

# ERIC REYNOLDS BLANDFORD

## (1907 - 1973)

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Eric Reynolds Blandford was born on December 28, 1907, the second child and first son of Sydney Dara Blandford of St. John's, Nfld., and Lillian May Reynolds of Halifax, Nova Scotia. He was born in St. John's, Newfoundland and thus began a lifelong passion for his birthplace.

Growing up in St. John's as a child of the Blandford family was a wonderful experience, the memories of which Eric recounted many times over the years to his wife and children.

He was sent to school at St. Bonaventure's, a private school in St. John's run by the Christian Brothers. Eric retained fond memories of the school and the Brothers, especially one called Brother Doyle who taught him to play chess instead of attending classes in Roman Catholicism, Eric being an Anglican. Eric was quite sporty as a young man and was a member of a rowing team. He also liked to box although his father did not permit this. He apparently continued regardless until discovered. He played hockey as well.

Eric was an avid reader and loved history, especially British. He had considerable artistic ability but unfortunately he only dabbled in this field. His family, however, does have some of his drawings and paintings to pass on to his descendants. He also was involved for a time in amateur dramatics. During his retirement years, he was writing a historical novel with a Newfoundland background. This was never completed due to ill health. Following the death of his father, Sydney, his mother, Lillian, decided to leave Newfoundland due to a major downshift in the family fortunes brought on by the crash of 1929. Montreal, Canada was the destination for Lillian and her family that by then had grown to seven, the youngest, Irma, being six years old.

They arrived in Montreal during the Great Depression. Eric, his brother Syd, and sister May were able to find employment that enabled them to help support the rest of the family.

When the Blandfords became neighbours of the McKeown family on Old Orchard Avenue in Notre Dame de Grace, Eric met and married Hilda McKeown, the oldest of five daughters of Richard Henry McKeown and Emily Catherine Burrowes. Eric and Hilda were married on June 12, 1937 at Trinity Memorial Church in Montreal. Their first child, Hilda Meredith, was born the following year on March 20, 1938 at a time when events in Europe were leading up to the outbreak of World War II.

When Canada declared war on Germany on September 9, 1939, Eric was quick to volunteer for the Canadian army. He was first enlisted with the 17th Duke of York's Royal Canadian Hussars, stationed at the Hussars armory on Remembrance Road in Montreal. He was subsequently sent to officer training school at Camp Borden in Ontario. He eventually became a captain in the Provost Corps and rose to the rank of major. He was stationed in Ottawa for a period of time prior to being posted to the European theatre. Many of the family were on hand to see Eric off on the train to Halifax for embarkation on the ship to England. During his time overseas he was in England, Holland, Belgium, and Germany. In spite of the V-2s passing over, he was able to enjoy some visiting of historical sights. It was during the war that Eric was made a Canadian by statute and enlistment in the Canadian army. After peace was declared, he would have preferred to remain in the army as he loved the military life but wartime volunteers were demobilised and he was forced to return to civilian life. He went back to work at Dominion Textile Co. Ltd., his pre-war employer, and remained with them until retirement.

Eric and Hilda's second daughter, Lois Katherine, was born to them on May 12, 1948 in Montreal. The family remained in Montreal and in time Eric gave his two daughters in marriage, Meredith in 1964 to Robert Massey and Lois in 1970 to David Rouatt. Eric became a grandfather in 1968 and again in 1971 with the births of Andrea Lois Massey and Graham Robert Massey. Sadly, Eric did not live to see Jason Erie Rouatt and Leslie Elaine Rouatt. Throughout his life, Eric was very close to his family, and also his wife's large family. He enjoyed nothing more than a family gathering, whether for a family event, or just Sunday dinner.

In Eric's later years his health deteriorated due to the onset of Parkinson's disease and a heart condition. He had a serious heart attack in 1968; he recovered from that, and took early retirement. He was enjoying his retirement when a second heart attack took his life on December 27, 1973 one day before his sixty-sixth birthday. He was buried in Montreal Memorial Park near many of his family.

Eric was never able to return to Newfoundland, but in the last year of his life he reminisced very much about those early years in St. John's and it was evident that his love of his birthplace had never diminished. He would surely be thrilled to know that his daughters also acquired this love of a place they have only seen through his eyes, but are shortly to visit in July 1999.

Meredith Blandford Massey  
June 1999