

During these terrible spring months of 1944, the Sixth Victory Loan Drive got underway in March. It is a story of total community commitment to the war effort. A small army of service-club members from the Gyros, Kinsmen and Rotarians was organized into competing teams of canvassers to knock on the doors of all Nelson residents in an effort to sell bonds or collect pledges for the drive. The goal was to raise \$500 for each of the 1,300 enlisted men and women from the Nelson district. Mayor Stibbs declared a civic holiday for April 26 so that residents would remain in their homes until the canvassers had called. It was an example of how a community can marshal its resources in times of emergency. The *Nelson Daily News* carried the message:

Citizens are urged to be prepared to sign on the dotted line in fast order to help speed the salesmen on their way to "Put Victory First." Service club men will canvass the city from top to bottom, from morning to night.

The newspaper reported on April 28 that "Nelson's unique civic holiday sales scheme had paid off in big dividends." Victory Bond sales had been boosted to reach one-third of the quota. Visible rewards for support of the campaign were offered to businesses. There were announcements during the drive of the names of firms that were entitled to proudly fly a three-star pennant, "symbolic of outstanding participation by employees." To qualify, 15 percent of a firm's six-months' payroll had to be invested, and at least 90 percent of the staff must have bought bonds.

The Victory Loan drives were not for adults only. The newspaper reported that "The youngsters are not letting themselves be left behind in the drive to 'put victory first.'" A group of six Hume School pupils subscribed a total of \$350 to the Sixth Victory Loan Drive. In May the junior high school's grade nine class supported the drive by staging before a packed house at the Capitol Theatre an "inspiring pageant" based on the "Four Freedoms." The Nelson newspaper described the evening:

Initiated and prepared by the students themselves, the pageant gave a clear picture of the meaning of the four freedoms.... While biblical and historical scenes unfolded before the audience, two lads in bugle band uniforms stood at the sides of the stage reading

alternately descriptions of man's long fight for freedom.... The audience also saw talking pictures of captured German and Japanese film, and heard addresses by Lieut. Hampton Gray, RCNVR and R.B. Morris on behalf of the Victory Loan Committee. Between scenes Lieut. Gray described experiences he had had in the Fleet Air Arm, detailing the intense training leading up to the first operational flight.... He expressed thanks to the people of Nelson for their help for servicemen, to organizations for the sending of parcels, and expressed pride in the way the people put over the Victory Loan drives.⁶⁸

Citizens of Nelson

HIT 'EM AGAIN CANADA!

Be Sure and Attend the
PUBLIC MEETING
IN THE
Capitol Theatre
WEDNESDAY, NOV. 28 — 8 P.M.
AND HEAR
FLYING OFFICER A. I. WATTS, D.F.C.

of the Royal Canadian Air Force tell the story of his experiences in the past 18 months while flying in Britain and Libya as a bomber pilot.

Nelson Symphony Orchestra in Attendance

ADMISSION FREE — COMMUNITY SINGING

SPONSORED BY THE NELSON VICTORY LOAN COMMITTEE

One of Many Patriotic Rallies

The Capitol Theatre was in constant use during the war years for fundraising concerts and patriotic gatherings.

A visit to Nelson in May near the end of the Sixth Victory Loan campaign by Governor General, the Earl of Athlone and his wife, Princess Alice, who was a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, gave the drive a final

boost. An editorial in the *Daily News* on May 12 urged Nelsonites to “go over the top today.”

The Victory Loan Committee is making a big effort this morning to reach the quota by 3 o'clock today so that Mayor Stibbs may greet the Earl of Athlone and Princess Alice with the news on their arrival at Nelson that the people of the city have again done their duty, that they have backed up with their money the more than 1,200 men who have joined the armed forces from the city and suburbs.

By the end of the campaign, sales had reached \$853,900—111 percent of its target.

The night of March 24/25, 1944, was a bitter one for Bomber Command. A total of 811 aircraft, including 113 from RCAF squadrons, set out to attack Berlin. Bomber Command lost 72 air crews that night. Among those killed was 27-year-old ***Pilot Officer Maurice Coupland Latornell*** of Nelson, the young man whose death was the inspiration for this book as I set out to discover how he had died. I now know that his Halifax bomber blew up when hit by enemy fire. Maurice is buried in the Kiel War Cemetery, but the bodies of some of his crewmates were never found. Bomber Command's daily diary⁶⁹ describes the raid:

This night became known in Bomber Command as “the night of the strong winds.” A powerful wind from the north carried the bombers south at every stage of the flight. Not only was this wind not forecast accurately but it was so strong that the various methods available to warn crews of wind changes during the flight failed to detect the full strength of it. The bomber stream became very scattered, particularly on the homeward flight, and radar-predicted flak batteries at many places were able to score successes. Part of the bomber force even strayed over the Ruhr defences on the return flight. It is believed that approximately 50 of the 72 aircraft lost were destroyed by flak; most of the remainder were victims of night fighters.... This was the last major RAF raid on Berlin during the war, although the city would be bombed many times by small forces of Mosquitos.

Maurice was a navigator with 425 (Alouette) Squadron. He was with the squadron in North Africa in mid-1943, where they flew from a base in Tunisia to attack targets in Sicily and Italy. The squadron had returned to

M. C. Latornell Earns Wings



NELSON AIRMAN ARRIVES OVERSEAS

Sgt.-Navigator Morris C. Latornell, son of Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Latornell of Nelson, who has arrived safely in Britain. His parents received a cable yesterday. Sgt. Latornell, who graduated at No. 2 Air Observer School, Edmonton, Aug. 14, was a member of the Hume School teaching staff before enlistment.



Pilot Officer Maurice Latornell

Photo courtesy of Helen Wood

Nelson Airman in North Africa

Morris C. Latornell, R.C.A.F., of Nelson has been in North Africa for the past three months. The former Hume School teacher went overseas as a sergeant-navigator late in 1942. He was a graduate of No. 2 Air Observer School, Edmonton, in August, 1942. The news of his arrival in North Africa was received by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Latornell here.

Po. M. Latornell of Nelson Presumed Dead

England to rejoin Bomber Command's No. 6 (RCAF) Group in October or November 1943. Maurice was born in Strome, Alberta, but grew up and was educated in Nelson. He graduated from the University of British Columbia with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1938 and a teaching certificate a year later. He taught at Hume School in Nelson for two years before enlisting in the RCAF in October 1941. Shortly before he enlisted he had been elected president of the Nelson Figure Skating Club. He was the young man who had taught me to skate four years earlier, and his death brought home to me, more than any of the newsreels or war movies, the reality of the war.