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NEWS LOCAL

Former St. Catharines cop remembered



By Jeff Bolichowski, The Standard
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Ivan Chamberlain is pictured in uniform in this undated photo.

The legacy of Ivan Chamberlain's training talents lies evidenced in the cases full of shooting

trophies he left behind.

There are two of them, said son Dave Chamberlain, laden down with what he figures are no less than a hundred awards for marksmanship won by his father, a former St. Catharines cop. Officer after officer trained under Ivan's watch as a firearms instructor for the Niagara Regional Police, Dave said.

But teaching cops how to shoot was only one stop in a life that saw Ivan at sea as Allied troops stormed the nearby beaches of Normandy in 1944.

The retired police officer and former navy anti-aircraft gunner died May 5. He was 88.

"He shook the door handles up and down St. Paul St. for years. He knew all the shop owners," said Ted Chamberlain, one of Ivan's four children. He said beat cops didn't get paid much in those early days, so shopkeepers would thank him with gifts like soup and cigars.

Dave said Ivan was born on York St. in St. Catharines.

During the Second World War, he served on a Canadian corvette, HMCS Lindsay, mostly in the North Atlantic. There, Ted said, Ivan was aboard ship in the English Channel as Canadian troops stormed Juno Beach on D-Day.

"They had to run escort for supply ships and whatnot," he said.

"The English Channel is as wide as Lake Ontario. All kinds of stuff could happen out there."

On another occasion, Dave said, Ivan helped rescue an Allied pilot who had been shot down. He said they managed to pull the American to safety - though not before someone on the rescue team accidentally took the man's eye out with a boathook.

But, Ted said, their father didn't share much about his life during the war. "I don't think he wanted to relive that experience."

Back in St. Catharines, Dave said, Ivan joined the St. Catharines police. He joined up in 1951 and served for about 34 years, spending the last 10 to 15 years teaching other officers to shoot at the Niagara Regional Police training facility in Fonthill.

He went to recreational shoots often, Dave said. His sharpshooting skills filled a pair of trophy cases back home.

"I think he was very rigid in his ways, mind you," he said. "I think he wasn't popular for his being so rigid in his ways. But I think he earned the respect of his peers."

For Ivan's sons, he said, being the son of a cop came with downsides. "Every time you got in trouble, the police were right there," he said.

There was little grey area with Ivan, said Ted. He said his father held to a strong sense of right and wrong.

"He had a very gruff manner about him," he said.

"When he was a police officer, he saw a lot of stuff. He saw the part of society that most people don't see, and that kind of wears you down after awhile. So he always looked at everything with a jaundiced eye."

"He still had time for laughs. What I remember most is he had a big laugh."

But it wasn't all policing, said Ted. He said Ivan was an original member of the Niagara Twinning Association and was so inspired by the city's sister-city relationship with Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, he started his own steel band here.

He was involved in a raft of community organizations, among them the Royal Canadian Naval

Association. Just two weeks ago he was awarded a 40 years service pin from the International Police Association.

And every year, he said, Ivan would be involved in the commemorations of the Second World War's Battle of the Atlantic.

He died this year on the date of the commemoration.