

PRIVATE HARRY EDWARD NELLIS

Regimental # M31398

Lester and Stella Nellis, originally from West Duluth, Minnesota, arrived in the Bezanson area in 1916. Harry was the second youngest in the family of seven children; Myrtle (1911), Orville (1912), Ted (1914), Lloyd (1915), Bill (1918), Harry (March 15, 1920) and Mayme (1923).

The family farmed in the Bezanson area until August of 1926 at which time they moved to Grande Prairie just in time for Harry to be enrolled in Grade 1 at the Montrose School. In 1933, Lester decided to move back to the farm at Bezanson; therefore, Harry finished his education at the Lindsay School. Being a sports enthusiast, as was his father, Harry played baseball with his brothers and local boys in 1936 and 1937 following which the game changed to softball for approximately two years.



Harry enlisted in the Army on October 3, 1940 and served overseas where he received a mechanics certificate after the successful completion of an apprenticeship program. As he was a mechanic for a truck convoy that transported ammo, food and supplies from the main depot to the front lines for combat troops who were on the ground and those who provided air support, he probably was transferred to the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. While in England, Harry along with many other young servicemen, often attended local dances. During one of those occasions, Harry met a young lady by the name of Grace Taylor. They later married on August 28, 1945 and Grace introduced Harry to golfing right after the wedding. Once the war was over, Harry embarked for Canada in October 1945

and was discharged on demobilization on November 29, 1945. Grace sailed on the Aquitania, arrived in Canada and traveled by train to reach Edmonton on July 4, 1946. Harry eagerly awaited the arrival of his wife and the young couple enjoyed a short honeymoon before they ventured home to Bezanson.

Harry soon found employment as a repairman for a local sawmill known as "Moon's Mill" that was located in Crooked Creek. Grace and Harry both lived at the "Mill" in accommodations that were provided for families. Their first son, Leslie, was born on July 25, 1947. In 1948, Harry once again participated in baseball when he played for the Bezanson Eagles Team. Harry lost part of his left arm from the elbow down in a devastating sawmill accident in March 1950.

Private Harry Nellis

Shortly thereafter, Grace and Harry decided it was time for a change. They purchased the NE 2-72-3-W6 from Elmer McLaughlin and moved to the farm on June 30, 1950. The following day, their middle son, Lawrence was born. The loss of part of Harry's arm never affected his zest for life and my means of hard work and perseverance, their farm prospered. With the birth of their youngest son, Edward, on September 15, 1956, the family was complete.

Once Harry's boys were old enough to play ball, a new fastball team was formed by the name of the Bezanson Norton Bros. Harry coached the team and in 1973, they went on to win the Wapiti Men's Fastball League. Harry's son, Lawrence, who was captain of the team, furthered his career and went on to play profession fastball with the Edmonton Acros and the Richmond Hills Dynes Fastball Team in Oshawa, Ontario.

Harry and Grace retired from the farm in the mid-70's and moved to Grande Prairie. Harry continued to work for the County of Grande Prairie in the Work Shop and Grace found employment with Ludbrook's Gift Shop in Grande Prairie. Their leisure time was spent golfing and curling and watching the many sporting events that their grandchildren and great-grandchildren were involved in. The farm was purchased by their oldest son, Les.



Harry passed away in 2005 and Grace in 2009. Both were buried at the Glen Leslie Cemetery.

Written by Wanda Zenner

August 2019

Reference

Smoky to Grande Prairie History Book

Interview with son, Les Nellis

South Peace Regional Archives War Brides Collection

Grace Nellis obit