



Naming Committee

Honouring People and Places in Our City

THE CITY OF
Edmonton

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Stanley C. Gordon King

(1920)



Gord King in an interview on [Battle Scars](#).

Gordon (Gord) King is a Veteran of the Second World War and a former Prisoner of War who was involved in the Great Escape.

Gord was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba on January 8, 1920. As a young man, he played Junior Hockey at a high level and was considered as one of the best goalies in Winnipeg.

In September of 1940, at 19 years old, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Since Gord was familiar with Morse code, he was sent into the wireless air-gunner trade and later upgraded to pilot training. Gord was quickly

rushed overseas to train as an observing pilot and to serve in several large bombing operations. He was then posted to a squadron which had plans to execute a thousand-bomber raid on Cologne, Germany on May 31, 1942.

While operating a Wellington Bomber during the raid, Gord was shot down by German night fighters and forced to jump from his flame engulfed plane. With his parachute improperly buckled to his chest, releasing the chute caused Gord to be carried through the air by his knees and thrown into the trees. When he fell from the trees, he was knocked unconscious. Gord woke up surrounded by German farmers yelling, "The war is over for you!" and was picked up by the German air force and taken to a prison camp, then transferred to Stalag Luft III, a new Prisoner of War camp for air force servicemen.

Gord would spend three years at Stalag Luft III as a Prisoner of War. During this time, he joined a group of men digging tunnels in hopes of an escape. The men planned to dig three tunnels to ensure that a tunnel would remain if another was discovered. While participating in the digging, Gord played many roles such as the look-out man and "the dish", taking excavated sand to the entry point and handing it off to a dispersal man. He and another prisoner also stole electrical wire that would replace the oil burning lamps in the tunnels.

The first tunnel Gord aided in digging was discovered when horses pulling a carriage stood over top of it, causing the surface to cave in. Despite the collapse of this tunnel, the men continued digging. Gord quickly took on the role of air pump operator, bringing fresh air into the tunnel by using old knapsacks and dried milk tins. Other men efficiently moved large amounts of sand through the tunnel by placing it in carts with a long rope attached to it. Carpet lined the cart rails in order to deaden the sound. When the sand was ready to be dispersed outside, men carried it in their pant legs. They were known as "penguins", a role which Gord also participated in, walking stiff legged before pulling a drawstring



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attached to the bottom of the sack in order to discretely release the sand. They mixed the discolored sand from the tunnel with the sand outside to lessen any risk of being caught digging, and eventually, after a year of digging the new tunnel, the men were able to plan their escape in March of 1944.

Gord was operating the air pump on the evening of the escape, and waiting to be the 141st officer of the 200 men who planned to escape, but only seventy-six officers made it out of the tunnel, three of which escaped before being discovered by a German soldier. When Adolf Hitler heard of the escape, he ordered 100 men to be killed, but was advised to only kill 50 by his propaganda minister. These men were shot while Gord and many others remained at Stalag Luft III as Prisoners of War until 1945.

After the war, Gord returned to Winnipeg, Manitoba. He worked for the City of Winnipeg as a clerk for a short time and then went to work as a salesman for W.G. McMahon Limited, a flooring covering business. After a few years, he was asked to become the Western Regional Manager, a job opportunity which brought him, his wife June, and his five children to Edmonton, Alberta in 1965.

As a Second World War Veteran and former Prisoner of War, Gord took part in many initiatives to bring attention to Veterans and Prisoners of War. While residing in Winnipeg, Manitoba in the 1950s, Gord helped form the Ex-Prisoners of War Association. When he moved to Edmonton in 1965, he formed the Edmonton Branch Ex-Prisoners of War Association and served as President. In 1983, the Edmonton branch assisted the Calgary branch with sponsoring an international reunion of former Prisoners of War from all Commonwealth countries.

Gord devoted much of his time to arranging for hospital and home visits for Veterans and their families, and he attended many Prisoner of War meetings. Most recently, he received the Queen's Golden Jubilee Award.

Gord's interests were hunting, fishing and curling along with supporting all his children in their high achieving sports. Three of his children are Canadian champion curlers, and in 2013, Gord went to watch his daughter, Cathy, win a world curling championship. Gord still resides in Edmonton in a senior retirement home since his wife of 64 years passed away in 2011.

*Written by Danielle Ferchoff
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CITATION ON FILE

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