

---

Ron Cox stands on the back lawn of his Front Street home with Sheila

# Nelson D-Day survivor reflects on 70-year anniversary

Ron Cox endured the storming of Normandy, POW camp and shrapnel injuries.

WILL JOHNSON / Jun. 16, 2014 6:00 p.m. / NEWS

Ron Cox clearly remembers regaining consciousness on February 18, 1945 to find a German Schmeisser levelled at his face.

This is only one of the World War II images seared into the 94-year-old Nelson resident's memory. While serving with the Vancouver Island-based Canadian Scottish Regiment he experienced chaos and slaughter while storming Normandy Beach, was injured by shrapnel multiple times and spent two months as a prisoner of war.

Seventy years later, sitting on his lawn overlooking Kootenay Lake, he can still describe exactly how D-Day played out.

“We got on board and you had to wait. We went to sleep, went down to Normandy and the waves were going up and down like this,” Cox said, motioning with his arms.

“The small craft comes along, and you climb down the rope ladder. The big ships are going like this. It was quite risky. We got on ’em and right before we landed the guy says ‘I’ll be back for you’. I said like hell we’re going back on that water.”

Men were being gunned down all around him while they advanced on Hermann Goering’s division.

“They had more ammunition than we did,” he said. His captain, Denis Huscroft, was injured during the offensive.

“He was good. One of the good ones,” said Cox. “He got injured there and out he goes. When you come back they put you anywhere. He was in another outfit then he got killed.”

Cox never saw his captain again. He noted that Huscroft’s family still lives in the area, and he thinks of him often.

When he was struck by shrapnel in the back and neck later in the war, Cox said he didn’t have time to process what had happened.

“I dropped like a stone. There’s no warning and then boom.”

He said conditions for the prisoners were desperate.

“The Germans had nothing to give you. They had nothing for themselves. They put us on the road and we marched. We started hearing the Russian guns and they turned us around and started walking the other way,” he said.

Cox said he had to adopt a certain emotional attitude to make it through. “You don’t want to have any special friendship because you’re missing ’em every day. It’s that simple. You’re standing there, and he gets shot?” he said.

That survival strategy ended with the war, because Cox has stayed close with every living member of his regiment and recently hosted them for an annual celebration at the Legion. He is the last surviving member locally, and is one of 12 country-wide.

Cox recently received a new medal, commemorating the 70th anniversary of D-Day, from the government of France. He barely has room on his uniform for it, and said he’s starting to lose track of them.

“If he gets any more he won’t be able to wear ’em,” said his wife Sheila.

Though his military accomplishments are hugely important to him, Cox was self-effacing during his recent interview with the *Star*.

“To me it’s another medal,” he said. “They came in the rations. I wasn’t hungry, so I kept them.”

When asked the secret to his longevity, Cox didn’t hesitate.

“My wife,” he said, reaching over to squeeze her arm. Cox met Sheila shortly after the war ended, and they were married in 1946. This year they will celebrate their 68th wedding anniversary.

“And I’m not going anywhere,” said Sheila.

“Hear that?” Cox asked. “That was a promise.”