



Fred, as he was called by his family, was born in Stirling, Scotland on March 12, 1920. He was the eldest of five boys and three girls. As the first born, Fred was his grandmother's pride and joy. At the age of three, his family left for Canada and settled in Chatham. His baptismal certificate is dated February 19, 1921, and signed by a bishop. William and Alexandra Laurie and their large family were regular members of the congregation at Christ Church and all the children attended Sunday School. As the oldest in the family, Fred took a particular interest in looking after his youngest brother Robert, whom he would frequently take to movies. On Saturdays, 5C each would enable them to watch movies all morning.

At this time, the Lauries lived at 163 Wellington Street East. After finishing eight years of schooling at Queen Mary school, Fred went on to complete grade nine at the Chatham Vocational school. Among his subjects that year was woodworking. In his spare time, Fred liked to play softball and soccer. His passion though was putting together a scrapbook of naval and merchant ships. Surprisingly, Fred also became quite an expert with weapons -particularly small arms. As part of such a large family, he also had to look after some household chores and baby sit some of his younger siblings.

For a short time Fred continued taking some grade ten subjects during night school; he also worked in the tobacco fields and then took a full time job in the city at the CPR Hotel which used to stand at the North East corner of King- and William Streets. While looking after the lunch counter, which allowed him to bring home a regular wage, Fred continued training with militia.

Because of his interest in military matters, he joined the Canadian militia in 1938. With the cloud of war gathering over Europe, Canadians were urged to join the armed forces and fight for democracy and freedom. More than thirty Basic Training Centres were built and five Laurie males joined the army. Routine military life soon gave way to very active training. Once their bodies were hardened, the men were transported all over Canada, honing their skills, learning their weapons and truly enjoying their army food.

Fred and Isabel Emma Clough were married on December 28, 1940 in a military ceremony at Christ Church.

Graduating from his courses, Fred and his fellow officers were now ready to take on the enemy. Responding to urgent appeals from the government, even soldiers loaned money to aid the war effort. Fred purchased war bonds. Fred and Isabel's

correspondence from that time recorded the many events in the couple's life. Fred named his son after Chatham's regiment....Kent. While Fred was still in Canada, it was easy for the family to keep in touch with another.

Reports about Fred's performance were very positive:

*February 24, 1943 by Captain Wilander:*

*".. very keen to get overseas and into 2<sup>nd</sup> Division with brother. A very smart looking young NCO. Alert and eager"*

*March 3, 1943 by Captain Mackenzie at OTC in Gordon head, BC.:*

*"Training background excellent. Intelligent, efficient and observant".*

Finally the order came through to leave Canada for the battlefields of Europe. Fred sailed from Halifax on April 6, 1944, on the S.S. Cavina (7000 tons displacement). He disembarked in the UK on April 23, 1944 and the very next day he was seeing the sights in London. After an all too brief visit with some Scottish relatives, Fred took on some new responsibilities.

Because of a surplus of officers in the Canadian army and a critical shortage of qualified officers in the British armed forces, the two governments established the CAN-LOAN agreement.

Almost seven hundred Canadian officers were seconded to the British army. John Alfred Laurie was one of the Canadians so honoured, and he was posted to the first Royal Norfolk Regiment.

As the Allied forces were gaining the initiative in this war and the Axis powers were forced into a defensive posture, Fred joined the largest military assault ever launched against the continent of Europe. On June 6, 1944 Allied forces came ashore in Normandy.

Fred's diary read:

*Tuesday, June 6; Exercise Overlord; landed "D" day in Normandy.*

While Fred's laconic diary entries record the historic events that suddenly engulfed him, the reality was that he still had to fight his way across northern France along with tens of thousands of Canadian and Allied troops. Fred Laurie was wounded, evacuated and returned to England for recuperation.

*Evacuated from France 27 June, 1944 on hospital ship Duke of Lancaster+ poisoned hand. Landed Southampton, 28 June 1944.*

The awful fighting and destruction continued unabated across North-West Europe. A healed Lieutenant Laurie returned to the continent on December 3 to do battle again.

He was posted once more to the front lines. Fighting their way across Holland and Germany, Fred and his men had the Germans on the run.

During the Battle of the Rhine, code named "Blockbuster" Fred distinguished himself in combat and earned the Military Cross. In the citation, his actions were described as:

*On the capture of Kervenheim on 28 February this officer was a platoon commander. On his company commander becoming wounded and 2 i/c being killed he immediately assumed command of the company. With great skill and under perpetual enemy sniper fire he organized his company and was personally instrumental in beating back an enemy counter attack. Not content with defensive fighting he led fighting patrols against the German counter attack force and by his forceful leadership and skillful use of fire wrought havoc amongst the opposition. During the whole of the operation his leadership and disregard of danger were most conspicuous and the manner in which he accepted his new responsibilities and discharged his duties as company commander were commendable beyond words.*

Near the German city Bremen, his diary entries were stopped when a bullet took his life three weeks before the end of the war.

And now once more the legal machinery was set in motion to close the file on yet another brave Canadian. His final pay was forwarded to his widow and his two infant children -aged two and four years old.

Today his memory is honoured in several places in Chatham, the Can- Loan Memorial in Ottawa and in the hearts of his widow, children and surviving brothers.

He is buried on the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten. Plot: 4 row: H grave: 10



**Lieutenant John Alfred Laurie CAN LOAN officier 04 H 10**

