



Kenny Allen, RAF Flt/Sgt Air Gunner
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I've enjoyed speaking with young people about my WWII experiences over many years just as I've tried to enjoy whatever life sent my way. It's always better to face what's in front of you with a smile and a joke. I love telling jokes. But, as I speak to you, young children in 2139, 200 years from

now, when WWII will seem such a long-ago war, I want to tell you what happened and how lucky I was. War dished out life-changing moments but it also led me to live in the great country of Canada. If you young people in the future can see WWII, one person at a time, hopefully you'll see the living history of a war that had to be fought.

I joined up at 17½ in 1942 and was sent to the Royal Air Force in Padgate, Lancashire, England where I went into square bashing (training). When training was completed I went in front of a Selection Board and their job was to find out what I wanted to be in the service. I said, "Air Gunner" so they sent me to the RAF Regiment as an Anti-Aircraft Gunner at the Isle of Man. A short period later they said they wanted maintenance assistants to help mechanics and we sailed as a convoy of troop ships, destroyers and aircraft protecting us on our 10 day trip to North Africa.

As our convoy approached Algiers, a troop ship full of nurses blew up just ahead of ours; it took a British destroyer with it. We were lucky. One night they called for someone to play the bugle. I offered to do so and got some privileges to eat with the crew because I was first up in the morning and last one to bed. One night I heard someone yell "Shoot the bugler!" It was my best friend from my small home town called Leek, Staffordshire. We went to a desert airfield called Oujda where we serviced Spitfires. One day hundreds of Gliders – C47s took over our airfield. It was General McCavin's 101st Airborne ready for the invasion of Sicily. I used to go up in a C47 to watch the troopers jump. One day I did not go up and the C47 I was to take blew up on takeoff, killing all. "Phew" – lucky me!!!

My papers then came up for air crew. I was sent to Rhodesia where I got my Wing Air Gunner badge. Next I was sent to Bhopal India to train on B24s. I flew these B24s in training missions as a rear ball gunner. During our time off three of us that liked to go into the bush hunting. We always took a searchlight so we could see the eyes of the animals. One night we shone our light into the bush and saw four Germans coming towards us with their hands in the air. They'd escaped from an Indian prison and had been in the bush for six days. They were weak, bitten by the bugs and very disillusioned. We fed them and helped them get stronger but we had to take them back to the prison. We knew they would be beaten, the poor devils. We told our story to our Wing Commander and how bad we felt for them and he said. "You were lucky they didn't turn on you! There were four of them and only three of you guys. They could have stolen your truck and uniforms." Then I thought, maybe we were lucky!!!

I then boarded a ship for Canada to pick up a B24. The ship was loaded with war brides. I got a job protecting them—guarding the doors to the showers. On reaching Canada I was sent to the Horse Palace in the Canadian National Exhibition grounds which was a holding unit for the Air Force. The B24 order was cancelled because the war ended and I was then sent to New York to return to England. I travelled on the *Queen Mary*; she was full of nurses and WACs. What a trip!!! It was too short!!!

On reaching England I trained as motor transport driver and was sent to Germany where I searched for graves of airmen who had been shot down. From there I went on to a Radar Chain.



*Peter Whitt Streetcar #2766
at High Park Loop by Brad O'Brien
www.transit.toronto.on.ca/streetcar/4501.shtml*

After that I went home and married a great girl—came to Canada where I drove the old TTC Peter Whitt Streetcars. The veterans from WWII drove for the Toronto Transit Commission. I worked for the TTC for 36 years.

THANKS CANADA FOR A GREAT LIFE—LIVE LONG
—Kenny

Kenny Allen passed away July 23, 2012 at 87-years-of-age in the middle of this project.