

*Introducing...*

*Staff and volunteers at the Perley Rideau focus on the life of each resident, working to make every day a special one. The residents have many untold stories – we're pleased to present one of them.*

## *Squibs Mercier*

Not many women can lay claim to being a "double war-bride." The very words conjure up joy and happiness on the one hand and pain and sorrow on the other. Squibs Mercier can make that claim and, as she recounts experiences in her life of 80 years, always with a twinkle in her eye and a sense of humour, she stresses the importance of remembering and showing appreciation.

She was born in Dorking, a town in Surrey, just south of London, and it was there that she met her first husband, Rueben Ashe from Madoc, Ontario. She was 17 and had been warned "not to get involved with those crazy Canadians," but she did. She and Corporal Ashe, of the First Division's Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, married within the year. Just over a year later Rueben was sent to Italy where he was killed in action in October, 1943. At age 19, Squibs was a widowed war-bride.

"I became very despondent when I lost Rueben," says Squibs. To occupy her mind and give some purpose to her life, she started working at Canada House, the Salvation Army kitchen in Dorking, preparing sandwiches and washing dishes. She thought of volunteering for work on a Salvation Army mobile canteen that served refreshments to troops in Europe, but instead she was sent to a monastery at Stratford-on-Avon, which had been converted into a guesthouse for Canadian airmen.

There she met her second husband, Johnny Mercier, a Radio Operator in the RCAF 425 Squadron, who was from Quebec City. Following a short romance, they married. When the war was over, Johnny returned to Canada and she joined him a few months later after a trans-Atlantic voyage "on a banana boat with 35 other war-brides." She and Johnny settled in

Gimli, a fishing and trapping town in Manitoba. They moved to Ottawa in 1950 and had three children, John, Wendy and Leslie.

Squibs speaks highly of the resident-centred care provided at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre. Her husband Johnny was a resident at the Health Centre for two years before he passed away in 2000. She, herself, was recently a temporary resident in the Perley Rideau's Convalescent Program, recovering from surgery.



*Johnny Mercier*

"Everything at the Perley Rideau is important," she says. "Apart from the excellent care, there is the hairdresser, the therapy received, the Gift Shop, the Cafeteria, and so much more – all of which makes the Perley Rideau a great place to sponsor."

Squibs is a strong supporter of the Health Centre. She has already purchased three leaves for the Perley Rideau Foundation's Tree of Life and she has included the Health Centre in her will. "Sponsoring leaves on the Tree of Life is a wonderful way of remembering those who have been important in your life," says Squibs.

Asked why she decided to include a bequest to the Perley Rideau Foundation in her will, Squibs says, "I



want to leave a lasting remembrance and tribute to two special gentlemen (Rueben and Johnny) and to show my deep appreciation for the wonderful service Johnny received at the Perley Rideau.

"When I came to the Perley Rideau for my convalescence, I realized that things in life change and I had to put my things in order. I decided to direct my funds to where I wanted them to go and so I decided to include the Health Centre in my Last Will and Testament."

Squibs Mercier feels strongly that leaving a bequest to the Perley Rideau Foundation is a lasting way of giving thanks and paying tribute to the special people in her life.

There are 450 residents at the Perley Rideau, 250 of whom are Veterans from World War II and the Korean War. Please lend your support by making a bequest in your will or a donation to The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation.

**Contact Paul S. Finn (613) 526-7194 or write The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation at 1750 Russell Road, Ottawa, ON K1G 5Z6.**

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