

## CLIFF CHADDERTON - UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

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**Cliff Chadderton:** I got into the army by default. I got into the army because I wanted a place to play hockey. That would have been in June of 1939 and by September, we were at war, so then the Colonel called me in and said, "We want you to join the regiment as an officer," and I said "no". He said, "What?" I said, "No thanks" I said, "I'll join all right, but this war is going to be over by Christmas and besides what qualifications do I have to lead men?" I found out a little bit later that probably I did.

**"These are our Heroes song"** – song lyrics

These are our heroes

They made us laugh

Brought us to tears..... these are our heroes

We would stand and clap and cheer..... these are our heroes

We're left with little souvenirs.....these are our heroes

Our hearts can carry through the years.

**Cliff Chadderton is CEO of The War Amps and Chairman of the National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada.**

**While serving as an Infantry Company Commander in World War II, he suffered the following war injuries:**

**Amputation of right leg below the knee**

**Shrapnel wound above right eye**

**Gun shot wounds in left foot, right hand and both knees**

**Puncture wound in abdomen**

### **PRE-WAR YEARS**

**Cliff:** I was very interested in sports. I was interested in history. I was interested in military things because my father had been wounded in WWI. I would say, also, that I really grew up believing in Canada. My mother was very conscious of being a Canadian.

I lived in the neighbourhood in Fort Rouge, Winnipeg, where there were a lot of veterans and the Legion was big and whatnot. These guys would sit around and talk about their experiences, but my father's view was more along the lines of...well, "I served my country. I know my life has been shortened by it so I'd better make the best of what I have left", and he sternly believed in that, and he drove it into my sister and myself.

On Sundays, his buddies would all gather at our house and they'd take the bung out of a keg of beer and shoot the breeze and my mother would hush me off to

play ball or something. She'd say, "You don't need this sort of stuff," but I knew that they were talking war but again I never noticed them saying, "Well Charlie Jopling was a great hero because he took a pill box" or something. They never talked about that.

They more talked about the fact that in the next war Charlie Jopling was going to have a traveling brothel and come back a millionaire. I remember that very much. These were the kinds of stories that these guys would tell, but they never got serious about the war, and I guess when I joined the Army, I didn't join as a military guy at all. I really joined the RWR as a hockey player. I was on the farm team with the New York Rangers and that's really why I got into the Army.

### **A CAREER IN JOURNALISM**

When I was in high school I got interested in debating and some people say I never lost that interest but when Time Magazine came into our house, it was mine. I read it from cover to cover.

My dad said "Look, this is what war does to you. It's what it did to me. You have to make sure that you get your education" and it was a great spur to me to play a little hockey but "don't forget your homework and don't forget your studies" and that type of thing and "you're heading for university no matter what" and I had that drummed into me when I was ten years old.

I can remember writing letters to the Editor when I was maybe fourteen-fifteen years of age, and getting a couple of them published. So then when I was going to university, I worked part time for The Canadian Press. I used to take all the news from the wire from Toronto and the wire from Edmonton and condense it for the Brandon Sun.

While everybody else was saying "what does this mean?" I was converting it to print and I said to myself, "what am I writing here?" I mean this is Armageddon. This is war and you're not going to fool around with that. I mean, this means that lives are going to be on the line and that's probably the first time I really took a look at my father as a hero. I said to my father, "You know, Dad, you've suffered to beat hell in your life - from being gassed at Vimy Ridge - for a principle, and the principle was you don't want to live under a dictator like Kaiser Wilhelm" and he said, "well there's not a lot I could do about it," and he said, "and there's not a lot you're going to be able to do about it either, but go and do your best."

My mother wasn't a conscientious objector at all about the war. She knew a lot about Hitler and the danger to our way of life from dictators and whatnot. And she knew all of those things, and she had a very subtle way of putting them across to me, so she sort of said, "now you're in - go. I don't expect you to hide -

do your job but be careful. Never make a move unless you have to; and if you have to, then make it, and do your damndest.”

**On October 15, 1939, Cliff Chadderton enlisted in the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. He was 20 years old.**

Put a fellow in a Royal Winnipeg Rifle uniform with the black button and tell him to go to a dance hall in Winnipeg just as the war was heating up, and all of a sudden he was transformed from an ordinary guy to something very special. It's very hard to explain that, but he felt very special because he was a soldier in a very famous Regiment.

It was an experience to join the army and to really, if you like, I hate to use the word but, to study, to understand that you had a God-given opportunity to understand what men were, what life was all about, what men were all about. What men were capable of.

**Cliff Chadderton quickly climbed the ranks to become a company commander and an acting major.**

Our first experience, of course, was parade ground; and if you get a bunch of what we call 'clod-hoppers', you get a bunch of guys off... who have been out stooking wheat or running a trap line or something, and say, you know, stand your front and right turn and at the incline, quick march, and they would say, "What the hell is this all about? I joined up to fight Germans." But you'd have to explain to them that the British Army had learned that if you didn't know your field drill, if you didn't know how to start, stop and turn right and turn left, you were just a jumble out there and so...but we had some unusual sort of ways of teaching it. I always loved that part of soldiering for some reason or other.

Nobody ever thought that it would be four years before we were in action, I mean, quite the contrary; we said "you know, you've got to get ready." The war was not going well in England, and the first division was already over there, the second division was on its way over, and we were told that as the third division, we would be needed very shortly.

What was my reaction to all of this? It was that the camaraderie got a hold of me. Everybody was put to the same level: you were eating the same, you were drinking the same, you were chasing girls, if you like, the same...I began to realize that if you were with a bunch of guys who had all been prepared to put their life on the line, they were good guys, if they weren't, they got out. I certainly found out I was willing to take a commission, simply because most of the guys were just really solid guys. Good characters... rough, tough. We had a lot of Métis serve with us. The Métis were just superb soldiers. The infantrymen that I served with, those guys were great.

## D-DAY

### **Excerpt from D-DAY: THE STORY OF THE CANADIAN ASSAULT TROOPS From The War Amps NEVER AGAIN! Series Produced by Cliff Chadderton**

**Cliff Chadderton:** *June 6, 1944. The Canadian invasion forces had spent years in Britain training for the task. They had tried very hard not to think of what lay ahead.*

*This is their remarkable story. How they formed the assault wave that smashed through the German defences, held off the counter-attacks of the crack SS Panzer units, and how in the end, they took in a magnificent battle, the pivotal city of Caen. It took a month.*

*It was difficult to realize the enormity of what we would be attempting. I was part of that force. Untried troops would dare to set foot in Hitler's Europe.*

**Cliff:** I've earned a living at sort of trying to portray how horrible war is and if you're not prepared to talk about it, you might as well go home and grow wheat or find a courtroom and practice law.

It was noisy. Very, very noisy. And the smell of cordite was very powerful.

To get poetic about it, it was the moment of truth. I mean, when you see a guy standing beside you one minute and the next minute you see his head blown off, or his arm flying through the air, or he lets off an awful . . . and when a guy gets hit by a shell, it makes a hell of a noise. People say it's only soft tissue, but (makes sound of mortar shell). I'll never forget it. It just makes me shiver when I think about it right now: A guy getting hit point blank by a mortar shell. Jesus, it's just awful!

And I hate to say it, but it is ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Get on with your god damn job, or you are going to be next, type of thing. The assault troops were highly, highly trained, that if Bill McWilliams was shot, and he fell beside you and you stopped to get him, help him, what about your objective, because the same shell that got him is going to get three or four other guys.

In that first ten or fifteen minutes of the landing, what you learned is, instinctively you knew that Bill McWilliams wasn't going to make it, or you knew that it was a fatal shot or, praise God, you knew that you could drag him ashore and that did happen in some cases, you could drag the guy ashore and he'd have a fighting chance to get out of this war. You have an inherent feeling that, "I can get out of it, no matter what it is, I can get out of it."

My job was to land and take a carrier and go left along the beach and that's kind of a dangerous vehicle to be driving around in because there is no top to it, you

see, it's only 3/8 of an inch of cast iron and that's the first time I sort of said to myself: what do you mean, Cliff, that you can get out of it? I mean how the hell are you going to get out, if a bomb lands right in the middle of this damn vehicle of yours, you see? I said, "Well that kind of thinking is not going to get you anywhere so think of something else." You kid yourself. I think you really kid yourself.

The carrier is the eyes and ears of the regiment. My job was to keep in touch with the Colonel and tell him what you saw. So, I turned left and I said to the driver, I said, "Sparky lets go, just follow the beach right along," and he stopped, and he said, "What's the matter?" "I don't want to run over that body!" and I said, "Yes you are!" He said, "No I'm not!" So he said, "You get out, and drag the God-darn body out of the way, and I'll take the carrier where it's supposed to go".

Well, that's the first time I ever touched a dead body, and I grabbed this guy by the ankles and I didn't look at him. I don't know today whether he was German or Canadian. I have no idea, but the next guy, I knew. I knew him very well, and I took a look at him and I thought, "That's it...that's it. I'll take a look at his gators. I'll take a look at his combat boots. I'll know he's a Winnipeg Rifle, and that's all. Just drag him out of the way and go, because if you get dwelling on the fact that this guy is Garth Henderson, and he's not going to be with you anymore, and you're not going to see him drink a beer or dance in a dance hall...if you start thinking that, it's just going to destroy you; you're not going to have the will to go.

Our objective for D-day was a place called Putot-en-Bessin, which was about ten miles inland. We expected, we were told, that the landing would be light. That once we got in there, we could go like mad and go right through to this railway crossing at a place called Brouay, which was the western end of this Putot. A Company, Able Company of the Winnipeg Rifles, was ahead of us, walking. It had probably taken me 25 to 30 minutes to get organized and get all my troops and do everything I had to do according to the battle order. Then, we followed A Company down this road.

I came to the top of the ridge, and there's the left side of the British 50<sup>th</sup> Division, the Inns of Court, so I was in liaison with this Officer. We were sitting talking, and I was afraid to get under cover because this Officer had been in a lot of action. This guy from the Inns of Court and...I thought, "Well I'm a rough, tough Canadian. I'm not going to jump into a bloody hole or something, you see." But nothing seemed to bother this guy but he was that type. He was leaning against the fender of this scout car, talking away, and all at once he looked up with his, again, his cigarette still going in his holder, and he said, "Honest to God. I say, ol' boy, I think they're coming." (Laughs)

The next thing I knew, I was in the carrier and my driver was in before me, and then we looked up and you could see the Germans coming across, and they had already captured Able Company and they were coming through this way and I

got on the set and I told the Colonel that they were coming down this road then they turned and they went in and they captured a bunch of our troops that were in this town of Putot.

From then, it was fluid warfare. They were coming over. They were dropping shells on us. We were dropping shells on them, and that's when we heard the terrible news that they had shot our people in the field and we didn't have that confirmed for about a month. It was tough to hear that.

Now, we were about eight miles west of the Abbey d'Ardenne at the Château d'Audrieu, and that was the headquarters of a guy by the name of Monke was his name. A real miserable SS, and he was the guy who took our troops into a field and shot them.

**Excerpt from TAKE NO PRISONERS  
From The War Amps NEVER AGAIN! Series  
Produced by Cliff Chadderton**

***Cliff Chadderton:** This monument was erected in 1989 to the loving memory of 58 members of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. Also eight soldiers from other regiments and units who were murdered in the grounds of the Château d'Audrieu, at Fontenay-le-Pesnel, at Haut-de-Bosq and other surrounding areas.*

*This monument is mute testimony to the brutal murders carried out under the direction of Nazi General Wilhelm Mohnke. The young men were defenceless Canadian volunteers.*

*Other war crimes had been carried out the day before at the famous Abbaye d'Ardenne by another SS General, Kurt Meyer. The prisoners involved came mostly from the North Nova Scotia Highlanders and the Sherbrooke Fusiliers.*

**Cliff:** You thought that you could get killed in the war but you never thought that you could get lined up against a fence and they just mow you down. I mean, I think I can say that, in all honesty, I don't know one soldier would say that he looked upon that as a possible end.

The ordinary German troop soldier wasn't a bad guy. I mean, he fought a clean war as much as you could expect, but the German SS: just brutal murderers. I mean they just didn't believe in the Geneva Convention and they were all 26 years of age or younger and thorough, thorough, thorough Nazis.

Our Colonel was very smart: Tell your guys – don't retaliate. If you retaliate, you're only asking for more.

We took an awful lot of prisoners. I don't know – in the hundreds, I never heard – but if we had gotten the reputation of shooting prisoners, those guys would never have given up. They would have fought to the last man – the last bullet – and we would have lost a lot of people we didn't have to lose. That's common sense, you see.

### **THE WORST DAY**

The worst day I ever spent was when the Colonel told me to go into this field and pick up all the Winnipeg Rifles I could find - dead or alive - and I thought he was kidding, but when I got out there and I realized that a lot of them were dead and some of them were alive, and they had been out there two days and they had been crying, "Momma!" Whew, boy. I said, "Ok. On with the job; I don't care who they are - just take a look at their boots -I know they're Winnipeg Rifles". See, we had combat boots, where ordinary soldiers didn't. We had mercury helmets, which ordinary – only the D-Day troops had the mercury helmets - so, no. I just said, you can't identify with these people. Now the time to identify is if he's in your company and you have to sit down and write his wife a letter or his loved one a letter, then that's...but that all comes afterwards.

### **AN OFFICER'S DUTY**

What was it like to write a letter to a mother? People often said one of the worst jobs for an officer was to write the next of kin and say, you know we just buried your son, or something. Well, you were programmed to write those kinds of letters; otherwise you never could have written them. How could you write a letter to a guy when you used to take his sister out dancing or something like that? You stuck to the form as the British would say.

You see, it didn't happen to private soldiers, they never wrote letters; it didn't happen to corporals; it just happened to officers – to the officers or the senior NCOs who were acting as officers. It just happened to them. They were the only ones who went through this experience, and I think that they learned that if they were to bare their souls, if they were really to try to say what this really meant, I mean, to see a guy, particularly if he was badly wounded. Let's get honest about it. Supposing he had his head shot off. You don't write his wife and say that, but you don't even admit it yourself. You just say, "Jim old guy, Jesus what a god damn bloody mistake this was and it's too bad and I know I wish it had been somebody else but what you're really saying is, Thank God it wasn't me.

**“These are our Heroes song”** – song lyrics

*I read the papers everyday  
And I'm really sad to say  
I see our memories turning gray  
And our heroes slipping away*

*They made us laugh  
Brought us to tears..... these are our heroes  
We would stand and clap and cheer..... these are our heroes  
We're left with little souvenirs.....these are our heroes  
Our hearts can carry through the years.*

### **CLIFF CHADDERTON IN COMMAND**

**Cliff:** I was fortunate. I was in action longer than most commanders and so, you know, I wasn't a great commander but through experience I had learned the tricks of the trade.

The first thing you did, and I think the Canadian Army was noted for this, is you try to make sure that every man knew exactly what he was supposed to do and what we were supposed to be doing. I was even foolish enough to use words like, “look, we're not smarter than they are, but we're as smart as they are, and they've got a defensive position, so they got one up on us. So what we have to do is we have to lay on a fire plan that's going to put smoke in front of their tanks when their tanks won't be able to see us”. And you know, you'd lay it all out in a plan. That's the first thing you'd do. You never place a man in a position where he's going to give up his life, unless you give him a chance to say, “That's not the way I would do it.”

I can remember the plan that I laid on to take Calais and my Company was the lead Company and I turned to all the NCOs and I said, “Okay now – is that okay with you guys?” And some of them would joke and say, “I got an idea Sir,” and I'd say, “What's that?” “Let's go the other way.” And everybody would laugh like hell, you see, but I love those kinds of guys.

Secondly, you have an evacuation plan for the wounded, how you're going to get them out.

Now you've heard the old story we never surrender...that is pure B.S. I mean, if I said to my troops before a tough attack, “Come on guys, we will never surrender,” they'd take a look at you, and they'd say, “You're some God damn hero - you're out for a VC?” I mean they smelled a rat right off the bat, so you didn't ever say, if you were a good commander, you didn't say, “We'll never

surrender.” What you said is, “If things get really bad, I’ll get you the hell out of there; one way or the other, I’m going to get you out”. What else can you do?

I never tried to fool my guys because how could they have any respect for you the next time you say to them, “Look we’re going to take this fort and this was going to be a piece of cake,” and some would say “Yeah, that’s what you said last time,” and you know, you can fool some of the people some of the time, but don’t ever try to fool a private soldier whose life is on the line. You got too much at stake. (Laughs)

Well what you do is you say, “I did my best.” I lost more men than I should have, but if the plan had not been as good as it was, we may have lost another 25. If Major Plunkville was running the show, he’d of lost 27. Better to lose 17 under Chadderton than 27 under a guy who doesn’t know his ass from first base. I’ve said that. I’ve said that, and you know it’s probably the reason why I can sit here, in this office, and still have active correspondence with at least twenty of my men. I still write them and they still write to me.

### **AN UNFORGETTABLE BATTLE**

The Battle for Soulangy; I had been sent down as a Second in Command of an Infantry Company. I had been given the job to do what’s called a recce or a reconnaissance of this Soulangy place, and I took my Regimental Sergeant Major with me and my batman runner, and as we went into this farmyard, I saw all these soldiers lying there...and they were all dead. They were from the regiment de la Chaudiere. They were all killed. So I went past them, and I went up to the, sort of the lookout for this great big Soulangy Castle, you’d call it, and there was a private soldier up there who said, “Where are the rest of the guys?”, he said to me in French. And I said, “Well what are we doing here?” He said, “We have to take this objective,” and I said, “Well where are the Germans?” And he said, “I don’t know.” He said, “How long have you been here?” I said, “Oh, half an hour. Did you see any?” He said, “No”. So I went back, hell bent for election, and took a motorcycle that was lying beside the road and drove back, and I told the CO they had left and that was where they were withdrawing – the Germans were withdrawing to Falaise. So he said, “What do you plan to do?” I said, “Well let’s take it before they reoccupy the place,” and he said, “Ok. How many men have you got?” I said, “About 60,” and he said, “Can you take it?” And I said, “There’s nobody there. Sure we could take it.” He said, “Ok, off you go.”

So we got some trucks, put the men in the trucks, drove within a quarter of a mile of this bloody big Soulangy, and I said, “Alright now. We’ll send 17 platoon. We’ll go around to the left, and 16 platoon will go around to the right, and 15 platoon will come up this road. As soon as you hear any fire, hit the ground and then we will decide what we do because we have to make a decision on the spot. “Ok Sir, fine, let’s do it,” and Bingo, and this is all taking place within 15 minutes, 20 minutes at the most.

So I'm walking down this road with the platoon that was in the centre, and I hear: Brrrrrr! And you could always tell - the German machine guns had a faster rate of fire than ours - so I knew that we were being fired on by Germans, so I said, "Go to ground." I saw this Jim Bullock come through, and he was holding his arm and I said, "What happened, Jim?" He said, "We got fired on." I said, "How many men did you lose?" He said, "We lost them all." Jesus, how could that happen? There was supposed to be no Germans there, so I said, "Ok, get back to the RAP and in the meantime I will get back to the Colonel," so I tried to get the Colonel and I couldn't get him and I finally got him, and he said, "You've got to take the objective anyway." This was about half an hour later. So I said, "Ok," so I had sent a guy by the name of Morris Soronow up on the right - he was a Lieutenant. Jim Bullock had gone on the left. So I got on the set, and I said to Morris, "Are you okay?" And he said, "Yes." I said, "Jimmy Bullock has been hurt. I am going to send Doug Kirkpatrick up to relieve him and then you are going to put on an attack on this final objective." Soronow says, "Ok that's fine."

Within about five minutes of this conversation, I see this German tank come out through the bushes, blasting away, blasting away, and now I heard somebody say that they got Lieutenant Soronow and I thought, 'Oh My God!' So then I got a hold of Kirkpatrick and he was under fire and he was killed. Soronow was killed, Jimmy Bullock was wounded.

It was my plan, that was the worst battle I was ever in by far, because ... I don't blame myself with making a mistake, it was just that the ground was such that the Germans could hide in it, they had fooled the Chaudière completely about it so I thought we were safe to ... if the Germans vacate someplace, you take it quickly because if you don't, they are liable to come back, so I said, "Let's take it." So that was my worst battle action.

## **60 YEARS LATER**

Sixty years later. Well, let me start with the cemeteries. When I go to a cemetery, I look up certain people. I can't look them all up, but for some reason or other this battle is the same, in my mind, as if it happened yesterday. As a result, I go right to Doug Kirkpatrick's grave and I put a poppy on it. I go right to Morris Soronow's grave and I put a poppy on it, and then I often go back because it's on the main road between Caen and Falaise. I often go back to this farmhouse that is still there and stand there and just say, "Let the images hit me!" Sometimes I close my eyes, sometimes I don't, but I just feel a physical presence of what happened there, of Soronow's 2IC saying to me, "Mr. Soronow got hit." Of Doug Kirkpatrick's Sergeant saying to me, "We carried Doug into the barn, he's dead." Of Jimmy Bullock coming out of the bushes holding onto his arm with blood streaming down and, you know... and I even went and walked the walk where the Germans were.

I walked back to where the Germans were looking at us, and some guys that were on one of these pilgrimages with me, I said, "I know that you are going to laugh at me, but I want you to stand here and I will tell you when you can move, and you stand here and you stand there." I saw the ground from the point of view of the Germans, now my view, the bushes changed in 60 years and this was about 40 years ago that I did this, but it helped me because I began to realize that nobody could have known the German position. It was superb, it was a superb defensive position, but how was I to know that? I could see it from their position and I said to myself, "As an attacking Canadian infantry company commander, what could I have done differently?" Nothing.

**In October 1944, the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army was assigned the mission to destroy German defences along the Scheldt River Estuary in Holland and Belgium, free the port of Antwerp and open up Allied supply lines. This was the last major military operation before the Rhineland. During two months of heavy fighting, the Canadians suffered 6,500 casualties.**

### **AT THE LEOPOLD CANAL, BELGIUM**

**Excerpt from AGAINST ALL ODDS  
From The War Amps NEVER AGAIN! Series  
Produced by Cliff Chadderton**

*Cliff Chadderton: In my company, we had a youngster who could sing like a bird. We used to call him Bing. And as we laid here very tense, with the Germans on the other side of the canal, the order was given quietness, then after a period of an hour or so people began to talk and the Germans on the other side of the canal began to yell at us. And do someone said Bing sing our song. We had a little song in our regiment. It went something like this. Put me in your pocket so I'll be close to you. How could I ever forget it? He sang the song and from across the canal the Germans started to applaud. And then some German yelled in English, Sing again! Sing again! So Bing sang it again. And the German threw a grenade over the canal and they killed him. I wanted to tell that story though for another reason.*

*At the Leopold Canal, this was the first time that we used flame throwers, and from the point of view of the infantry, we did not like the idea because it's the worst possible weapon of war for those who have to fight on the ground. And we knew that if we burned the Germans on the other side of this canal, they were going to be looking for revenge. This had bothered us all afternoon but in my company at least after they killed Bing with a grenade we didn't have any compunction at all.*

*I wanted to hunch down low on this dyke, to provide some idea of the perspective of what happened here on the night of October the 5<sup>th</sup>, 1944. At 0400 in the morning, the north shore regiment grabbed their kapok assault boats and went up over this canal. We followed them. About this time, the flame throwers were shooting streams of liquid fire across the canal. We could hear the Germans screaming, some of them alight like torches, running up and down among those trees. The north shore carried the kapok boats down to the edge of the canal, here, and eased them into the water. And as we got into the boats on the canal, the German positions which had not come under fire were opening with what we called enfilade fire at the boats. Approximately one half of the people who had gotten into the boats made it to the far side.*

**Cliff:** So we lost a lot of men crossing that canal - how many I don't know - we had 60 some going over, maybe we lost 20 but we got across and when we got across, we ran into the Regina Rifles who had gone ahead on our left and the Canadian Scottish were on our right and we were in the middle so we ran into the Regina Rifles on our left and I said, "What kind of a do is this?" They said, "It's shaky as hell, we don't know if we can hold it."

So we dug in and occupied these slit trenches that the Germans had and the Germans put in about three attacks between 4 and first light I guess.

Then the next day was quiet. We were, sort of, regrouping and whatnot, that would be the 7<sup>th</sup>. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, we needed reinforcements. An infantry company is about 120, I was down to about 30 men so I couldn't hold the ground and so they sent up some conscripts, good guys, wanted to fight, no choice but wanted to fight. Most of them french speaking, and I could speak a little French, so we were alright there so they came up the next day that would be the 9<sup>th</sup> - which we got reinforced. Then we went over the afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup> and occupied more of these slit trenches, filled them up with new troops and had a fairly quiet night. The 10<sup>th</sup>, the Colonel called me and he said, "I want you to put an attack on this Grafjan." I said, "Ok, fine." So I got a hold of three or four of my best men and said, "Now we will go down this road as far as we can and dig in, that's the first step. Then after we have dug in and we get a good look at the ground, then Sergeant McGeachie will be with us and McGeachie will say ok, bring up the rest of your men."

In the meantime, I stayed in the slit trench behind where I could organize the troops who were coming up. So McGeachie went up the road and then I got a signal from him to come ahead, so I brought up about 10 or 15 reinforcements. It was a road with polder land on each side, flooded so you could only get so many men up. I got up there and as soon as we got in they fired every damn thing at us you could think of, mortars, little two inch mortars - what we called popeyes - machine guns, sub-machine guns, everything you could think of, it was just hell.

So I said to McGeachie there was no point in staying there we were just going to get killed. So McGeachie turned around and he said to me, "You are getting out

first." I said, "Why?" "Because I want you to organize everybody when they come back, otherwise they'll just come back to where you started and it will be a kind of a milling around and everybody is going to get killed." So he said, "I'm sending you." He was a Sergeant, I'm the Officer. He says, "I'm sending you back first".

So I started back down the Canal and I got hit. I felt this guy grab me by the back, it was McGeachie, and he said to me, "Can you walk?" I said, "I don't know, I think I can". He said, "Ok, I'm going to put you in a slit trench. So he took me back and put me in the slit trench and I blanked out, and then I saw a German up above drop a grenade on me and that's all I remembered. But then I lay there and I was all covered with mud and they were digging me out and by that time we had a kapok bridge across but it had been blown by the Germans so Alec Bell came along, who was one of my big Sergeants, big tough guy, and Alec came along and he said, "Are you alright, Sir?" And I said, "I don't know," I said, "The pain's gone". He said, "No wonder, it's all full of mud." They were packing mud all over my feet so I wouldn't feel the pain, you see. He said, "We're going to get the hell out of here".

The next thing I saw was Alec saying, "Just like shooting ducks in the marshes", he said, "I got a punt". He threw me in this punt and I thought it was full of water and one guy in the front with a pole and another guy with a rifle in the back. And I put my hand down in this thing and I lifted it up and it was all blood. And I said, "My God, it's all blood". I was bleeding like a stuck pig. But Bell said "No, we're going to get you out of here, don't worry about it".

So they carried me out and I got back to the RAP (Regimental Aid Post) and the Doc came along and he said, "I'm going to give you a shot of morphine, but the only clean place I got is between your neckline". So he gave me a shot of morphine in here and I blessed him for that and then he turned to his assistant and he said "that's Chadderton and don't let him suffer". And I thought I know what that means. Goodbye. Anyhow, they got me out of there and I don't remember getting back to the first port of call is the Casualty Clearing Station, but I remember them saying, "Well, he's lost a foot," and then they got me back to 12 General Field Hospital and I was lying there, and a doctor came along...I believe his name was Hunter, and he came along and he said, "You're the last one I can operate on today," he said, "You know what time it is?" I said, "No." He said, "It's midnight".

So I'd been from 2 o'clock to midnight. So he took me in at midnight and took off the part of one leg and said, "I think we can save your other leg, but I'm not sure." The next thing I remember, I was in a great big drill hall being put in the stretcher and being flown back to England. I went to another General Hospital and they said, "You need more surgery," and I had a bullet wound in the gut, so that was very serious. Finally, he got that out.

In retrospect, looking back on it, it should have helped me, but the first thing I asked for: Jimmy Kerr. I said, "What happened to Jimmy Kerr?" Because he told me the night before, he says, "Tomorrow I get it". I said, "Ah, you're full of ..." he said, "No, tomorrow I get it". So I asked for Jimmy Kerr and they said that you sent MacGeachie to get him. I said, "I did". He said, "Yeah, he was dead".

**Excerpt from AGAINST All ODDS**  
**Part of The War Amps series NEVER AGAIN!**  
**Produced by Cliff Chadderton**

*Cliff Chadderton: Jimmy Kerr, I served with him right from the start. There but for the grace of God it would be me.*

**Cliff:** Why should I...you know my Dad taught me a bit of doggerel one time – it was called 'Why Me?' And the answer is, "Why me? Just lucky I guess."  
(Laughs) I kept saying this over and over and over again and I finally said it was Jim's turn; maybe I'm next week, but what the hell, and I realized for the first time that there would be no more next week: the war was over for me, and I must say to you, in all honesty, that was a feeling of great relief to realize that my role was over but not, thank God, I didn't get it on D-Day or I didn't get it, you know, I had my four months in and that was fine.

With regard to Leopold Canal, it's happiness, it's happiness. I was glad to sacrifice a leg, knowing I was going to get out of this war. Now that may be very, oh I'd say, that may be very selfish of me, on my part, I don't know, but I mean that's why the Leopold Canal always brings flooding back of nice thoughts and when I sometimes go to bed at night and I can't sleep, I think of the Leopold Canal and I think of everything that happened that night – I think of McGeachie, what a bloody hero he was, and Jimmy Kerr and whatnot, but I also think that that was the battle that I went through that allowed me to continue living.

Whereas now, at Soulangy, - I was not wounded at Soulangy - but in Soulangy, it was a terrible battle because my plan had gone awry. That's really what bothers me, to be honest with you. Whether it was a good plan or a bad plan I don't know, but I know that, and I talked to the Colonel about this, Colonel Fulton about this, - he's now dead - but he thinks it was a good plan but he may have been saying that to make me feel good. But it was my plan and I lost three, I lost more than three, but I lost three really great guys in that battle so maybe that's why it's worse than Leopold, because to balance it out you see – the Leopold is where I got saved.

It's tough. It's tough. Do you ever get over it? Three nights ago, I dreamed about it again. Three nights ago for God's sake! Do I ever get over it? Do I want to get over it? I don't know. Are these thoughts bad for you, these dreams if you like, or recreations in your mind? Are they bad for you? And I don't know the answer to that. I really don't know the answer to that. I wrestle with it a bit later

on in my book. But I don't really know the answer to that. And secondly, if they are bad for me, can I do anything about them, because I've reached the age in life when I don't sleep well. I sleep, but I don't sleep well and I know that. I'll get up in the night and go and make myself a cup of tea and then I realize I'm thinking about this damn battle. So much for memory sixty years later. Guys who went through it, it's their one sustaining memory. What does it sustain? Well, maybe it sustains the fact that their proud of what they did or they're not proud of what they did. It could be one or the other, who knows. It's a tougher question for me because I can't answer it.

### **YOU PLAY WITH THE CARDS YOU'VE GOT**

I divided my body into parts: I don't need my legs, really, I need my head. My head was ok, so with the head I could go out and challenge the world and find something to do that would be useful.

It gave me an opportunity that I never would have had otherwise. I mean, my God, look at the opportunities that I had! I never would have had those opportunities had it not been for the war and had it not been for getting cracked up a bit in the war and, you know, taking a hit when I was in the wrong place at the wrong time – it was worthwhile. I would say that it all hasn't been a picnic, but I've always had a way of finding where the good part of it was, and I'd say, "Hold on to that!"

I wouldn't change a thing. I wouldn't change a thing because I would be afraid that when they dealt the cards the next time I wouldn't get all the good cards. I'd get a bunch of two's or something. No, you know I think that you play with the cards you got and you make the best you can and somewhere in that deck was a work ethic that I'm happy about and wonderful opportunities to build something, so what more does a guy want?

"They shall grow not old, as we who are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them".

Cliff Chadderton has never let the loss of his leg hinder him. In fact, it has made him a beacon of hope to many, and has given him the opportunity to work for the needs and benefits of Canadian amputees and veterans. He has been a visionary behind The War Amps innovative programs such as the CHAMP Program for Child Amputees. Cliff Chadderton is Chief Executive of The War Amps and Chairman of the National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada. He is known nationally and internationally as a documentary producer, creating The War Amps *NEVER AGAIN!* series to illustrate the reality of war and to preserve Canada's military heritage. Cliff Chadderton has written a memoir entitled, *Excuse Us! Herr Schicklgruber* – an insight into the personalities, feelings and hopes of the men with whom he served in the Second World War. This documentary is based on an interview conducted by Veterans Affairs Canada as part of its Heroes Remember Project.

**“These are our Heroes song”** – song lyrics

*These are our heroes*

*They made us laugh*

*Brought us to tears..... these are our heroes*

*We would stand and clap and cheer..... these are our heroes*

*We're left with little souvenirs.....these are our heroes*

*Our hearts can carry through the years.*

*They were a constant in our lives*

*We saw them win and lose with pride*

*We sat and watched and were amazed*

*They gave us hope, we gave them praise...these are our heroes*

*They made us laugh*

*Brought us to tears..... these are our heroes*

*We would stand and clap and cheer..... these are our heroes*

*We're left with little souvenirs.....these are our heroes*

*Our hearts can carry through the years.*

*They made us laugh*

*Brought us to tears..... these are our heroes*

*We would stand and clap and cheer..... these are our heroes*

*We're left with little souvenirs.....these are our heroes*

*Our hearts can carry through the years.*

*Heroes,*

*Our heroes,*

*To us, you were the stars in the sky.*

*These are our heroes.*