

## PRIVATE JOHN SARMAGA (1919 – 2005)

Regimental # M56274



The senior Sarmaga's immigrated to Canada from Poland in 1906 and settled near Sifton, Manitoba where they purchased land. After hearing about the agricultural opportunities in the Peace District, Stephan Sarmaga left Manitoba and filed a homestead application on land in the Kleskun Hills area (NE 34-72-3-W6) in 1917. Stephan married Mary Bojarczuk and they raised a family of three children; John (May 21, 1919), Stan and Anna. The family had returned to Valley River, Manitoba for three years during the mid 1920's as Stephen had secured employment there.

John started school at the Halicz School when the family returned to Manitoba; however, he attended the Lindsay School once the family returned to Bezanson. After John had completed Grade 10 at the age of 16, he worked on the family

farm for approximately 5 ½ years and also worked for Fenton Brothers as a truck driver for six months. John enrolled in the Non-Permanent Active Militia of Canada (Regimental # M562596) and completed a one-month training course on December 20, 1940. He subsequently enrolled again with the NPAM (Regimental # M5645) on December 5, 1941 for further training which he completed on February 10, 1942. John enlisted on February 11, 1942 at Grande Prairie with the Royal Canadian Ordinance Corps which is the Administrative Corps of the Canadian Army. He was granted permission to marry Sadie Gaboury and the wedding occurred on October 30, 1943. John was transferred to Calgary where they were housed in the Mawatta Barracks following which he was sent to Barriefield, Ontario where emphasis was placed on marching, map reading and truck driving. Lastly, John was transferred to London, Ontario where he completed courses in Motor Mechanics, Radial Engines and General Motors Diesel Engines as well as a 13 week work-experience course in a Machine Shop on tool and equipment repair and maintenance. During this time, John was diagnosed with several medical issues; peptic and duodenal ulcers, pes cavus which is an unusually high arch that impaired his ability to march. As a result of these afflictions, he was discharged for medical reasons (unable to meet the required military physical standards) on March 3, 1944 in Calgary. Private John Sarmaga received the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and the 1939-45 War Medal.

## Private John Sarmaga

John returned to the Bezanson area and continued to farm. His father had transferred ownership of 160 acres (NE 36-72-3-W6) to John so that he could begin his own farming operation. John purchased some machinery and the SE 1-73-3-W6, which became the home quarter, in 1945. After a few years of difficult harvest conditions, John moved his family to Grande Prairie for the winter where he had found employment as a machinist in a machine shop. In an effort to supplement the family income, he would also haul grain and or lumber whenever the opportunity would arise. John and Sadie purchased more land and built-up a sizable farming operation. Sadie, born in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, was the oldest in a family of four children born to Eugene and Mary Gaboury. John and Sadie raised a family of five children; Maxine, Donna, Grant, Gene and Audrey. Sadie was a teacher and taught at the Bezanson Consolidated School for many years. John enjoyed participating in Community ball games, picnics and dances. As he lived close to the Smoky River, he spent a great deal of time hunting, hiking and horseback riding along the banks of the river.

John and his sons farmed until 1998 when he and Sadie retired and moved to Grande Prairie. John passed away on April 23, 2005 and was buried at the Glen Leslie Cemetery. John had received an award from the Legislative Assembly of Alberta upon the occasion of his "Award of Life Membership in the Royal Canadian Legion".



Training in Grande Prairie

Back Row:

Bill Nellis, Roger LaValley, Ross Kochalyk, Ralph Norton

Front Row:

Martin Cooper, Ross Ford, Zotique Menard, Bud Stewart, **John Sarmaga**



### References:

Smoky to Grande Prairie History Book  
South Peace Regional Archives land database  
Interview with Maxine Maxwell (daughter)  
Service File