

At the Cemetery Tour on May 12, 2018, Rob and Evelyn Jewsbury spoke about Evelyn's parents. Bert and Evelyn Earl are buried in St. Luke's Cemetery in Midgley Terrace, Row R, Plot B4.

Hubert George Henry Earl and Evelyn Earl, née Neal

by Rob and Evelyn Jewsbury

Hubert George Henry (Bert) Earl, a native of Oxford, England, was born February 6, 1908. Bert was 13 when his family immigrated by ocean and rail to Winnipeg, Manitoba. One of nine children, his father Percy Earl, was a South African War and Great War wounded veteran.

At 29, Bert, a Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reservist PO, was selected to represent Canada's Western Region at the May 12, 1937 Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. The coronation was precisely 81 years ago today: May 12.

He sailed aboard the *Dominion Destroyer Skeena* to the UK and was assigned a position at the Queen Victoria Memorial in front of Buckingham Palace. Interviewed later by a Canadian reporter, he described the historic procession as "a marvellous spectacle."

Canada declared war on September 10, 1939. The following month on October 18, Chief Petty Officer Bert Earl married Evelyn Neal at the Esquimalt Military Church.

After the corvette *HMCS Wetaskiwin K175* was built at Burrard Dry Dock, Vancouver and commissioned at Esquimalt in 1940, Bert sailed its first war mission on St. Patrick's Day, 1941, escorting the first convoy to Iceland, making six escort returns over eight months.



HMCS Wetaskiwin, circa 1943-1944
Credit: Ken Macpherson / Naval Museum of Alberta - Canadian Navy Heritage website.

The *Wetaskiwin* was involved in two major convoy actions in September and October 1941. On October 16, it rescued 15 men from a torpedoed US freighter *Bold Venture* and 22 from the tanker *Barfonn*. Several sailors said 15 U-boats were involved in the mass attack. During the rescue, a torpedo came within 20 yards of the corvette's stern. Torpedo Coxswain Chief Bert Earl steered and navigated the 205-foot *Wetaskiwin*, solely responsible for lives of its 6 officers and 79 crew. Chief Earl zigzagged the corvette through enemy fire and watched torpedoes narrowly miss the bow and stern on another occasion.

In complete darkness, an ammunition carrier exploded and lit the sky up like midday. The corvette later picked up a wounded fisherman with part of his head blown off by a U-Boat. With no medics aboard, Bert assisted another crew member to sew a fishing net to the skull and scalp. During the entire medical procedure, Bert remembered the patient never complained while smoking a cigarette. He was dropped off alive at Iceland.

When the corvette lost radio contact for several days, maritime headquarters presumed it was lost at sea. Halifax was rejoicing when radio contact resumed.

The corvette always was in danger of U-boats — especially under Victor Vogel — the notorious commander of U588, a member of 2 Wolf Packs. Commander Vogel had terrorized coastal waters around New England after sinking seven ships and badly damaging another.

On July 31, 1942, *HMCS Wetaskiwin* and the 320-foot *Skeena* together dropped depth charges and sank the U588 just northeast of Newfoundland. None of the 45 men survived. Nazi Captain Victor Vogel was dead!

Chief Earl survived the war yet 1797 of his navy buddies died. *HMCS Wetaskiwin* survived but the *Skeena* was one of 24 warships that perished.

Back in Victoria at the Crystal Gardens' dance, the VE-Day celebration with Big Band music was replayed over radio station CJVI as Chief Earl's whistle and unmistakable boatswain's voice called out, "Liberty men ... fall in!"



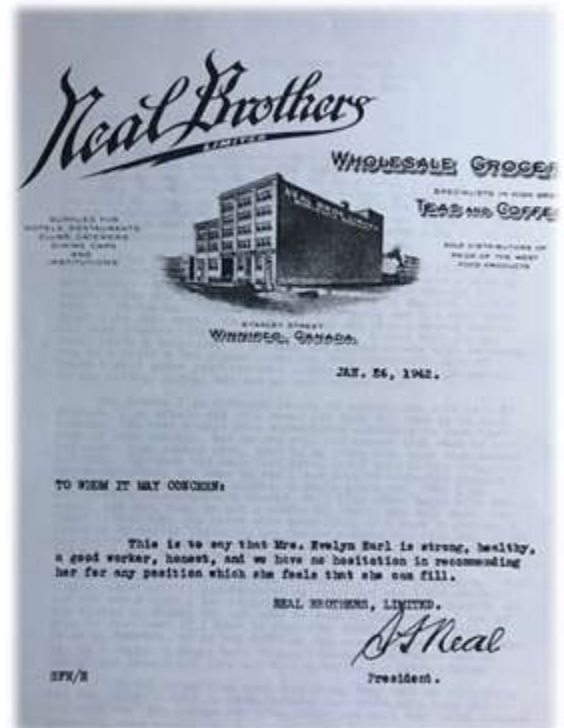
Evelyn and Rob Jewsbury telling their family story at the Cemetery Tour, with Pam Gaudio on the left.

Photo credit: Barb Prescott

On Thanksgiving Day in 1920, Austin and Mable with their eight children, all born in Randolph, Utah, headed north to Camrose, Alberta, where snow already had fallen. Frontier life faraway from Utah where Mormons helped one another was very tough for Mable.

Three more children were born to Mable in the next seven years. Plans were made to return to Utah in 1927 but the plans unexpectedly changed. Harvey was born on May 14, Mable's 43rd birthday, and Mable died three days later on May 17, leaving behind eleven children with husband Austin. The shock was so great for Austin he was admitted into a sanitarium. Daughter Evelyn was only 12. Baby Harvey was left with the midwife, Miss Burke, who took him home.

Evelyn Earl, née Neal, a native of Randolph, Utah, was born October 2, 1914. Evelyn was the 5th child of 11 children. Her mother Mable, born in 1885, was descended from the McKinnons of Scotland and the Baumbergers of Switzerland. Her father Austin, born in 1871, was of Irish descent and his surname had been changed from the spelling, Neel.



Letter of Reference for Evelyn Neal from Neal Brothers Wholesale Grocer Submitted by Rob and Evelyn Jewsbury

Over the years the other ten children would scatter, many working as farm labourers. Miraculously, years later they all reunited. Today, the only survivor of all the children, 94-year-old Rita, is retired in Camrose, Alberta, from the family farm.

In the 1920s, Austin and his brother Frank established Neal Brothers Ltd, a major western wholesale grocer, which distributed food products from the railroad hub of Winnipeg. Neal Brothers was very successful in Canada until it failed during the 1930's Great Depression. The family said it was bigger than 1929-founded Safeway, yet Safeway bought out Neal Bros. Artifacts bearing the name Neal might be found in the flea markets.



Austin died in Winnipeg on October 10, 1943, at 72. His brother Frank died tragically on October 22, 1957, at age 78. He was out for an evening stroll crossing Cook Street in Victoria and was struck by a drunk motorcyclist. His niece, Evelyn Sr., heard the news on the radio before the Earl family at 1618 Edgeware Road was notified.

Evelyn Neal (Evelyn Jewsbury's mother) married Hubert Earl on October 18, 1939 at the Esquimalt Military Church.

The family owned the Edgeware Road home for 50 years and Evelyn passed away in Memorial Pavilion in October 1999, the day before her birthday, and 10 years after the 1989 death of husband Bert in Veterans' Memorial Pavilion.

*Bert and Evelyn Earl on their wedding day,
October 18, 1939
Family photo submitted by Rob and Evelyn Jewsbury*

Source: St. Luke's Prescription, Summer 2018