

# THE PERLEY AND RIDEAU VETERANS' HEALTH CENTRE FOUNDATION

*Our staff and volunteers strive to make each day special for our residents*

## Life in the Key of Jupp

When Bill Jupp moved into the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre in April, he brought with him a positive outlook and his vintage Selmer alto saxophone. Both have served him well throughout a life marked by the love of family, the elegance of jazz and the ugliness of war. From piloting bombers during WWII, to blowing sax alongside such legends as Zoot Sims and to sharing his musical talents with Ottawa high-schoolers, Bill Jupp always abides by the spirit of the 1931 classic by Duke Elling-

ton and Irving Mills: It Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got that Swing. When the war ended, Bill returned to Windsor and married Mary Whitty, a singer who performed occasionally with local orchestras. Bill pursued a career in music, playing in bands and dances at local hotspots such as the Elmwood Casino and Bob-Lo Island. The Billy Jupp Orchestra, with Mary on vocals, recorded an album in Detroit. Even in those days, though, there was little money to be made in music and Bill held various jobs to make ends meet. By the early 1950s, the heyday of big bands was drawing to a



*Bill Jupp solos on the saxophone during a special reunion concert with his old band at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre in July.*

ton and Irving Mills: It Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got that Swing.

Born in Windsor in 1922, Bill Jupp took to music like a duck takes to water. As a child, he performed at church alongside his pianist mother and was a regular member of the local Kiwanis Boys' Band. Before reaching his teens, he earned a gold medal as a soloist at the Canadian National Exhibition Music Competition and finished in the money at the Chicago World Fair's music competition. The golden age of big-band music was underway and Bill—adept at clarinet, saxophone, flute and piano—loved every note, beat and measure.

When WWII broke out, Bill answered the call and enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force. After completing pilot training in Canada, Bill packed up his clarinet and headed off to Europe. While on leave, he'd sit in with bands in London—particularly the RCAF's big dance band. As a member of No. 415 Squadron, Bill piloted Halifaxes and Wellingtons on bombing missions over Europe.

close and Bill's band broke up.

When Bill heard that the RCAF was hiring pilots, he accepted a commission at RCAF Station Centralia, near London, Ontario. Another opportunity soon presented itself: Germany had joined NATO and the alliance chose to establish an airbase at Baden-Soellingen, where they would need both pilots and flight instructors.

Germany, like much of Europe, remained a strong market for big-band jazz and Bill was soon back on stage, leading bands and arranging music for such luminaries as Zoot Sims and Eddie Sauter.

"During that time, I did more writing than playing, although I sat in with Eddie Sauter's big band sometimes," recalls Bill Jupp.

Bill Jupp's life took another significant turn in the early 1960s, when his marriage ended in divorce and the RCAF transferred him to headquarters in Ottawa. He flew less and less, and left the RCAF shortly after it became part of the Canadian Armed Forces in 1967. "I got tired of flying a desk," he says.

Determined to start afresh, he returned to school and earned a Master's degree in education. Bill remarried Irma Warkentin, a woman he had originally met in Germany, and Bill started a new career as a high-school music teacher, first at Sir Wilfrid Laurier and later at Woodroffe. One of his pupils—Mike Tremblay—went on to become a successful professional musician and considers studying under Bill Jupp a major turning point in his life. Along with arranging for and conducting high-school orchestras, Bill also led and performed in both a community band and a professional jazz band. In the 1988, he retired from teaching, but continued to perform, including gigs at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, the Montreal Jazz Festival and the Detroit-Windsor International Freedom Festival.

Bill's second wife passed way in 2005 and his physical abilities slowly began to decline. He performed less often, although he continued to manage and write for his jazz band until 2009, and took the stage for special reunion shows in 2011 and 2012. Lacking the energy to practice regularly, he put his sax away for the first time in more than 70 years.

Son Peter moved in with him in 2009— at first, Bill needed help only with managing his schedule. Gradually, his needs increased and he moved into the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre in April 2015.

"My sister, half-sister and I all rest easier now because we know dad gets the best possible care," says son Peter.

In July, Bill was even inspired to pick up the sax again and play a few numbers with his old band.

"It was pure magic to hear him swing again," says daughter Elizabeth.

The Perley Rideau is home to 450 residents, 250 of whom are war veterans

***We appreciate your support in making a bequest in your will and/or making a donation***

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