

# Obituaries

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RUSSELL JORDAN KENNEDY, 92 » VETERAN, PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATOR

## Queen's engineering prof was an expert in hydrology

His work helped the forestry industry transport logs on rivers; later he founded the Coastal Engineering Laboratory at Queen's

BY FRANK B. EDWARDS

The night before his regiment was to sail for France in the cleanup operations following the D-Day landings, Lieutenant Russell Jordan Kennedy broke his thumb, an injury that normally would have delayed the young engineer's participation in the liberation of Europe. But he found a surgeon willing to tend to it surreptitiously in exchange for 50 pounds of tea, and he landed in Normandy the next day as a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers with his thumb in a splint. It was his only injury of the war.

Fifteen months later, King George pinned a Military Cross on Kennedy's tunic in recognition of his "gallantry, devotion to duty and ability to think and act clearly and quickly." Those same qualities later served him equally well in civilian life on the faculty of Queen's University at Kingston, where he spent a career carefully planning and executing projects with a minimum of fuss and an abundance of common sense.

Kennedy died of pneumonia on June 4 at the age of 92 in Kingston General Hospital, just a block away from the university to which he had dedicated so much of his life.

A good-natured farm boy from Dunrobin, a village west of Ottawa, Russ Kennedy was the oldest of six children whose schoolteacher mother Mabel was an insatiable reader. Family lore says that neighbours claimed ungraciously that the young family always had its noses stuck in books.

Kennedy saved money for two years after high school and in 1937 registered at Queen's University. At the time, the school was considered "a poor man's" university and attracted many farm kids from the Ottawa Valley. There, he met his sweetheart, Shirley Workman, the daughter of a globe-trotting mining engineer from St. Catharines, Ont.

When war broke out in 1939, Kennedy joined the university's officer training corps and, upon graduation in 1941, applied for a commission in the Royal Canadian Air Force. But, with an engineering degree, he was steered instead toward the 23<sup>rd</sup> Field Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE).

By the time he arrived in France in July 1944, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Kennedy was the company reconnaissance officer, responsible for scouting worksites before the engineering teams moved in with heavy equipment to build bridges, repair roads and remove debris that was blocking the Allied advance.

Usually, the engineers were engaged in cleaning up after the heavy fighting was over, as was the case in Caen when the RCE had to push roads through the city after it had been reduced to an impenetrable, three-storey pile of rubble. But on other occasions, Kennedy surveyed road repairs and planned replace-



Russell Kennedy, seen here in the U.K. in 1943, was awarded a Military Cross for his service in the Second World War.

ment bridges on the front lines while mortar and artillery rounds from both sides fell around him.

His company was nicknamed the Storm Boat Kings, for its September, 1944, evacuation of about 2,000 British and Polish paratroopers who managed to break free of the German forces that surrounded them during Operation Market Garden near Arnhem, Holland. More than 7,500 others were killed, captured or wounded during an ambitious attempt to secure a series of Dutch bridges that were necessary for the advance into Germany. The 1977 movie, *A Bridge Too Far*, tells the story of the battle for the bridges, but gives short shrift to the Canadian engineers who managed the death-

fyng evacuation.

Originally, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Company was scheduled to shuttle relief forces across the Rhine River, but eight days into the operation its orders were changed to assist with a nighttime retreat, rescuing as many men as possible in a dozen large clumsy plywood boats. The current was strong and the 500-pound boats' Evinrude outboard motors were unreliable.

Although not trained to operate them, Kennedy took control of a storm boat after seeing his best friend hit by enemy fire during the initial crossing. Unable to save him, Kennedy headed across the river and crammed 36 men into the 16-man boat, repeating the trip until the motor died, at which time he

coaxed another boat to life.

At one point, he towed two malfunctioning craft behind his. When dawn broke, he continued the evacuation under heavy fire. Shortly after the war ended, he travelled to Buckingham Palace to receive the Military Cross.

Kennedy's war was a mix of mundane road repairs and hair-raising adventures, often involving construction of temporary bridges on mine-infested routes. He ended his European service managing a yard filled with thousands of surplus vehicles, from which he liberated a staff car for his own use – a well-earned luxury after a year bouncing around in jeeps under fire.

When he returned with his medal to Ottawa in February, 1946, he snuck into an isola-



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Ed Watt

tion hospital to visit his sister Grace, a nurse who had come down with mumps and couldn't attend the family reunion. A few months later, he married Shirley Workman and began working as a lecturer at Queen's school of engineering, eventually completing a master's degree at Iowa State University and taking a post as a professor of civil engineering. He also took command of the campus branch of the Canadian Officer Training Corps from 1951 to 1958.

The couple moved to a house Kennedy had designed himself in a co-operative community on the rural edge of Kingston, a neighbourhood filled with other Queen's professors that was regarded with some suspicion as faintly socialist. They had four children and Kennedy lived in the house until his death.

In 1959, when their youngest daughter, Barbara, was three months old, Shirley suffered a seizure and underwent emergency surgery for a brain tumour that left her an invalid, mentally and physically impaired, until she died seven years later. Trying to balance work with his new parenting responsibilities, Kennedy sent the baby to live with his brother Kingsley's family on the farm in Dunrobin so as to free up time to care for his wife. During the summer months, the other children moved to their grandparents' farm near the Ottawa River.

"He could have been head of the civil engineering department," recalls his former student and fellow professor Ed Watt. "It was offered to him but he said no because of his wife's illness and the age of his children."

Academic research drew him toward water and, between 1952 and 1962, he became a hydrology specialist engaged in industrial research, studying the science behind the forest industry's use of rivers for transport.

"Russ was the acknowledged expert in the dynamics of logjams and the rafting of logs," says Watt, explaining that Kennedy studied how best to hold log rafts together when they were floated downriver to pulp mills. "He analyzed the forces within the raft to determine what the ideal size of logs were and how big rafts could be made."

Kennedy's work extended

to coastal waters and he established the university's Coastal Engineering Laboratory as part of its water resources engineering program. He raised money for it from corporations, creating a model for industry-funded research at Queen's. Later, he became associate dean of graduate studies for the university and, in 1967, was named vice-principal of administration by John Deutsch, the new principal. In 1968, he married Marjorie Rice, a retired librarian who was a close friend of the family.

On campus, former public relations officer Cathy Perkins remembers him as "a disciplined man who kept discipline around him and led by inspiration."

"I wouldn't have had much work if all faculty had been more like him," she joked to the 400 friends and colleagues who attended a special university memorial service shortly after Kennedy's death.

During the 1970s, the soft-spoken Kennedy supervised a major campus construction program, including a controversial plan to build a parking garage under a popular green space. Student protesters feared that the underground structure would serve eventually as the foundation for another building, so Kennedy designed it so that it would be unable to support additional weight. The space remains a popular soccer and rugby field today. He used the excavated fill to extend a nearby waterfront park deeper into Lake Ontario.

After his retirement in the 1980s, Kennedy was made the Alumni Association's first executive director, a post that allowed him to combine his love of the university with his administrative abilities. He raised unprecedented amounts of money, moved the expanded organization into Summerhill, a gracious mansion that is the campus' oldest building, and introduced the use of computers to keep track of the thousands of alumni whose support was needed to fuel Queen's continued growth.

Kennedy was active right to the end of his life. In 2008, he and his sister Elizabeth Marsh produced a memoir of his days with the 23<sup>rd</sup> Field Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers. Earlier this year, he donated a rural property northwest of Kingston to Queen's for use as a water resources field station.

A survivor of skin, throat and prostate cancer, he was suffering from bone cancer when he was diagnosed with double pneumonia a few hours after attending a monthly old-timer engineers luncheon at the university. He was admitted to hospital that evening and died the next day. His second wife, Marjorie, fell ill and died 11 days later.

Kennedy leaves his children Ian, Rob, Nancy Dorrance and Barbara Wilhelm, his brother, Kingsley, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

» Special to The Globe and Mail

### I REMEMBER » PETER QUAIFE

Stan Endersby of Toronto remembers bassist Peter Quaife of The Kinks.

I met Peter after moving to London, as Toronto's Yorkville Village was coming to an end in 1968.

Instantly he struck me as being full of charm, funny and down to earth.

He saw me playing guitar in a London club and came right up and invited me to be in a band. He wanted to leave The Kinks.

At the time he was upset that he had no creative input in the band and that they never played anywhere.

He was committed for another album. So I returned to Canada. A few months later Peter called me, flew me out with Marty Fisher (keyboard player) and later drummer Gordy MacBain. Almost before I knew it, there was a big press introducing our new band Mapleoak.

We rehearsed, got a record



Peter Quaife, left, and Stan Endersby in Belleville, Ont., in the mid-1990s.

deal with Decca, played the London clubs, released a 45 record *Son of a Gun* and toured around Europe.

Peter liked his Scotch and we

liked our "recreational tobacco." Despite many great times together the band fell apart in late May, 1970.

In the years to follow I played

in Toronto and Los Angeles and eventually Peter wound up moving to Toronto to pursue graphic design. When our paths crossed we were always glad to play together.

We played the odd Kinks songs from time to time, but never on stage.

He loved Ray Davies's music and *Village Green Preservation Society*. He also liked Dave Davies's *Death Of a Clown*. He told me how much he liked John Dalton's bass playing.

My fondest memory is when I visited him in Belleville, Ont., in the mid-90s before he became sick with kidney disease. We all went out to a bar/pub and Peter and I played on stage. It had been more than 20 years since we had done that, and it really felt great.

I recently saw a video on the Net of him playing with the Kast off Kinks.

It looked like he was having a great time with some of his old

musical friends. I wish I could have been there.

I didn't visit Peter often, but the last time I saw him in Belleville, he took me on his rounds. He accepted everything that was happening and didn't become his illness.

He supported a lot of people – a very kind man. He had made a lot of friends. His art, his classical guitar playing and the book he was writing were all very important to him.

Peter had a tendency to be both hot and cold, but that was his nature and with friends you sometimes put up with things. I've always considered him a friend.

I realize how much I owe this man and how different my life would have been without him in it. We gave the band a shot. Whether it was bad management, being inexperienced songwriters or taking the wrong direction, I don't know. But we did record one of the early

country rock albums in the sixties, maybe the first in England.

» I'll always remember:

» Playing The Factory in Birmingham and getting that standing ovation.

» Playing at The London Palladium and Marquee

» Practising at the Angel Pub

» Doing our BBC auditions

» In the studio recording and hearing our first single on the radio

» Playing the Marquee

» Playing the Roundhouse

» My purple Marshall amp

» All my friends from Eel Pie Island in Twickenham

» The amazing time in Denmark

My heart goes out to all his bandmates, friends and fans. We all know how much he will be missed. We also know once a Kink always a Kink.

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To hear *Son of a Gun* by Mapleoak go to [www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/)