

## A Hong Kong POW Group to Rifleman Duplassie; Royal Rifles of Canada



Bernard Patrick Duplassie was born on August 8, 1921 in Sunnyside, New Brunswick. He was the third youngest in a family of six boys and seven girls. The family sustained a living by working a small mixed farm and aided this by the use of outside labour. He completed Grade 6 at a country school in Sunnyside at the age of 16, but later could not account for grades missed or how long he went to school, to Army enlistment officials. Bernard Patrick Duplassie enlisted as a Rifleman (E30530) with the 1st Battalion, Royal Rifles of Canada, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps on September 17, 1940 at Motepedre, Quebec. The Battalion left Vancouver, British Columbia for Hong Kong on October 27, 1941. The day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 8, 1941, the Japanese Empire launched an attack on the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong. Two and half weeks later, Duplessie was captured and taken prisoner on December 25th. He was sent to North Point Prison Camp in Hong Kong. It was here that he witnessed from twenty yards away, a Chinese coolie being killed by a Japanese guard outside the camp, by bayoneting him in several places in the body. Duplessie would also state after the war that the "food was very bad during my internment, consisting of only a few ounces of rice a day, some soup made from greens. We got a little bit of horse meat on special occasions, such as when Japanese Generals came to inspect the camp. We got fish about once a month, but it was rotten most of the time." He remained there until September 26, 1942, when he was sent to Shamshuipo (AKA the Sham Shui Po District of Hong Kong). Again, Duplassie recalled a specific incident to investigators after his release from captivity: "I saw Major Boon (Cecil Boon) go out of the camp five or six times in a Japanese vehicle. A Japanese driver drove the vehicle. On one instance which occurred in the fall of 1942, I saw Major Boon hold a Japanese officer's sword, while a

Japanese Officer, whose name and description I do not know, beat up a British Officer, whose name was Captain Green. Captain Green was the R.C. Padre in the British Army, and was beaten up by a Japanese Officer who used his hands and feet to hit and kick Capt. Green." He went on to state that "This incident happened on the parade ground and the whole camp saw it." After four months at Shamshuipo, he was placed upon the POW Transport Tatsuta Mata (Hellship) on January 19, 1943, which had 1,100 prisoners of war on board, of which 663 were Canadian. Upon arrival in Nagasaki, Japan on January 22, 1943, he boarded an electric train for a ten mile ride to Camp 3D Tsurumi at Yokohama. It was here, along with the others, that he worked in the Nihon Ironworks at the Tsurumi Shipyards, performing a variety of jobs related to ship building. The camp was engulfed by fire on April 9, 1945, forcing the Japanese to incarcerate the prisoners elsewhere. On May 13th, the 198 Canadians arrived at the Sendai No. 1 Prisoner of War Camp at Yumoto, forced to work for the Joban Coal (Tanko) Company, and it was here that Duplessie would remain until the cessation of hostilities, released from captivity in August 1945. In a War Crimes Office Report, dated October 1945, he was given a list of eleven items to check off, if he had been witness to any of the atrocities. He checked off seven items: 1. torture, beatings or other cruelties, 2. imprisonment under improper conditions, 3. massacres, looting or burning of towns, 4. use of prisoners of war on enemy military works or operations, 5. transportation of prisoners of war under improper conditions, 6. failure to provide prisoners of war with proper medical care, food or quarters and 7. collective punishment of a group for an offence of others. His handwritten note on the reverse of the form spoke volumes: "Beating men for nothing, making them stand for hours with a pail of water over your head or on your hands and knees with hot coals under you. I seen this myself." Duplessie was discharged from service with the 1st Battalion, Royal Rifles of Canada on January 25, 1946. For his Second World War service, he was awarded the 1939-1945 Star, the Pacific Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Overseas Clasp and the War Medal 1939-1945. Six years after his departure from the Royal Rifles of Canada, Duplessie re-enlisted in the Canadian Army, this time as a Private (SE30530) with the Royal Canadian Engineers, at No. 2 Personnel Depot in Fredericton, New Brunswick, on February 29, 1952, stating his trade as that of Farm Labourer/Woodsman. He was sent to the Royal Canadian School of Military Engineering at Vedder Crossing, British Columbia on March 11th and was reclassified as a Sapper 2nd Class on April 5th. That Fall, he was transferred to 57 Field Squadron on October 20th, qualified as a Pioneer with the Royal Canadian Engineers, Group 1 on November 2nd and was classified as a Sapper 1st Class on April 5, 1953. He was awarded a caution for being Absent Without Leave the following May. Duplessie was transferred to 2nd Field Squadron for overseas service, embarking Canada on November 16, 1953 and disembarking in Holland on the 26th, where he was posted to the Canadian Army, Central Europe. He would serve two years in Germany with the Royal Canadian Engineers. Duplessie would run afoul of the authorities again, on January 14, 1954, but this time it would prove to be of a more serious nature. He would face four charges: 1. drunkenness; 2. fought with a person subject to the code of service discipline; 3. behaved in a disgraceful manner; and 4. a civil offence that is to say, assault. As a result, he was sentenced to five days detention on January 20th. The incident behind him, he re-engaged the following year for three years' service on February 29, 1955. That Fall, he was admitted to the British Military Hospital in Hanover, Germany on September 7, 1955 and after ten days' treatment, was discharged from hospital on the 17th. Duplessie embarked Central Europe on November 19, 1955, arriving in Canada on the 28th and continued with 2 Field Squadron, Royal Canadian Engineers at Camp Chilliwack, Vedder Crossing. He was posted to the Royal Canadian School of Military

Engineering on September 22, 1956, to develop skills as a Carpenter. He took a twenty-four week course entitled Carpenter Group I, from September 24, 1956 to March 16, 1957, and during that time, he had a brief stay at Chilliwack Station Hospital, from February 18th to 23rd. However, Duplessie suffered from low grades in Mathematics and Carpentry, well below the standards set by the Army. It was noted by one of the instructors that "Sapper Duplassie works quietly but without results, and does not follow simple instructions. He has limited ability to absorb knowledge." It was determined that the "course is simply too much for this sapper to absorb. His basic education is about Grade 4 level." Eight months later, Duplessie was struck off strength to CBUME (Canadian Base United Nations Middle East), as part of the United Nations peacekeeping forces on the border between Israel and Egypt following the Sinai campaign of 1956. He embarked Canada on November 11, 1957, disembarking in Italy on the 17th and was posted to the Canadian Army, Middle East. He left the next day for Egypt and would served as part of the border force for over eleven months. While there, Duplessie re-engaged for three years' service on February 29, 1958 and was awarded the United Nations Emergency Force Medal on June 1st. Upon completing of his Middle East service, he embarked Europe on October 25, 1958, disembarking in Canada on the 27th, where he returned to 2 Field Squadron at CFB (Canadian Forces Base) Gagetown in Burton, New Brunswick. He was admitted to Camp Hospital at Gagetown on April 16, 1959 and after five days treatment, was discharged from hospital on the 21st. He re-engaged for an additional six years' service on March 1, 1961 and passed the Command Projectionist Course 2 on January 25, 1963. Duplassie applied for the Canadian Forces' Decoration on February 28, 1963, stating his service as a Rifleman with the Royal Rifles of Canada (September 17, 1940 to January 25, 1946; totalling five years, four months and nine days' service) and as a Sapper with the Royal Canadian Engineers (February 29, 1952 to February 18, 1963; ten years, eleven months and twenty days' service), a total of sixteen years, three months and twenty-nine days' service in the Army. The award was approved in April 1963 and was officially awarded on May 7, 1963. He re-engaged for five years' service on March 1, 1967 and witnessed a break and enter of a building in August 1968 at CFB Gagetown. He was briefly posted to CFS (Canadian Forces Station) Alert in the Northwest Territories, from January 14, 1970 to February 22, 1970. In the position of Field Engineer 041, he took a CFSME (Canadian Forces School of Military Engineering) Level 5 ADJ course from November 30 to December 18, 1970, achieving a good standard in all ten subjects. He was scheduled to retire from service shortly thereafter. Bernard Patrick "Bernie" Duplassie was a member of the Oromocto Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion in Sunnyside. He and his wife, Adelaide had three sons, Darrell, Ryan and Douglas and a daughter, Donna. Duplassie died on December 18, 1990 in Fredericton, New Brunswick, at the age of 69. He was cremated and a memorial service was held at a later date. (C:14) - See more at: <https://www.emedals.com/a-hong-kong-pow-group-to-rifleman-duplassie-royal-rifles-of-canada#sthash.p1sNY0bQ.dpuf>