

**MILLER, Charles Burton (Charlie/Chuck) [UNTD STAR(OAC) '47 U-52730] (1927 - 2015) Age: 87**



87 years, passed away peacefully on Thursday July 16, 2015 surrounded by his family. Beloved husband of Evelyn. Dear father of Janice Polgar (Roger), Nancy Wilson (Brian), John Miller, Greg Miller (Stephanie). Loving grandfather of Andrea and Alex Polgar. Dear son of the late Harry and Beatrice Miller. Dear brother of Reta Jane Griffin (Bob). Predeceased by brothers Bruce Miller (Joan), John Miller (Ann) and sister Lena Smith (the late Don). Dear brother-in-law of Lillian Coleman (the late Lorne). Several nieces and nephews also survive.

Charlie Miller had a wonderful sense of humour and a love of telling stories. He was an ordinary guy with an extraordinary set of accomplishments. He was a Watford son born to a high school principal and an elementary school teacher who lived his life in the service of education first as an "Aggie" at the University of Guelph and later at his first teaching job where he wooed and won his beloved Evelyn. He served in the Royal Canadian Navy on the Athabaskan and the Haida. He continued his teaching career in Essex County as vice principal at Leamington District Secondary School and Kingsville District High School and principal of Gore Hill Public School. Today generations of former students have benefited from his simple honesty, his fairness and his gentle advice. Privately, he was the goodwill ambassador for kindness and generosity. An expert sailor, skilled curler and golfer whose best clubs were his pencil and his foot. He could coax life into his beautiful flower gardens and spectacular home grown vegetables. Special thanks to the staff at The Leamington Mennonite Home who took care of him and nourished his love of singing, his beautiful smile and his unassailable spirit. He took a lot with him, not the least his ability to help us all find the attainable best in ourselves.

At Charles request, cremation has taken place. Memorial visiting at the Reid Funeral Home and Reception Centre, 14 Russell Street Leamington on Wednesday July 29, 2015 from 2-5 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. A Memorial Service to celebrate Charles life, will be held at the Leamington United Church, 9 John Street Leamington on Thursday July 30, 2015 at 11 a.m. Linda Blair officiating.

Leamington Masonic Lodge A.F. and A.M. # 290 service Wednesday evening at 7:30 p.m. Memorial donations may be made by cheque to the Leamington Mennonite Home or Leamington United Church. Friends may send condolences or make a charitable contribution online at [www.reidfuneralhome.ca](http://www.reidfuneralhome.ca).

He was promoted to SLT (O-51717) Sen. 6 Feb '50, attached to STAR, and promoted to LT sen. 18 Apr '52, attached to PREVOST and Ret'd in 1957.

As a UNTD Cadet he was on the famous "Polio Cruise" of 1948 in ATHABASKAN (2nd).

Attached is a page from the Sep 1997 UNTD Newsletter wherein Charlie summarizes that event.

## DREAM CRUISE BECOMES A NIGHTMARE

### Cover Story

When polio broke out on board *HMCS Athabaskan* in June 1948, the ship's company were put in quarantine, including all the UNTD cadets who believed they had been drafted to a summer training dream cruise. This bit of UNTD history is covered in, *Quarantined*, on page 68 of *UNTiDy Tales*. Now, for the first time, we have an account by a cadet who was there. This story and pictures were submitted by Charlie Miller, 175 Talbot St. West, Leamington, ON., N8H 1N5.

*Editor*

After completing a three-week navigation course at the Navigation Direction School in *HMCS Stadacona*, Charlie Miller from Ontario Agricultural College and other "Untidies" from: University of Toronto, Queen's and McGill Universities, were sent to sea in the tribal class destroyer, *HMCS Athabaskan*, and the British cruiser, *HMS Sheffield*. Both ships were headed for the Caribbean, but the *Athabaskan* would transit the Panama Canal and end up in Victoria. There were 33 UNTD cadets on board *Athabaskan* when she sailed from Halifax on May 19. They made ports of call in: Guantanamo Bay, Jamaica, Panama City and Acapulco Mexico. In the tropics, summer temperatures soared to over 100 degrees fahrenheit every day.

While enjoying a pleasant leave in Los Angeles where the cadets watched the radio shows, "Meet the Mrs." and "The Beulah Show," things began to go wrong. A young naval rating who had not been feeling well, went on leave without reporting to sick bay. By time he got back to the ship it was too late. He and six others had contracted polio while in Mexico. He would die later and be buried at sea off Vancouver Island. Two cadets, Paul Presant of Blenheim, Charlie's roommate at OAC and Bill Purvis of the University of Toronto, came down with polio.

When the ship anchored off Victoria on June 29, 1948, the polio victims were sent to Veteran's Hospital where Paul Presant was to remain for several months. The rest of the UNTDs were put in quarantine at

William Head until July 13. They called the former army barracks, UNTiDy Lodge.



*UNTD Cadets in quarantine at William Head B.C., July 1948. The only cadets identified are in front L. to R.: L. Presnell, (U. Of T.); D. Corrigan, (OAC); C. Miller, (OAC).*

Bill Purvis recovered more quickly and enrolled in Law School. He became a successful lawyer in Toronto and is now deceased. Paul eventually completed his OAC studies in 1951 and went to work for the 3 M Company. He presently resides in London, Ontario. Charlie Miller went home to pick tobacco in Delhi for the rest of the summer in 1948. He remained in the Naval Reserve until 1957 and served in several ships: *HMCS New Liskeard*, *Brockville*, *Porte St. Jean*, *Raccoon*, *Wallaceburg*, and *Portage*, mostly on the Great Lakes. His daughter was christened on *Portage* in Sarnia, the same year that he received his Watchkeeping Certificate in 1957.

Although he left the RCNR in 1957, Charlie continued his association with the military by teaching communications to Army Cadets at Glencoe District High School. After thirty-five years of teaching, Charlie retired from Kingsville District High School as Vice Principal in 1987. He lives in Leamington.

*Charles Miller*