoln	
Apr. 27	Eastbourne, Friskin	
Apr. 28	American Hospital	
Apr. 28	Nocton	
Apr. 28	Digby RAF, RCAF	
Apr. 29	Gransden Lodge RAF, RCAF	
Apr. 30	Gransden Lodge RAF, RCAF	
May 1, 1945	London	
May 1	Eastbourne, Fristin	
May 2	Seaford	
May 3	London, General Aircraft Co.	
May 3	London, Stage Door Canteen	
May 4	Lincoln	
May 5	Cranwell	
May 5	Skellingthorpe RAF	
May 6	Nocton	
May 6	Digby RAF, RCAF	
May 7	Gransden Lodge RAF, RCAF	
May 8-15	London	May 8 VE Day
May 16	Cosford RAF	
May 17	Cosford RAF	
May 18	Cosford RAF	
May 19	London, Seymour Hall	
May 20-21	London	
May 22	London, BBC, Maida Vale Studio	
May 23	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
May 24	Wales, Pembroke Dock RAF, RCAF	
May 25	Wales, Carew Cherlton RAF	
	London	
May 28	Lincoln	
May 29	Cranwell RAF College	
May 30	Digby RAF, RCAF	
May 31	Nocton	notation - "GI's"
June 1-3, 1945	London	
June 4	Yorkshire, Dishforth RAF, RCAF	

June 4, 1945	Yorkshire, Croft RAF, RCAF	
June 5	Yorkshire, Topcliffe RAF, RCAF	
June 6	Yorkshire, Skipton RAF, RCAF	
June 7	Yorkshire, Middleton - St. George RAF, RCAF	
June 8	Yorkshire, Dishforth RAF, RCAF	
June 9	Yorkshire, Tholthorpe RAF, RCAF	
June 10	Yorkshire, Dalton RAF, RCAF	
June 11	Yorkshire, Wombledon RAF	
June 12	London	
June 13	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
June 14-17	London	
June 18	London, City Road	(the band's rehearsal space was located in the Finsbury Army barracks here)
June 19	City Road	
June 20	City Road	
June 21	City Road	
June 22	Barnstaple	
June 23	Wrafton (Croyde Beach)	
June 24	Barnstaple	
June 25	Cornwall, Predannack Airfield	
June 26	Cornwall, Predannack Airfield	
June 27	Torquay RAF	
June 28	Paignton	
June 29	Torquay RAF	
June 30	London	
July 2	Bournemouth	
July 3	London	
July 4, 1945	Nocton	
July 5	Digby RAF, RCAF	
July 6	Digby	
July 7-9	London	
July 10	London, BBC Marylebone Studio	
July 11	London, Monseigneur Theatre	
July 12	Odiham RAF, RCAF	
July 13-15	London	
July 16	Norfolk, Bircham Newton RAF	

July 17, 1945	Norfolk, Docking RAF	
July 18	Norfolk, Bircham Newton, RAF, RCAF	
July 19	Bircham Newton, RAF, RCAF	
July 20	Bircham Newton, RAF, RCAF	
July 21-23	London	
July 24	Cambridgeshire, Molesworth RAF, RCAF	
July 25	Molesworth RAF, RCAF	
July 26	London	
July 27	Slough	
July 28	London	
July 29	Thamesford	
July 30	Tempsford RAF, RCAF	
July 31	London	
Aug. 1, 1945	Calveley	
Aug. 2-3	London	
Aug. 4	Aldermaston RAF, USAF	
Aug. 5	Aldermaston RAF, USAF	
Aug. 6	Aldermaston RAF, USAF	
Aug. 7	London	
Aug. 8	London	
Aug. 9	Cambridgeshire, Molesworth RAF, RCAF	
Aug. 10	Yorkshire, Rufforth RAF, RCAF	
Aug. 11	Yorkshire, Tholthorpe RAF, RCAF	
Aug. 12	Yorkshire, East Moor RAF, RCAF	
Aug. 13	Yorkshire, Skipton RAF, RCAF	
Aug. 14	Yorkshire, Topcliffe RAF, RCAF	
Aug. 15	Yorkshire, Linton RAF, RCAF	VJ Day
Aug. 16-19	London	
Aug. 20	Cornwall, Penzance	
Aug. 21-22	London	
Aug. 23	Dunsfold RCAF, RAF	
Aug. 24	London, Seymour Hall	
Aug. 25-26	London	
Aug. 27	London, City Road	

Aug. 28, 1945	London, City Road	
Aug. 29	Calveley	
Aug. 30	London, Seymour Hall	
Aug. 31- Sept. 4, 1945	London	
Sept. 5	Nottingham	
Sept. 6	Nottingham	
Sept. 7	London	
Sept. 8	Claveley	
Sept. 9-10	London	
Sept. 11	London, Knightsbridge	
Sept. 12	Down Ampney RAF, RCAF	Dakota
Sept. 13	Odiham RAF, RCAF	
Sept. 14	London, City Road	
Sept. 15	Liverpool	
Sept. 16	Liverpool	
Sept. 17	Liverpool	
Sept. 18	London	
Sept. 19	London, Seymour Hall	
Sept. 20	Bigot or Bicot Hill (???)	
Sept. 21-26	London	
Sept. 27	Acton (London)	
Sept. 28- Oct. 3, 1945	London	
Oct. 4	Aldermaston RAF, RCAF	
Oct. 5	Aldermaston RAF, USAF	
Oct. 6	Aldermaston RAF, USAF	
Oct. 7	London	
Oct. 8	Odiham RAF, RCAF	
Oct. 9-15	London	
Oct. 16	FLIGHT TO SCHLESWIG HOLSTEIN, GERMANY FOR SECOND TOUR OF CONTINENT	Dakota
Oct. 17	Germany, Schleswig	
Oct. 18	Schleswig	for RCAF Sqdn. 406
Oct. 19	Schleswig	

Oct. 20, 1945	Schleswig	
Oct. 21	Germany, Kiel	
Oct. 22	Germany, Isle of Sylt	
Oct. 23	Germany, Westerland Sylt	
Oct. 24	Germany, Rendsburg	
Oct. 25-27	Schleswig	
Oct. 28	Denmark , Aabenraa	
Oct. 29	Denmark, Haderslev	
Oct. 30	Germany , Kiel	
Oct. 31	Kiel	
Nov. 1, 1945	Kiel	
Nov. 2	Germany, Uttensen	
Nov. 3	Germany, Hamburg	
Nov. 4	Uttensen	
Nov. 5	Hamburg	
Nov. 6	Hamburg	
Nov. 7	Schleswig	
Nov. 8	Germany, Husum	
Nov. 9	flight to Belgium, Zaventum	
Nov. 10	Belgium , Brussels	
Nov. 11	Brussels	
Nov. 12	Germany , Hamburg	Dakota
Nov. 13	Hamburg	
Nov. 14	Hamburg	
Nov. 15	Hamburg	
Nov. 16	Germany, Celle	
Nov. 17	Germany, Belsen	
Nov. 17	Celle	
Nov. 18	Germany, Oldenburg	
Nov. 19	Oldenburg	
Nov. 20	Oldenburg	
Nov. 21	Holland , Groningen	
Nov. 22	Holland, Hilversum	
Nov. 23	Holland, Hilversum	
Nov. 24	Holland, Amsterdam	
Nov. 25	Belgium , Brussels	
Nov. 26	France , Paris	
Nov. 27	Paris	
Nov. 28	Paris	

Nov. 29, 1945	Belgium Brussels	
Nov. 30	Back to England	Dakota
Dec.1-3, 1945	London	
Dec. 4	Odiham RAF, RCAF	
Dec. 5	London, Knightsbridge	
Dec. 5	Liverpool	
Dec. 6	Liverpool	
Dec. 7	Yorkshire, Leeming RAF, RCAF	
Dec. 11	London	
Dec. 12	Base post office	
Dec. 13-17	London	
Dec. 18	London, Connaught Rooms	
Dec. 19-23	London	
Dec. 24-25	Bournemouth	
Dec. 26-30	London	
Dec. 31	Down Ampney RAF, RCAF	
Jan. 1-2, 1946	London	
Jan. 3	London, Connaught Rooms	
Jan. 4-14	London	
Jan. 15	Odiham RAF, RCAF	
Jan. 16-17	London	
Jan. 18	London, Seymour Hall	
Jan. 19-27	London	
Jan. 28-31	Topcliffe RAF, RCAF	
Feb. 1, 1946	The end. Back to London and repatriation.	



Above: A big 'do' in St. John's, Newfoundland, Nov. 3, 1943

Below: Gun fun for Jack Fallon in Newfoundland





The caption in Billy Carter's photo album is "Face-Filling in Cornwall"



Northern Ireland 1944



Above: 1945

Below: East Grinstead, Feb. 12, 1945





These are the three medals awarded to Bill Carter. Since my dad had the same three, it's entirely likely that all the band members were awarded them. Medals from the left: the Defence of Britain, Canadian Volunteer Service, and War Medal. In his memoir of 2009, Dad also said he had received another one called the France and Germany Star, for service in Germany and France between D-Day and May 8, 1945. But I haven't seen it in what was left to me.



An interesting RCAF Gander "patch" in Bill Carter's possession



Uniform patches from Don Hilton





Photos from Bill Carter's album of war damage in Europe. (locations unknown)





Bill Carter photo album

The only note beside this photo is "Liverpool." Looks like an impromptu concert beside a docked ship. (?)



Smiling Saxes:

Jack Perdue, Frank Palen, Pat Riccio, Phil Sparling



Trombones to the fore: Charlie Overall, Bill Bebbington and Mel Smith (hidden). Looks like RAF Castle Archdale in Northern Ireland.



Something's got them smiling. Location guess: Could be RCAF Headquarters in London. The upper right notation says HQ 3.8.45 (I think). They were in London on March 3, 1945.



Fraser Lobban and Charlie Overall



Fraser Lobban and Phil Sparling



Another HQ function in London



Vocalist George Lane



The RCAF Streamliners

“Band of Brothers”

1941-1946

“It was a dreary, rainy night in Yorkshire, England in 1944. Inside, the Mess of this RCAF Bomber Command station was brilliantly lit and decorated for the dance – as well decorated as a Nissen hut can be, and as gay as any dance can be in wartime in a country that’s not yours. Then the band started to play “London Lament” and suddenly the country was yours and everything was fine and rhythmic. The band, the RCAF STREAMLINERS, playing your kind of music and so well, too...what a treat to hear three trumpets...three trombones...five saxes and four rhythm. Yes, once again you were dancing to one of the best service bands overseas...”

written by Phil Mackellar for the album cover of “The Basic Sounds of the Pat Riccio Quartet” Quality Records

