

Title: Eric Grove helped bring Lancaster to warplane museum
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Well into his 80s, **Eric Grove** continued to pursue his love of flying and maintained an encyclopedic knowledge of the aircraft in the collection at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum.

The west Mountain resident and former Lancaster pilot died in early May after a battle with cancer. He was 88.

"He was a very active member," said Rex Russell, volunteer services administrator at the CWH. "He became a true ambassador for the museum."

Mr. Russell said Mr. Grove was instrumental in helping the museum acquire their Avro Lancaster, the only flying aircraft of its kind in North America.

A Lancaster suitable for restoration was found in Goderich and moved to the museum in 1979.

"(Eric) was instrumental in finding it and arranging transport by Chinook helicopter down here," Mr. Russell said.

To say Mr. Grove led an amazing life would be putting it mildly.

Born in England, he joined the Royal Air Force at age 19 at the beginning of the Second World War. By 21 he was flying Lancaster Bombers over Germany.

On Nov. 23, 1943 during his third mission over Berlin in five nights, his Lanc was shot down. As captain of the aircraft, Mr. Grove was the last to bail out.

In Prisoner of War, a DVD produced by the museum, Mr. Grove recalls landing in the snow carrying a compass, a map, a box of water, some chocolate and money.

"I'd taken the money out and buried it because a lot of it was French and German money and English money," Mr. Grove said. "We didn't want this getting into the hands of German spies."

Mr. Grove was soon captured at gunpoint by a German army convoy and at age 22 began an 18-month ordeal as a prisoner of war.

While being paraded through town, Mr. Grove recalled he was attacked by Berliners who were angry at him for the recent bombing.

But shot-down airmen were considered precious to the Nazis as they might carry secrets about the Allied war effort and the German troops didn't hesitate to shoot civilians who accosted their prisoner.

"They just turned their guns on their own people," said Mr. Grove, who refused to reveal anything more than his name, rank and number.

As a POW he was taken by train from Berlin to Frankfurt for interrogation. He was then moved to a POW camp in Lithuania, then to another camp and then finally to Stalag 4B near Dresden. He recalled watching the fire bombing of Dresden later in the war.

Mr. Grove said he was in a camp with more than 25,000 other prisoners of war from all over Europe, including some 10,000 Russians.

"It was pretty dirty, pretty filthy and smelled and we were full of lice and God knows what else," Mr. Grove said.

Mark Newman

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