

Honouring the Life of
**SIR GEORGE
BEARDSHAW**

14 Sep 1923  11 Jul 2026

A Life of Courage, Kindness and Service

**Home Children Canada
July 2026**

Written by Lori Oschefski



Sir George & Lori Oschefski Jun 9 2026

There are some people who leave an impression the moment you meet them. Sir Dr. George Beardshaw was one of those rare individuals. He possessed a quiet strength, an infectious optimism, and a genuine kindness that immediately put people at ease. Despite the hardships he endured throughout his life, George never allowed bitterness to define him. Instead, he chose compassion, gratitude, and an unwavering belief in the goodness of people. His warm smile, quick wit, and humble nature drew others to him, while his generosity of spirit inspired everyone fortunate enough to know him.

George's life was extraordinary, but not because of the honours he received or the remarkable milestones he achieved. It was extraordinary because of the man he chose to be. He carried himself with dignity, treated every person with respect, and devoted the final years of his life to ensuring that the story of Canada's Home Children would never again be forgotten. He became more than a survivor—he became a teacher, an ambassador, a mentor, and, to many of us, a dear friend.

I first met George in 2012. From that very first day, he became much more than a supporter of Home Children Canada—he became the living face of a generation that refused to be forgotten.

Most people spend the last years of their lives slowing down. George seemed to become more active as an ambassador. Even in his late nineties and beyond the age of 102, he was attending ceremonies, giving interviews, welcoming visitors, accepting honours, and speaking for those who no longer had a voice. Just a month before his passing, he accepted an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Wilfrid Laurier University. He never stopped believing that one more audience, one more interview, or one more conversation could make a difference.

There was never a request too small or too large. If we asked George to speak, he was there. If we asked him to attend a ceremony, he was there. If we needed an interview, a documentary, a presentation, George simply said yes. Time and again, he gave his time, his energy, and, most importantly, his story.

He understood that he wasn't speaking only for himself. He was speaking for the tens of thousands of Home Children who had come before him—those who had never been able to tell their own stories.

George's story began on September 14, 1923, in the coal-mining town of Doncaster, Yorkshire, England. Born to a single mother, he was the fourth of five children, entering a world that offered little stability and few opportunities. His father, a

married man with another family, soon disappeared from his life, and George would later believe the police had compelled him to return to his first family. George retained no memory of his mother, and his earliest recollections were of living with an Aunt May, whose heavy drinking left little room for the care and affection a young child needed. "She could drink ten men under the table," George would later recall with his characteristic humour.

At just six years of age, George entered the care of Dr. Barnardo's Homes. Like so many Home Children, he was suddenly separated from the only life he had known. Barnardo's provided food, clothing, and shelter, but it was also a place of strict discipline where even small infractions could bring harsh punishment. Alone and vulnerable, George struggled until his older brothers, Charlie and John, were placed in the same cottage and offered him the protection only family could provide. Those precious years together were short-lived. John emigrated to Canada in 1932, Charlie was boarded out once again, and George found himself alone.

Then, one ordinary day at school, everything changed. "The inspector came into the classroom and asked, 'How many boys would like to go to Canada?' So I stuck up my hand."



It was a decision made in the innocent way only a fourteen-year-old boy could make it. George desperately wanted to leave Barnardo's and imagined adventure lay ahead. He believed he was an orphan. He believed Canada was a place where he would become a cowboy. No one explained that he would be leaving England forever, or that he would likely never see his family again. Knowing his older brother John was already somewhere in Canada, and believing his mother was dead, George embraced the opportunity with hope rather than fear.



In 1938, he boarded the ship bound for Canada. Apart from being terribly seasick, he remembered the voyage fondly. The children were treated well, allowed to eat what they wished, and George carefully packed the few possessions he was permitted to bring: some clothing, a box camera, and his treasured crystal radio set. On board with him, was Cyril Hewitt - a man who became a life long friend of George's.

After arriving in Quebec, the children travelled by train to Toronto, where they spent three days at Barnardo's receiving home on Jarvis Street. During their brief stay, they were taken on an outing to Toronto Island—a welcome adventure before their new lives began.

The next step would determine the course of George's future.

Prospective farmers from across Ontario had submitted requests for boys to work on their farms. George was handed a list of nearly two hundred names. One entry immediately caught his eye: Mr. Payne of Little Britain, Ontario.

"I came from Great Britain," George later laughed, "so I thought I'd go to Little Britain."

With that simple piece of fourteen-year-old logic, George unknowingly chose the farm where he would spend the next five years.

George arrived by train at the small station outside Lindsay, Ontario, where Mr. Payne met him in a 1929 Chevrolet. As the young English boy stepped onto Canadian soil, he was about to begin a life unlike anything he had imagined. There would be no horses to ride across the open plains and no adventures of the Wild West. Instead, there would be long days, hard labour, and responsibilities that would quickly force him to grow up.

The neighbourhood children were fascinated by the newcomer. They would gather simply to hear George's Yorkshire

accent and admire his different style of clothing. Everything about Canada was new to him. He had never seen a cow before arriving on the Payne farm, and he quickly learned that tending livestock involved far more than simply feeding them. Stepping in cow manure became an almost daily occurrence, something he later laughed about, though there had been little humour in it at the time.

George rarely spoke with anger about Mr. Payne. When asked what kind of man he was, George simply shrugged and replied, "Ahhhh... alright." It was a typical George response—measured, fair, and free of bitterness. But behind those few words was a very different reality.

The work was relentless.

George rose before daylight and worked until long after the sun had disappeared. There were cows to milk, fields to tend, fences to repair, and countless chores that seemed never-ending. For all of that labour, he was to receive three dollars a month. Even that money was not placed directly into his hands. It was held by Barnardo's, which deducted the cost of clothing, straw hats, and other necessities before George ever saw a cent. Years later he would acknowledge that he eventually received the balance, but as a boy it meant he had almost nothing he could truly call his own.

Mr. Payne often reminded him that he wasn't worth the three dollars he was being paid.

George never forgot those words.

Life on the farm was lonely as much as it was demanding. He was there to work, not to be part of the family. Simple pleasures that other teenagers took for granted—a trip into town, an evening at the movies, or time with friends—were out of the question. Bound by a five-year indenture agreement, George felt trapped. More than once he ran away, only to be returned after Barnardo's insisted he honour his placement.

For a while, he endured it.

Then one morning, George reached his breaking point.

He had already milked his own cows and had begun helping with Mr. Payne's when he mentioned that one of the cows wasn't giving as much milk as usual.

"If you kept your mouth shut," Mr. Payne snapped, "she'd likely give more."

George later recalled simply standing there, looking at the farmer.

"I'd had about enough."

He kicked the milking pail against the wall, chased the cats away from the barn, and began walking toward the house.

"Where are you going?" Mr. Payne called after him.

"I can't take this treatment anymore," George answered. "I'm leaving."

Inside the farmhouse, Mrs. Payne was preparing breakfast.

"George, did you get your chores done already?"

"Yup," he replied. "About all I'm going to do."

When she realized he intended to leave, she pleaded with him.

"You didn't leave Will down there all alone, did you? After all we've done for you... We won't be able to get another hired man." George had heard enough.

"You've done nothing for me but work my ass off."

Then came one final attempt to persuade him.

"One of these days this farm will be yours."

George's answer never changed. "I don't want your damn farm."

Those were George's final word to the Payne's. He left, walked down the road and hitched a ride to Delhi. Although his brother John was also in Canada, George did not see him for at least two years. John was living in Delhi and that is where George headed - to his brother's farm. Once in Delhi, he was able to obtain a job working on a tobacco farm. Barnardo's did try to get him to return to the Payne's but George was determined he was not going back. "They just worked me like a slave" George later said.

By 1944, George had managed to piece together a life for himself, taking on whatever work came his way, but there was still one question that had never left him.

What had become of his family?

Somewhere along the way, he had learned that his brother Charlie had managed to find their mother in England. The news stirred emotions George had kept buried for years. He later told me that one of the reasons he enlisted was to go to England to find her and ask why "the hell" she had sent him to Canada in the first place. Although she had played no part in raising him and had been absent throughout his childhood, he found that he still wanted to meet her. There were no feelings of anger or revenge—only curiosity and the quiet hope of finally understanding where he had come from.

Like thousands of other young Canadians, George answered the call to serve during the Second World War. In February 1944, he travelled to Toronto intending to enlist in the Royal Canadian Air Force. His plans quickly changed when he was told that, because of his limited education, he would most likely spend the war working as a mechanic.

That wasn't why George had enlisted. He wanted to go overseas. He wanted to serve.

And, if fate allowed, he wanted to see his family.

Instead, George joined the Canadian Army and was posted to the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, one of the country's most distinguished infantry regiments. Through determination and hard work, he rose to the rank of Corporal and became a member of the 8 Platoon.

Before long, he found himself back in the country he had left six years earlier.

During a brief three-day leave, George travelled to the address where his mother was living. He arrived unannounced, wearing the uniform of a Canadian soldier.

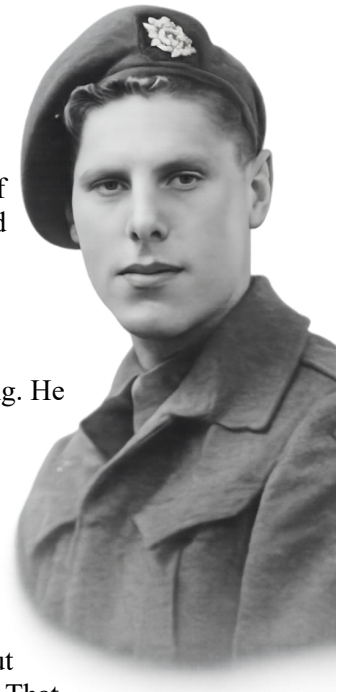
It should have been the reunion every Home Child dreams about.

Instead, it was like visiting strangers.

His grandmother welcomed him warmly, telling him how proud she was and how smart he looked in his uniform. His mother, however, remained quiet. George never questioned her about why he and his brothers had been separated or why they had entered the Barnardo Homes. That conversation never took place.

Looking back, George rarely dwelled on the disappointment of that visit. It became just another chapter in a life that had taught him, time and again, to accept what could not be changed and move forward.

Soon he was back with his unit as the Allied armies pushed through northwest Europe. Like so many young men of his generation, George experienced the uncertainty, exhaustion, and danger of front-line combat. Then, near the end of the war, everything changed once again.





During fighting near Deventer in the Netherlands, George and members of his platoon were captured by German forces. For the final twenty-eight days of the war, Corporal George Beardshaw lived as a prisoner of war, during which time he made two determined escape attempts alongside two fellow prisoners. On both occasions, they hid within the building, waiting for advancing Allied troops in the hope that the Germans would be forced to move them, creating an opportunity to slip away. In a second attempt, they also tried to exploit a hole or loose section of wire fencing, with some assistance from members of the Dutch underground.

Years later, when people asked him about being taken prisoner, George characteristically dismissed the experience with his familiar dry humour.

"It was," he would say with a smile, "a bit of a schemozzle."

Most people would have carried those memories with bitterness for the rest of their lives.

George carried them with perspective.

He often summed up the experience with another of his favourite expressions: "Another fine mess."

It was vintage George. Even when recalling one of the darkest periods of his life, he found a way to make others smile. He once told me that he chose to share the better stories of the war, keeping the hardest parts to himself—but admitted that when he crawled into bed at night, those terrible memories were still there.

When the war ended and freedom returned, George had survived more than most people could imagine. He had endured abandonment, institutional care, years of hard labour as a Home Child, the horrors of war, and captivity as a prisoner of war.

Yet somehow, none of those experiences had taken away his kindness.

If anything, they had strengthened it.

With the war finally behind him, George returned home to Canada carrying memories that would stay with him for the rest of his life. Like so many veterans, he rarely spoke about the darkest moments. Instead, he focused on building a future.

That future arrived in the form of a young London, Ontario woman named Mary Emma Sanderson.

On July 11, 1952, George married Emma in Wellington Street United Church in London. Officiating at the ceremony was the Reverend Winfield Hunt. Emma, the daughter of Norman and Mary Sanderson, wore a beautiful white satin gown with a lace yoke adorned with seed pearls. Her fingertip veil was secured with a band of pearls, and she carried a basket of American Beauty roses. George's brother John proudly served as one of the ushers while Glen Brown stood as his best man. Following a wedding trip, George and Emma began their married life together in London—a city that would remain George's home for the rest of his life.

Those who knew George and Emma together quickly realized they were devoted to one another. Their marriage was built on quiet love, loyalty, and mutual respect. Although they were never blessed with children of their own, their home



was never lacking in love.

In 1953, George's younger brother Charles also emigrated to Canada, allowing the three brothers to once again share the same country after years of separation. It was something George treasured. The three brothers had endured remarkably similar childhoods, and although life had taken them down different paths, they had finally found one another again.

Tragically, that happiness was short-lived.

In 1961, only a few years after arriving in Canada, Charles was killed in a road traffic accident shortly after his forty-first birthday. His sudden death left behind a grieving family, including his wife and two young children.

Without hesitation, George and Emma stepped forward.

Unable to have children of their own, they poured their love into Charles's son and daughter, helping to raise them and providing the stability and support the family desperately needed. It was never something George sought recognition for. It was simply what family did.

That quiet sense of responsibility defined George throughout his life. Whether it was caring for family, helping a neighbour, supporting a veteran, or years later becoming the public face of Canada's Home Children, George never looked for praise. He simply saw what needed to be done and did it.

It was one of the qualities that made him such an extraordinary man.

George made his living as an auto body repairman and mechanic, a trade well suited to his practical nature and strong work ethic. He took pride in honest work and earned the respect of those who knew him through his quiet reliability and willingness to lend a hand whenever someone needed help.



Emma devoted her career to caring for others. She worked for more than forty years as a Registered Nursing Assistant on the surgical ward at London's Victoria Hospital. Compassion came naturally to her, both at work and at home. In her spare time, she lovingly crocheted blankets, afghans, and gifts for family and friends, rarely missing an opportunity to brighten someone else's day with something she had made by hand.

Together, George and Emma built a happy and fulfilling life. They shared a love of travel and explored many parts of the world together, creating memories that George would fondly recall in later years. Whether travelling abroad or simply enjoying time at home, they were happiest in one another's company.

Although the war was behind him, George never forgot the men with whom he had served. His loyalty to The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada never faded. He remained an active and proud supporter of his regiment throughout his life, attending reunions, commemorative events, regimental functions, and Remembrance ceremonies whenever he could. He cherished the lifelong friendships forged during the war and considered it an honour to represent the regiment.

As the years passed and one veteran after another answered the final roll call, George quietly became one of the regiment's most cherished members. Following his passing on July 11, 2026, at the age of 102, he was recognized as the last surviving Second World War veteran of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada—a distinction he carried with the same humility that characterized every other honour bestowed upon him.

George never sought recognition for his military service. He simply believed he had done his duty. Yet his lifelong commitment to remembering those who served, honouring those who never came home, and maintaining his bond with The Queen's Own Rifles became another defining chapter in a life dedicated to service.

Little did George know that, in the years ahead, another calling awaited him—one that would see him become the voice of an entire generation of Home Children and touch the lives of thousands of people across Canada and beyond.

For decades, George lived a quiet life. He worked hard, loved Emma deeply, remained devoted to his regiment, and rarely spoke publicly about being a Home Child. Like so many survivors, he simply got on with life.

That changed in 2012.

When I first met George, I had no idea that our lives would become so closely intertwined. From that first meeting, it was obvious he was someone special. He possessed a warmth and generosity that immediately put people at ease. Before long, George wasn't simply supporting Home Children Canada—he had become our friend, our mentor, and eventually the public face of an entire generation. He often said to me “I wasn’t famous until I met you.”

My own journey with George began in 2012, although neither of us could have imagined where that first meeting would lead.

At the time, I was working alongside filmmaker Eleanor McGrath on her documentary *Forgotten*, while also gathering stories for what would become my first book, *Bleating of the Lambs*. Through George's longtime friend and fellow Home Child, Cyril Hewitt—who had arrived in Canada aboard the same Barnardo ship as George in 1938—we were introduced.

I still remember walking up to George and Emma's home for the very first time. I expected to meet a former Home Child whose story would become part of a film and a book.



George and Don Cherry being interviewed by the Canadian Press.

Instead, I met someone who would become one of the most important people in my life.

From the moment we sat down together, George's warmth and humour filled the room. He welcomed complete strangers as though we were old friends. Before the cameras even began rolling, he had us laughing. It was impossible not to like him. George and his wife Emma were so sweet during the interview—she kept giggling and reaching over to smooth George's hair.

It was George who introduced me to Walter Goulding, then 104 years old. Walter was also filmed and interviewed, as was Cyril Hewitt. The men remained friends over the years.

That first interview lasted only a few hours. The friendship that began that day lasted the next fourteen years.

Neither of us could have imagined where that first meeting would lead. What began as an interview for a documentary and a book soon became a friendship that would take us across Ontario and beyond, sharing George's story with thousands of people. George and Emma quickly became more than supporters of Home Children Canada—they became part of our family. They attended countless events, commemorations, school presentations, reunions, and memorial services, never hesitating when I called to ask if George would be willing to speak.

The answer was always the same.

"Of course."

On July 28, 2014, Home Children Canada held a major commemoration honouring the British Home Children who had served and died during the First World War. It was an emotional day, bringing together descendants, veterans, dignitaries, and supporters to remember the thousands of Home Children who had answered Canada's call to serve. The day also served as our grand-opening of our award winning exhibit we created in partnership with the Black Creek Pioneer Village in Toronto.

George was our guest speaker. Sharing the stage with him was one of Canada's best-known personalities, hockey icon Don Cherry, whose Grandfather was a British Home Child. While many had come hoping to hear Don Cherry speak, it was George who quietly captured the hearts of those in attendance.



He didn't speak from prepared notes. He spoke from experience. He spoke as a Home Child. He spoke as a soldier. He spoke for those who had never been given the opportunity to tell their own stories.

As George concluded his remarks, his pride in the country that had become his home shone through. Raising his fist into the air, he declared with unmistakable conviction, "I love Canada!"

The audience erupted in applause.

It was vintage George.

His declaration was more than a patriotic statement. It was George's way of saying that hope had triumphed over hardship.

Despite everything he had endured he never lost his love for the country that had given him a future.

The years that followed brought new opportunities for George's story to reach a wider audience.

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In August 2015, I had the honour of presenting George with a newly released copy of my book, *Bleating of the Lambs*. His story, drawn from the interview we had recorded in his home three years earlier, now appeared in print alongside the experiences of other Home Children whose voices had too often been overlooked.

Just two months later, in October 2015, George attended the opening of Eleanor McGrath's documentary, *Forgotten*. The film had also grown from the interviews recorded during our first meeting in 2012. Once again, George watched as his personal story became part of something much larger—a public account of the Home Children and the lives they had built in Canada.

For many years, the Home Children had been encouraged to remain silent about their past. Some had carried feelings of shame, while others believed no one would understand or care to listen. George helped change that.



Lori, Judi and George August 2022 at a reception for Sir George where he was awarded the French Legion of Honour Medal

By allowing his story to appear in books, films, interviews, and public presentations, he showed other Home Children and their descendants that there was no shame in the truth. Their experiences deserved to be heard, recorded, and remembered.

George was only beginning to discover just how powerful his voice could be.

Toward the end of 2015, another remarkable person entered my life—and, in many ways, helped shape the years that followed.

Her name was Judi Helle.

Judi had quietly stepped in to help care for Emma, whose health had begun to decline. Having worked alongside Emma as a nurse years earlier, the two women had remained close

friends, and when Emma needed help, Judi was there without hesitation. It was an act of friendship that would ultimately change all of our lives.

As Emma's health continued to fail, Judi became a constant source of strength and support for both George and Emma. Before long, she and George developed a close friendship built on mutual respect, shared memories, and an unwavering commitment to preserving history.

Judi understood that George's story extended far beyond his experiences as a British Home Child. He was also a proud veteran of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, a prisoner of war, and one of the last living links to a remarkable generation that had served during the Second World War. She made it her mission to ensure that both parts of George's story were heard.

Together, we encouraged George to continue sharing his experiences whenever he could. Whether speaking about his childhood as a Home Child, his military service overseas, or the importance of remembrance, George never failed to leave a lasting impression on those who listened.

As the years passed, Judi became far more than a caregiver or a friend. She became George's fiercest advocate, travelling companion, organizer, photographer, and protector. Behind almost every appearance George made in his later years was Judi, quietly working behind the scenes to ensure he could continue doing what he believed was so important.

In 2021, I had the privilege of nominating George for one of France's highest civilian distinctions—the French Legion of Honour. Established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, the Legion of Honour recognizes those who have rendered exceptional service to France. George's nomination honoured his courage and sacrifice as a Canadian soldier who helped liberate Europe during the Second World War.

When I completed the nomination, I hoped George would receive the recognition he so richly deserved.

A year later, on September 14, 2022, George's ninety-ninth birthday became a day he would never forget.

Unknown to George, Judi had quietly organized a remarkable surprise celebration. Family, friends, military representatives, and members of The Queen's Own Rifles gathered to honour not only his birthday but also the official presentation of the French Legion of Honour. Every detail had been carefully planned, ensuring that the day reflected the gratitude and admiration so many people felt for this remarkable man.

Watching George receive the medal was one of the proudest moments of our friendship. It was far more than a military decoration—it was international recognition of a young Home Child who had crossed the Atlantic believing he was coming to become a cowboy, only to return a few years later as a Canadian soldier fighting for the freedom of Europe.

George accepted the honour with deep pride, humility, and a full understanding of its significance. He was profoundly moved by the recognition, knowing what it represented—not only for himself, but for all those who had served alongside him. In his heart, the medal belonged equally to the men with whom he had fought—those who stood beside him, those who never returned home, and those whose sacrifices had made such freedom possible.

For those of us privileged to witness that unforgettable day, it was impossible not to feel that history itself had come full circle.



*George with his nephew Allan and his niece Elizabeth
and Colonel Roger Vandomme*

The honours did not end there.

In 2025, George was once again recognized for a lifetime of service when he received the King Charles III Coronation Medal. The medal is awarded to individuals who have made a significant contribution to Canada, their province or community, or whose achievements have brought honour to Canada abroad. George was nominated by Doug Ford and was awarded on June 20, 2025.

George's final public honour came on June 9, 2026—just over one month before his passing.

On that day, Wilfrid Laurier University conferred upon Sir Dr. George Beardshaw an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree in recognition of his extraordinary life of service, his military sacrifice, and his unwavering commitment to preserving the history of Canada's British Home Children.

The nomination had been championed by our good friend Kelly Morrison, a Wilfrid Laurier University alumna who believed, as so many of us did, that George's life represented the very values the university sought to honour.

The ceremony itself was deeply moving.

Before George received his honorary degree, Kelly Morrison delivered a heartfelt tribute to his remarkable life. Standing before hundreds of graduating students, faculty members, families, and distinguished guests, she spoke of George's journey—from a young British Home Child who arrived in Canada believing he was an orphan, to a courageous Second World War veteran, prisoner of war, and ultimately one of Canada's most respected ambassadors for the Home Children.

Kelly captured not only the milestones of George's extraordinary life but also the kindness, humility, resilience, and optimism that defined the man behind the honours. It was a tribute filled with admiration, gratitude, and genuine affection.

When George received his honorary Doctor of Laws degree the audience rose to its feet in a prolonged standing ovation, applauding not only the honour being bestowed but the remarkable life that had earned it.



*George with Kelly Morrison who nominated him
for this doctorate*

George was then invited to address the graduates.

His remarks were simple, heartfelt, and genuine.

Following George's address, the graduation ceremony resumed as the graduates crossed the stage one by one to receive their degrees.

What happened next was one of my favourite memories of the day.

As each graduate approached, many paused to nod respectfully. They recognized that they were sharing the stage with someone whose life had been shaped not only by hardship but by extraordinary courage, resilience, and service.

George responded in the only way he knew how.

He applauded.

Every.



Single.

Graduate.

No matter how long the ceremony lasted, George continued clapping, smiling, and celebrating each young person as they crossed the stage.

Watching him that afternoon, I couldn't help but smile.

That was George.

Even while receiving one of the greatest honours of his own life, he was also interested in celebrating the achievements of others.

It was such a simple gesture, yet it perfectly captured the man I had come to know over fourteen years. George never sought to be the centre of attention. He found genuine joy in encouraging others, celebrating their successes, and making them feel valued.

Looking back now, I realize that those graduates probably thought they were honouring George by acknowledging him as they crossed the stage.

In truth, George was honouring them right back.

There was one final opportunity for George to do what he had dedicated the last eighty years of his life to doing.

Share his story.

Following the presentation of his honorary Doctor of Laws degree, CTV News interviewed George about the recognition. At 102 years of age, he remained as humble, gracious, and good-humoured as ever.

Asked how he felt about receiving the honorary doctorate, George smiled and admitted, "I am completely overwhelmed, yes, I'll tell you."

Then, with the humour that had become his trademark, he added, "Quit giving me awards—you've got to stop."

That was George.

No matter how many medals he received, how many standing ovations greeted him, or how many lives he touched, he never saw himself as anyone special. He was simply George—a former Home Child, a proud Canadian soldier, and a man who believed that if sharing his story could help even one person better understand the experiences of the Home Children, then it had all been worthwhile.

None of us knew it at the time, but that interview would become George's final television appearance.

Looking back now, it seems somehow fitting that his last public words reflected exactly who he had always been—humble, grateful, and still able to make everyone around him smile.

It was the perfect ending to a lifetime spent serving others.

Within days, George's health began to decline, bringing to a close a remarkable public journey that had touched countless lives.

George accepted the final days of his life with the same grace, dignity, and quiet humour that had defined the one hundred and two years that came before them.



Sir George's final interview along side Judi Helle. Photo credit CTV News

I was privileged to spend time at his bedside during those final weeks. It was not easy to watch my dear friend growing weaker, but even then, George remained unmistakably George.

I brought with me messages of love and gratitude from our group, sharing with him how deeply he was appreciated and remembered.

Sometimes he smiled.

Sometimes he quietly squeezed my hand.

And sometimes, he simply whispered, "Thank you."

What struck me most was that George never spoke of regret.

He spoke of gratitude.

He thanked us for coming. He thanked Judi for her unwavering devotion. He thanked those who had cared for him. He told us he loved us. Time and again, he reminded us how blessed he felt.

George felt he had lived long enough and had done all he could do. He was ready, knowing he had made a difference and had left the world a better place than he found it.

Despite having so little strength, he even tried to sing a familiar song, reminding us all that the joyful spirit we had known for so many years was still there.

One afternoon, a singer from Parkwood came to his room. By then, George was very close to the end of his journey. He lay quietly, listening as she sang the familiar songs he loved. Though he had little strength left, he gently tapped his fingers to the music. It was a small gesture, but one that spoke volumes. Even then, the music brought him comfort, and it was a quiet reminder that the joyful spirit we knew so well was still there.

During one of my final visits, George said something I will never forget.

With complete sincerity, he looked at me and quietly said,

"I am loved."

Three simple words.

After a lifetime that had begun with uncertainty, abandonment, hardship, and loss, George's final realization was not about the medals he had received, the honours that had been bestowed upon him, or the remarkable life he had lived.

It was that he was loved.

Yes, George...

You were very, very loved.



This is the very last photo I have had the honour to take of Sir Dr. George Beardshaw. It was taken at the Wilfrid Laurier University reception for his Doctorate.

— Sir George's Photo Album —



June 2016 With British Home Child George Beardshaw and BHC Descendant Len Brown, both Vetrans of the Second World War. A ceremony June 4 to Honour and Remember those who served at D-Day plus dedicating a D-Day Memorial Stone.



Front Left to Right: Padre John Howie, Colonel Roger Vandamme, George, CWO (ret'd) Brian Budden, L/Col Scott Moody
Photo by Home Children Canada

French Legion of Honour reception Aug 2022



BHC Walter Goulding, George and I in April 2021 celebrating Walter's 106th Birthday. Walter passed away shortly after



Reunion hosted by Home Children Canada for Sir George and Cyril Hewitt, Aug 2021



George with his good friend Rick Harley laying the BHC wreath Remembrance Day 2022. Many wonderful afternoons were spent with the Harley's



George and Jim Brownell - 2014



2017 George out sharing his military service and the story of the Home Children at the London Fair



2016 George and Emma at our event at the Black Creek Pioneer Village event in Toronto. George was asked to draw the winning ticket for the gift basket.....and he drew his very own ticket!!



100 year old Sir George at the London Knights Game in London, Ontario. Sir George delighted the crowds of some 8,000 people, by dropping the puck



2016 we brought George and his friend Cyril Hewitt together for lunch.



Sir George on the cover of the 2025 Canadian Bombshell Beauties calendar. Sir George loved meeting these gals.



Frank Ward and his sister Janice Savini, along with Frank's wife Ann have been friends and supports of Sir George over the years

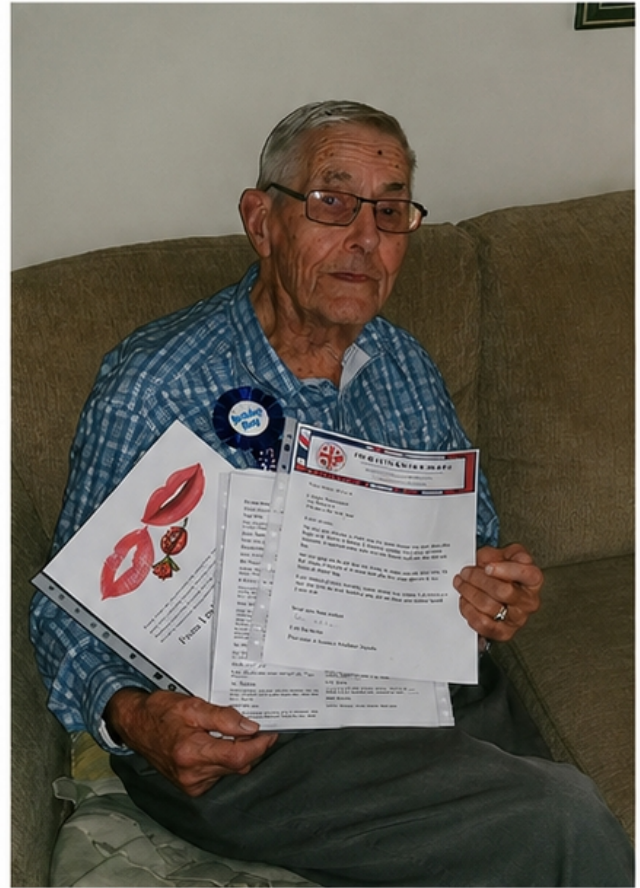


With Home Children Canada's 2023 Board of Directors at the British Consul Generals reception in Toronto, July 2023

Left to right back row Diana Hanson-Fulton, Dan Oatman, Paul Jackson, Maria May, John Jefkins, Front row Kim Farrell, Lori Oschefske and Sue Pearson



Valentines 2023, from Judi Helle



George with his birthday wishes from our group 2021



September 2021 Dan Oatman and Diana Hanson-Fulton on hand to wish George a Happy 98th Birthday



Sept 2023, my Grandson Logan attends Sir George's 100th Birthday Party.



Lori out sharing a pint with George



Shannon McKnight with her friend George



Eleanor McGrath, George, Emma and Lori at the premier of "Forgotten"



Padre John Howie, the current Regimental Padre for The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada laying a wreath with George in London, Ontario



*With Brian Budden in Toronto 2023
Photo credit: Brian Budden*



*2024 Sir George interview with James Matthews
of Sky News*



*Sir George taken in 2024 at our Backus-Page House Museum Military
event*



*The Canadian Bombshell Beauties came out in full
force to celebrate George's 101st Birthday*



3rd Annual Veterans' Classic in London, Ontario 2019 - the event was to feature flyover of the Red Knight, Canada's renowned aerobatic aircraft, piloted by former Canadian astronaut Bjarni Tryggvason, who flew aboard the 12-day Space Shuttle mission STS-85 in 1997. However mechanical issues kept it grounded. Here we are at the Red Night with Bjarni Tryggvason.



Also attending the event was George's good friends Rick and Debbie Harley. Here we are with the former Mayor of London.

Shannon Mcknight, Dan Oatman and Gillian Hoekstra ran our exhibit table for this event.



The photographs featured in this special edition are courtesy of Lori Oschefski, Dan Oatman, Paul Jackson, Judi Helle, and the many friends who shared their treasured memories of George by attending events with him over the years. There are so many photos it was difficult to choose which ones to share.