

A Short Life of William Morris Davidson
*(April 25, 1921 Burton on Trent to September 20, 1989 Toronto
Son of William and Elsie Davidson)*

The main part of this document is a chapter from
the Davidson Family History –
“The Gaudesus and Dabrovolskis Families, and
The History of William Morris Davidson”

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back in 1991 based on anecdotes told to us by our father,
William Morris Davidson.

Preface

By the time I had finally written down this story of my father William Morris Davidson, two years had elapsed since his death on September 20th, 1989. This second anniversary of his passing, I hope, will be partially commemorated by this small book.

We are very fortunate indeed to have many stories about Morris' life and his family. Father was always able to talk in a pleasing manner about his life and was able to transfer his wanderlust and love of humanity to his sons in this manner. I must admit that we never tired of hearing these stories from him. For many of the details of his army stories we can thank my brother Michael who sat father down and interviewed him thoroughly.

When I reread this story, I feel as if my father is still here. It is a wonderful feeling and one I hope I can share with you.

David Frank Davidson



San Francisco, California

October 28th, 1991

Chapter 1

The Family in England

William Morris Davidson was born April 25th, 1921 at Burton-on-Trent. His birth certificate is based on entry #260 in Register book 183 of the same district.

His father William Davidson, died October 17th, 1923. After that his mother Elsie Mary, then sent him to live with his grandparents Eliza Lord and David Henry Parker in Sproxton. They considered Morris to be their fourteenth child. Their thirteen child Phyllis, was born five and a half years earlier.

Elsie Mary took her other two children, David and Robert, to the Frampton Estate in Brianspuddle Dorset where she looked after an apiary. It was there that she met Cecil Cuthbert Collins. She remarried again on December 2nd, 1925. After they married, Morris moved back with his mother.

Before he was old enough to go to school, Morris was brave enough to look inside bee hives. This must have been because had seen his mother working with beehives. He used to say that "the bees know me". Once when in a field he poked a hornet's nest and they chased him. His friends and family covered him with hay to protect him. Morris then said "these bees don't know me" and would not come out.

Morris was left handed and he played cricket left handed. He was beaten at school in an attempt to force him to write right handed and he attributed his poor penmanship to this. At home, he was told that they never set dinner tables for left-handed people, possibly because of the myth that left-handed people were slow.

He used to bring flowers home to his mother. What she did not know was that he had ran through the backyards of the neighbours to take them.

Morris collected coins and stamps when he was young, and formed a very good collection. Times were tough, during the war though and his mother gave

his stamp collection to the boy scouts at a paper drive. She eventually also had to sell his coins, receiving 100 English pounds for them.

Once when Morris was at his home talking to some children, one of them said that he was the only one who had climbed the tallest tree around. Morris asked him what he found there. The boy said that he found the name "bimbo" carved at the top, but he didn't know who that was. Morris did not tell him that was his nickname when he was young. James Collins mentioned that only one person had ever dived off the cliffs at Lulworth Cove near Bovington Camp and lived and that was Morris when he was young.

Just after Morris turned 16, he enlisted in the army. He must have just finished school if he stayed until he was sixteen, or else he might have been working as a plumbers helper and was dissatisfied with his immediate future. It was May 27th, 1937. The war would begin in two years.

Let us turn now to Morris' parents.

William Davidson was the father of Morris. He was born in Ayr, Scotland sometime after 1883. Ayr, Scotland was noted for its leather trade, which was undoubtedly controlled by our relatives. Robbie Burns, the famous Scottish poet, who was born in Alloway near Ayr wrote,

Auld Ayr, wha ne'er a town surpasses

For honest men and bonny lasses.

Morris' brother, Robert John Davidson, was likely named after a brother of their father. This Robert Davidson of Ayr may have gone to Montana and taken up sheep farming at the turn of the century. There is no knowledge of a related David Davidson of Ayr.

Morris Davidson said his uncle or great uncle or great great uncle was the moderator of the church of Scotland. This title would make him a Protestant or Presbyterian.

Though our father was called Morris, that was actually his middle name. This name came from his grandmother's maiden name, that is, William

Davidson's parents were Mr. Davidson and Miss Morris. The family name Morris is derived from the Latin Mauricius, which translates as Moorish, a saint who was horribly martyred in 286 AD. The name was introduced into Britain by the Normans, amongst whom it was popular.

In his youth, William was supposedly dismissed from every university in England, Scotland and Canada, though there is no evidence of him applying to the University of Toronto. Wherever he did attend, he probably studied business.

When William Davidson bought the wedding ring for Elsie, he went into a goldsmith's shop and was showed a ring that he liked. The goldsmith weighed and priced it. Grandfather pulled out his own gold scale from his vest, checked the weight of the ring, found it was a pennyweight under, and said "Put it proper!".

William married Elsie Mary Parker in 1916 or before. At that time he was effectively disowned by his family for marrying an English woman below his rank. Elsie had been a beekeeper and sometime washerwoman. The upper class Scots were very clannish in those days. As well, William's family were all doctors and lawyers.

Elsie's brother Edward said that Elsie Mary, as well as everyone else, called her husband, Mr. Davidson. William learned many European languages as well as Indian languages, but he would not learn Welsh or Russian. He was bald. He liked blueberries and called them bilberries. He also had his own porridge mixture cut specially for himself.

The Davidsons raised bees. One time, their bees got sick and they treated them with some chemicals. They recovered but as a result of their treatment, the honey they produced was green. Making the best of a bad thing, William sold it by advertising it as "a once in a lifetime chance to eat green honey." William would, at times, buy bees from the Holland Bee Fair. Once he won a 2.5 guilder piece from the fair for making the largest bee purchase. Morris knew this as he collected coins and may have seen the piece.

William, like many businessmen from Ayr, was also in the leather business. He brought tanned skins from India cheaper than comparable tanned skins in England. When the price of Indian leather went up, Grandfather went into the

leather lace business. William once told Elsie that she would never succeed in business because she couldn't lie.

William entered Great Britain once with 120 spade guineas. A spade guinea is a gold coin with a shield on face that looks like a spade. It is worth 21 shillings. The customs agent thought he was a spy, because he could not recognize them as a coin of the realm.

At the time of his death, William was in his late thirties and living in Burton-on-Trent. He died of a heart attack on October 17th, 1923. Elsie Mary said that the funeral for her husband was attended by the Davidson relatives who came down from Scotland but then returned and nothing more was heard of them. She was pregnant with Robert at the time. Because she was having financial difficulties supporting three children, she wished that she could have dug up the casket and gotten the silver from the side handles.

Morris' mother was Elsie Mary Parker. She married William Davidson and had three sons. David Henry was born May 4th, 1917, William Morris was born April 25th, 1921, and Robert John who was born after his father's death on April 4th, 1924. David Henry was named after Elsie's father. A photograph exists with three David Davidsons in it, David Henry, his son David and the son of Morris, David Frank.

Elsie married Cecil Cuthbert Collins. Cecil was a corporal in the Military Mounted Police. They had three children together: Else Eileen Rose, Francis James and Kenneth Michael.

She lived in Burton-on-Trent with William and then moved to Walton, near Melton Mowbray, and then to the Frampton Estates in Dorset to be a beekeeper. When Elsie worked with the beehives, she used to carry a feather to brush them off her face as she was concerned that she might suffocate. The bees would hang in great masses from her chin and hair when she worked with them.

She was asked to leave the estates because her employer thought that a young widow should not be about playing tennis in a short dress. She then moved to Bovington camp to buy and operate cafe. By then, she was married to Cecil. She later operated a laundry there for the Royal Tank Corps. After the war, she ran a pub in Parkestone, The Central Hotel at Ashbury Cross. She returned to

Bovington Camp and in her last years until her retirement, ran The Alamein Gas Station.

Elsie had learned to drive a motorcycle in 1921 with her first husband. Later, when Elsie learned to drive a car, her husband Cecil Collins got angry when she stalled the engine. Elsie just went out and bought her own car.

A story is told of when Elsie and her own mother went to an agricultural show. A cow got loose and in the excitement her mother was knocked down. Elsie dived on top of her to protect her. Afterward, her mother asked her why she did that, as she could not then see any of the excitement going on.

We have one anecdote about Elsie when she was young. She went to church one day and her dog, like Mary's lamb, followed her along. When she got to the church the dog followed her inside. Elsie told the dog to go home. The minister, who was another wag, said "let him stay Elsie, there is worse than that here."

We have a great deal of information about Elsie's family, the Parkers, because of research done by Angela Parker. Angela was a granddaughter of Albert Edward Parker. A son of this same Albert Edward Parker, Keith Parker, married another cousin, Gladys Parker, daughter of Sidney Lorenzo Parker, and then moved to Canada to work as chicken farmers. They were close friends of the Toronto Davidsons. Keith and Gladys had two sons, David and Philip. Philip married Donna Marrant who lived down the street from the Toronto Davidsons.

The great great grand father of William Morris Davidson was Luke Parker. The great grand father was John Parker (born 1826 and died 1912) and he married Lucy Rose. The couple had four children: Thomas Parker, Mary Parker (who died 1943), George Robert Parker (born May 4th, 1866 and died 1917) and David Henry Parker (born March 15th, 1870 and died August 17th, 1930). John and Lucy Rose were living in Hambleton, District of Oakham, Leicester when David Henry was born.

David Henry Parker married Elzia Lord on August 20th, 1894 at the Parish Church (St. Peltas) in the parish of Saltby, Leicester.

David Henry Parker was 24 years old, a bachelor and working as a gamekeeper, perhaps with his father John. Now being a gamekeeper is an honourable occupation for a Parker as the medieval origin of the name comes from the keepers of the great feudal estate parks and game keepers of the period.

As a game warden, David Henry worked for Duke of Rutland. He raised pheasants and partridges so his lordship the Duke could take his friends hunting. Likely the position included a cottage on the estate. He was given 40 acres for a service that he rendered once to someone. On this property, he built the Fineshades bungalow in Sproxton, bit by bit, and raised his family there.

David Henry Parker would die in Sproxton, District of Wareham, county of Leicester of "congestion of lungs (hypostalic), hemiplegia, cerebral haemorrhage" in the presence of his son, George Alfred Parker on August 17th, 1930.

Eliza Lord was born February 2nd, 1875 and died November 12th, 1949 Her father Robert Lord was a labourer. The local minister in Sproxton used to say that there were many Lords (i.e. Eliza Lord for one) in town, but no ladies.

David and Eliza Parker had 13 children, their hometown, and dates of their birth and death are given below.

David Herbert (Sproxton/ b. February 3, 1896)

Rose Emma (Brighton/ b. March 25, 1897)

Elise Mary (Bovington Camp/ b. June 25, 1898)

John Robert (Midlands/ b. November 2, 1899, d. December 25, 1964)

Albert Edward (Sproxton/ b. February 3, 1901)

Sidney Lorenzo (Leeds/ b. January 22, 1903)

Luke Henry (Manchester/ b. April 17, 1904)

George Alfred (Lancashire/ b. January 5, 1906)

Thomas William (London/ b. March 20, 1907 - d. January 28, 1961)

Gwendoline Annie (Leicester/ b. June 21, 1908)

Philip Arden (Southampton/ b. January 1, 1910)

Gladys Helen (Lancashire/ b. July 17, 1911)

Phyllis Margaret (Sproxton/ b. August 23, 1915)

Chapter 2

The Second World War

Regular Army Service Record shows Morris enlisting May 27th, 1937 (he would have just turned 16). He enlisted in Winchester into the Royal Army Service Corps. His date of birth was given as April 25th, 1919. He had to stretch the truth about his age to start his career with the army at such a young age. He enlisted for 6 years with the colours and 6 years with the reserves. He was 6 feet tall and weighed 164 lbs. His maximum chest was 34 in and he had a fair complexion, and dark brown hair. He was noted to have a scar on the outer side of his left elbow.

His record with the Royal Army Service Corps shows he was at home from May 27th, 1937 to September 28th, 1938. Then in Palestine from September 29th, 1938 to January 18th, 1940. Then back home from January 19th, 1940 to April 12th, 1940. Then a part of the British Expeditionary Forces (this would be in Agincourt France) from April 13, 1940 to June 23th, 1940. Then back home from June 24th, 1940 to February 12th, 1942. Then to the Middle East from February 13th, 1942 to February 3rd, 1946. Then he returned home from February 4th, 1946 to May 25th, 1946. He served for eight years and 364 days.

His trade was listed as a Plumbers mate when he enlisted. From the Military he was awarded his 3rd class education certificate June 19th, 1937 while at home. He passed the (AQ) Drivers Class III October 19th, 1937 also while at home. He passed Cooks classes February 14th and March 23th, 1938 while at home. From his Army certificate of education second class we find that Driver M. Davidson T/64403 of the 61st Company Royal Army Service Corps passed English, Imperial Military History and Geography, Map Reading and was Distinguished in Mathematics. He was awarded this in Haifa August 31st, 1939. He was apparently well trained in the Army. He also passed the WTI Course in Rifle, LG, ATR Pistol and Bayonet January 25th, 1941 while at home.

He was appointed A/L/Cpl April 3rd, 1940 while at home. He was appointed A/Cpl July 16th, 1940 also while at home after his trip to France. He incurred some change of rank January 30th, 1941 while at home. He reverted to

the rank of driver at his own request July 18th, 1945 while in the Middle East. He took several privilege leaves while at home and before he was shipped to the Middle East. He took a 2 week leave August 7th, 1943 while in the Middle East.

On of his Solder's service and pay book was issued February 22nd, 1945 when he was in the 660 COY RASC at the No. 24 Base Supply Depot. He had two duty free labels for 20 and 10 shillings dated December 5th, 1945 when he was in the Middle East. Blacked out in his record is the parish he was born in Burton-on-Trent and the fact that his father was Scottish and his mother was English. This is likely in case he was captured by the enemy.

When Morris was at war, his mother, Elsie M. Collins was living at the Old Parsonage in Winterbourne Kingston. His eldest brother David Henry Davidson T/56833 Cpl RASC was missing but was found to be a POW in the 12 COY RASC in Hong Kong. His younger brother Robert John Davidson RASC was at ATS Arbourfield Reading.

Here from an interview by his son Michael Davidson, is how Morris describes his military career.

I signed up for the Royal Army Service Corp, RASC, a non-combatant corps. When I was signed up, the army tried to get me into the Hampshire Regiment (a fighting corps) but I told them that I had signed up in the non-combatant RASC and was going home otherwise. I was trained in Buller Barracks RASC in Aldershot then sent to driving school at Feitham, Middlesex, and then was assigned to 23rd Company RASC Davenport in 1937.

When Neville Chamberlain went to Berlin we were shipped to Gibraltar, to wait to go up through France, if necessary. Chamberlain came back, saying that there would be peace in our time and I was sent to Palestine (61 Company RASC - Mount (Har) Cambel, Haifa) to distribute mail and rations, gas ammunitions, supplies to the various troops until January 1940, when I returned home.

Once I was assigned three pints of paraffin which I was supposed to distribute. At the same time I was given several drums of paraffin from an unofficial, non-army source. I was happily distributing all this paraffin to whoever needed some. But then my commanding officer discovered me giving

the paraffin out without recording its withdrawal and gave me some trouble for this.

I prepared to go to Finland but that dropped through. I was sent to France as a part of the 12th Division BEF British Expeditionary Force. The Germans chased us out of France on June 18th, 1940, one month after Dunkirk. I had been in Brittany helping to hold that province.

I was mentioned in Despatches while I was in Agincourt, France. Our trucks had stopped for the night. The last truck brought the rear up, to make sure nobody got left behind. The last truck in the convoy also carried a Lewis machine gun. Some Belgian planes, probably commandeered by Germans, came along and were bombing us. Major Hopcroft, "Hoppy" to the drivers, came running across the area where the trucks were parked. I yelled to him: "For Christ's sake, Major, set an example and keep your bloody head down," which the Major obeyed right away. After the attack was over, My Sergeant Major came over to chew me out, but the Major got there first and said "Damn good show, Corporal Davidson."

In the supplement to The London Gazette of Friday December 20th 1940 on page 7185 is the entry that "The names of the undermentioned have been bought to notice in recognition of distinguished services in connection with operations in the field, March-June 1940." "The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment) 3055366 L/Cpl. W. M. Davidson." He was one of seven soldiers mentioned in despatches from this regiment.

In Brittany, France, I was driving the last truck in the convoy again, bringing up the rear. My navigator's name was Brand, affectionately Brandy. We had just bought some cigarettes and rum from some place or another. We saw an old man in a great coat. We stop and invited him on board. The guy looked tired.

"Would you like a cigarette?" I asked.

"I would love a cigarette" said the man.

"Brandy, give our friend a couple of packages of cigarettes," and Brandy did this.

"Would you like some rum?" I asked.

"I would love some rum." said the man.

"Brandy, give our friend a good shot of rum." Brandy pours him a generous shot of rum. Now drivers were not supposed to have rum in their vehicles.

"You look hot in that great coat," I said, "why don't you take it off."

"I am and I will," he replied. The man removes his great coat and his rank was revealed, he was the Brigadier.

I am surprised and drove up to my Major's car and passes this important passenger to him. Later, when we stopped, the Major came back and said:

"I understand you have some rum on board, corporal."

"I can't really deny it," I said.

"The Brigadier says that if I do anything about it, he will bust me down to a corporal too," said the Major. That's how I made friends with the Brigadier.

The army dropped the idea of holding Brittany and I returned home June 18th, 1940. After the evacuation I became part of a reformed 51st Division Supply Company RASC in Scotland. We were later changed to the 14th Independent Infantry Brigade. This was a small mobile brigades to defend against parachutes invasions into England. These independent brigades would later become the SAS, the Special Airborne Services.

I was busted down to a driver in Wales for an incident which happened while I was very tired. But the Major, still a good friend, called his friend the Brigadier, and suggested that the Major himself punish me by reduction of ranks and having me reposted. I was reposted to Halifax, England. The Major knew what he was doing when he busted him. You cannot bust a corporal who has held his rank for six months (war-substantiated). I was re-instated as a corporal with back pay. This was sometime in 1940-41. I was then assigned to a holding company to wait for reposting.

I could have been promoted to a higher rank but I was happy as a corporal and did not want the responsibility and concerns of the more senior officers.

I was posted to the vehicle reserve depot in Middlesex. From there I was sent into the Middle East the long way via the Atlantic, around Africa, up through the Suez canal and into the RASC base, Egypt where I arrived in 1942.

I went up on the last great push by the British Army from Alamein to Tunis. Montgomery was pushing Rommel and his Germans back to Tunis. I thought Montgomery was a good commander because he did not move unless his troops could be supplied. This was sometime before D-Day in 1943.

I was driving supplies for the 11th (27th) New Zealand Silver Fern Division who were trying to get around back of the German lines. How do you get behind them? Find some Germans. Drive deep into the desert behind them. Sneak up the back. The problem was that the Germans kept retreating and we and the New Zealanders were always coming out of the desert in front of them. They would continue up the coast road, and try the manoeuvre again. This went on all the way up to Tunis. The last swing was around the Mareth line (in between Tripolitania (Libya) and Tunis. Our truck broke down behind this line, and I had to wait until some of our guys arrived to tow us out.

We are talking a lot of trucks in the desert. The 10th Brigade had 4000 trucks. They used to drive 3 abreast.

The 51st battalion had a busy sign maker. Every where you looked you was signs about the 51st battalion. 51st Battalion gas station. 51st battalion camp ground, 51st Battalion stores. One day they found a big sign saying 51st battalion dead camel above a dead camel.

The Boyd anti-tank gun (2 pounder) was worst than useless. First you would have to wait until the tank was nearly on top of you. Then you had to hope that the tank would rear up on its back treads so you could fire into its soft underbelly. Then the recoil from the gun would knock you back 20 feet so that you would be out of harm's way when the tanks crashed forward and down.

I was in one dilly of a sand storm once. Then it rained heavy and I was in a mudstorm. The desert is not all sand, nor is it always hot. It gets very cold at night. It froze once at Tobruk while we were there. The locals didn't seem to care much about the war. They checked to see whether a group was German or English and gave an appropriate greeting to both.

We captured one German once, or rather this German gave himself up to us. We found him deep in the desert and he had no idea what he was doing there or how he got there. He was probably a deserter.

I returned to my base where I caught dysentery. This caused me to miss the invasion of Sicily when the rest of the RASC company was sent on. Instead I volunteered for special service and was sent to Turkey to build roads and airdromes for a possible invasion of the Balkans. This was in 1944.

When I was in Turkey, I was riding a bus once (I spoke Turkish fairly well) and overheard a couple of men talking. One said that he had to rush home, to listen to Churchill speak on the radio. I leaned over and asked him if he understood English, he replied he did not, but loved to hear Churchill speak.

D-Day 1944. The allies had just made a big landing in Europe. We were celebrating. The captain opened the rum rations. Afterwards I felt like about 65 men. "Do you know what that means? I had rations for one hundred." The following morning, following my routine I went to the airdrome and tried to open my office door. It was a very light double door, locked with felt nails. I couldn't find the keyhole and so I gave the lock a pull, hoping the lock would pull off. Instead the whole door fell on me. I pushed it off me and went in to order tea. Many months later I heard the Turks talking about the strong Englishman who ripped the big solid wooden doors of the front of the building, picking up these monstrous heavy doors and threw them aside, and went in for tea. I was too modest to explain the real stories.

I could speak a smattering of Turk, Arabic, Hebrew, French, Italian and could get by in Turkish and Arabic. I used to read the Turkish newspaper. When you are stuck there, you learn them. In Turkey I was stuck there all by himself, the only Englishman for sixty miles around. I was still a corporal, and had twenty trucks and twenty Turkish trucks. I used to pay the drivers and administer them. The Turkish lira was worth seven to the English pound. The Canadian dollar was worth five to the English pound at the time.

Yom kim de misch misch. When the Egyptians asked us for money and we didn't feel like giving it, we would say "Yom kim de misch misch." Perhaps when the apricots bloom.

There was the story about Morris Haley and Knobby Bradshaw. Morris Haley, my friend told about this other character called Knobby Bradshaw.

Knobby apparently had told Morris Haley about the crazy exploits of the wild and woolly friends of his. In actual fact, I was this friend, but I didn't say anything.

One day we were in Benghazi and I said "Morris, that's Knobby Bradshaw over there." After we met and talked, Knobby says to Morris Haley: "Remember the character I was telling you about. Well that's Morris (Davidson)."

I caught malaria in Turkey but the doctors could not find any evidence of it in my system. I was sent down to the base in Egypt to be checked out. The Medical Officer thought I was okay. My next assignment was in Tobruk, Libya, and I headed down there. The guy was a quack and told me that I was one of the healthiest specimens he had ever set eyes on. So I went down to Tobruk in Libya.

I arrived in Tobruk with a temperature of 106 degrees. I went to the medical inspection room, and was sent to the hospital. The colonel Medical Officer came and asked me,

"you are having a relapse of malaria but your papers do not show an original infection of malaria. How come?"

"I was sent to Egypt base for a checkup and the MO (Medical Officer) there said I was as healthy as hell, So here I am."

The colonel asked: "Why did he say that when you had two letters for checking up?"

I said "Doctor So-and-so said I was all right."

The colonel had all along suspected Dr. So-and-so was a quack. He was delighted as father's case confirmed this and provided grounds to have Dr. So-and-so removed for incompetent practice.

"You're lucky, We will cure you, it's Christmas tomorrow. Eat, sleep all you want." I went to bed.

When you book in a hospital, you had to have money and valuables checked. The army nurse, the "sister lieutenant" comes with a paper bag and says you have to make a list of all your belongings, including denominations and serial numbers of all your money.

"First, sister will you take these silk stockings and put everything in a bag for me." I gave her a pair of silk stockings, and she looked after his valuables.

I caught malaria and returned to base in Egypt then to Tobruk, Benghazi, Cyrenaica (Libya).

I was getting sand happy. I got drunk on rum and jumped in the Mediterranean sea to try to swim home. That wasn't working so I swam back. It was time to go home. I was demobilized in 1945 after 8 years, 364 days in the Army.

Morris' Regular Army Service Record shows that his military conduct was exemplary. The testimonial reads "A very excellent driver with a good knowledge of M.T. and vehicle maintenance. He has a good appearance, a pleasing personality and a fine sense of duty. Mentioned in Dispatches London Gazette 20/12/40. Is very highly recommended for suitable employment calling for honesty, courtesy and responsibility." He transferred to the Reserves May 28th, 1946 at Hastings. On the Release Leave Certificate it is noted that Morris was released from the military February 4th, 1946. Again he had a similar testimonial.

We know from his National Identity Card that when Morris returned to England he lived at the Old Parsonage in Winterbourne Kingston Blandford by February 16th, 1946. He lived at the Central Hotel in Ashley Cross Parkstone in Dorset by April 2nd, 1946. He lived at the National Service Hostel Colnbrook Bucks by October 29th, 1946, and returned to the Central Hotel May 8th, 1947. He got his passport September 2nd, 1947 and left for Canada, November 14th, 1947. From his last year in England, we have his partially used 1947-1948 Ration Book with his national registration number WLB 5004919.

Someday one of his sons will write to the Royal Army Service Corps Records Office to collect his medals. His Army number was T(ransport)/64403. He was awarded an "Palestine" Africa Star, with an Eighth Army "8" and clasp. Perhaps he was even awarded a British Expeditionary Forces France Medal. He was also awarded the General Service Medal and Clasp.

Chapter 3

Life in Canada

Morris embarked for Canada on November 14th, 1947 probably on a TransWorld Airlines DC-3. He landed for refueling in Newfoundland, likely Gander, and then continued on to Toronto. He entered Malton Airport on November 15th, 1947. He came with \$100.

Ontario was looking for skilled workers under the Drew plan and it was relatively easy for Morris to find work as a plumber. His first employer was Bill Winney who lived down the street from the Davidsons for many years. Morris worked as a non-union plumber, because he did not like the personality of the plumber's union steward in charge of hiring for the city.

When he first came to Canada, he stayed at 7 Rose Avenue in Toronto. Phyllis Copeland, a sister of Olive Weir lived with her mother downstairs. Morris lived with Olive and Doug Weir upstairs.

On June 1st, 1948, Morris made a formal application to quit the United Kingdom. He did this because he was still eligible for reserve military service until May 26th, 1949. It was likely, though, that he knew then that he planned to get married and stay in Canada.

He had met Julia Tilly Gaudesus when she was working on Richmond Street for Eaton's sewing. For their first date they went to the Policeman's ball. Morris bought Julia a sewing machine, the same as Queen Elizabeth had received, as an engagement present. Julia Gaudesus was born July 10th, 1918, in Toronto.

From their marriage certificate, we know that they were married September 4th, 1948. They had gotten the licence on August 26th. The minister was F.C. McMulkin and they had the service at Saint Barnabas' Church at Gibbons and Ossington. The witnesses were Jean Yawney and Douglas Weir. Julia was 30 and Morris was 27 years old.

They moved to Oak Street when they got married and then to 175 Regent Road in May 1952 after their first son was born. They have two sons, David Frank, born March 19th, 1952 and Michael Cecil, born May 10th, 1954.

David Davidson was first married to Mary Anne Theresa Casey of Lachine, Quebec, but was divorced and had no children. Mary worked as an executive secretary. She now lives in Kingston, Ontario with her second husband.

David's present wife is Kornelia Johanna Agatha Klinkenberg of Bremen Germany. She was born July 19, 1950. They have no children. Kornelia works as an executive assistant and is presently going to Golden Gate Law School. She has a sister Hilka Elisabeth who was born July 20, 1946.

Michael's first wife was Chun Cheng Huang. They were divorced and had no children. She had 2 brothers and 3 sisters. Her mother was a shadowy sort of figure and her father was a colonel in the Taiwanese Air Force where he trained pilots. Spring worked for the secret intelligence and was in charge of mail from the mainland.

Michael second wife is Alyse Weinberg who was born August 15, 1955 in Lille, France. Alyse has a PhD in Canadian Studies from the University of Lille and presently teaches French at the University of Ottawa. They were married October 15, 1982. They have three children, Miriam Andromeda born October 6, 1985, Daniel Bazalel born February 16, 1987, and David Morris Leopold born March 29, 1988.

When Morris' son David was near 14, he talked his father into becoming a scoutmaster. David left scouting several years later, but Morris stayed on for 25 years. As his scouts got older they would still come to visit him. They all called him Mr. D. as did the friends of his two sons. Morris was actively involved in the Gilwell Camps program.

Morris and Julia would regularly go to Saint Barnabas' Anglican Church. It was at this church that David was baptized. Morris remembers a story about a local bigwig who gave a lot of money to the church. The minister mentioned this. Later he was kneeling while praying and Morris and Julia, who were right behind him saw that he had big holes in the bottom of his shoes. He was a bachelor.

Morris used to volunteer to do the plumbing for Saint James Church in Downsview. Every time it flooded, he would get the sump pump to work. When the church had some money he told them to get drains. They said they wanted drapes. As Morris was not going to work himself to death for free, he stopped going to church.

Morris' long-time employer Harry Burrige was a layman in the Anglican Church. Their company did a lot of work in the city churches and through this Morris knew many of the church's hierarchy.

One day when Bishop Wilkinson was visiting Saint James Church in Downsview, he saw Morris and, with his hand out to shake, walked towards him. The Reverend Patterson who was between them, thought that the Bishop was going to shake his hand, stood there with his hand out ready. The Bishop walked right past him to shake Morris' hand.

Harry Burrige who was always called Uncle Harry in the Davidson family was the owner of the Rapid Plumbing Company where Morris worked for 25 years. Morris had telephoned Harry looking for work. After a short discussion, Harry said he would hire him, even though he had only spoken to him on the phone. Morris said "you mean I got the job." This was always one of Harry's favorite stories to tell.

When Morris retired from Rapid Plumbing, Harry Burrige, the previous owner, gave him a \$1000 bill as a present. He was very pleased and went to show it to one of the neighbours, a young couple. Morris tore off a small corner and gave it to the woman and said "never say that I haven't given you anything."

When Michael Davidson bought a large van for his children, Morris said, "Son you are now older and deeper in debt." David remembers that Morris said to him when he considered buying a house that "this is a large responsibility and you need not take it on if you don't want to."

I asked my father once when I was having trouble deciding what to do about my future, before my PhD, what I should do and what to consider. His reply was "that you should choose a job that you enjoy. If I didn't enjoy being a plumber, I would quit immediately and find something else to do." About going to school for advanced studies, he said that "some people are able to do that sort

of work and if you can then you should." He was always encouraging to my going to school and was never mean about any financial support.

When Morris was working for Werner, he had another plumber working with him, Dennis. One day the two were working at Saint Margaret's Church repiping the boiler. This plumber asked Morris if he had any religious beliefs. Father replied "when you wander lost in the Sahara Desert for five days you come to believe in something". The plumber noted that he did not elaborate and seemed to prefer to answer the question indirectly.

On the night he died, Morris was visited by his friend Peter Curelli. He had come over to play cribbage. Peter found the English relatives visiting (Brenda and Gordon) and then left shortly after. He reported that Morris said that he felt poorly which shocked Peter as Morris had never complained about his health before. Morris must have gone to the hospital around 9 PM.

Morris' health had gotten progressively worse over the past year. When he would visit his grand children he would often return home to Toronto with a cold. He was very prone to pneumonia. He would cough, the coughing would shock his bronchial tubes and the tubes would tighten up. He would then begin to have difficulty breathing. The medical treatment consisted of trying to loosen his lungs up. On the evening he was admitted to the hospital this treatment appeared to work, he felt better and he telephoned Julia to say that everything was alright. He sounded calm and OK. Julia told him not to act foolish which really meant not to walk around.

Some time later that evening, it is probable that a blood clot broke loose from one of the veins in his legs and lodged in his lungs. What caused this is not known. Very suddenly his breathing failed. His condition became critical. his blood pressure dropped. Dr Micheletti assisted by a nurse put a ventilation tube down his nose and throat and into his lungs. It did not help and his heart failed.

William Morris Davidson died Wednesday morning, about 1 AM, September 20th, 1989. He was in the North Western General Hospital and Dr. Micheletti and a nurse were present. At his autopsy they found a blockage, perhaps a recent clot, in his lungs. The pathologist also found that Morris' heart

weighed 700 grams, the largest he had ever seen. He said it must have needed a lot of work to keep it beating.

His wife Julia had been notified to come to the hospital. When she got there someone else was waiting in the room. The nurse led the first person away. When the nurse returned, Julia asked "He's not with us anymore, is he?" The answer was No. Mother grumbled about all the drugs that father was taking and went home alone. She called her son David and then Michael. It was now 2 AM in the morning. From the time of Morris' call to Julia until his death could not have been more than two or three hours.

That day David flew in from San Francisco. He required a special visa to return to the United States as he was in the process of getting his permanent resident status. He stayed for two weeks and helped Michael organize the funeral and Julia's affairs. 110 people signed the visitors book at the funeral. The funeral for Morris was September 23th, 1989 at 1:30 pm. The next Thursday, Morris' ashes were scattered over the grave of Helen Dabor. David and Julia Davidson had a few moments of silence at that time.

Life continues on for the Davidson family. Julia is still living on Regent Road. Michael and Alysee and their three children are living in Ottawa. David and Kornelia are living in San Francisco.

The following is the eulogy delivered by David Frank Davidson at the funeral of his father William Morris Davidson.

I would like to thank you all for coming and for your support and for your condolences. Looking around I can see my father's associates in scouting, at work, his neighbours, and his friends and family here and in England. We gain some strength from your support and together things are easier. There is a genuine sadness and concern which reflects well on my father. Thank you again for your support.

I would like to say a few words about my father's life and what he did and his good virtues. He was born in Burton-on-Trent sixty-eight years ago. When he was very young, his father died and his grandmother and then his stepfather

helped to raise him. He had a happy active youth in and around farms in England. He joined the army just after he turned sixteen.

In the Army as a non-combatant, he learned to drive a truck. He was in the Eighth Army and went off to North Africa, Palestine and Turkey. He learned to speak Arabic, Turkish and Hebrew. Many of you have heard him tell stories of his times there. From this travel, he got a good sense of tolerance to men and developed a sense of equality of all men. I never, and I am sure you never, heard him slight any man.

After his time in the Army, he came to Canada to work as a plumber for Rapid Plumbing with Harry Burrige and then with Werner. He was content with plumbing and a hard worker. He was never too tired though, not to help his neighbours. It was as a plumber that he met my mother Julie, married and moved to Regent Road in Downsview.

As children we talked my father into joining scouting. We left and he stayed on for twenty-five years. His scouts stayed with him as long as they could. It was really the oldest floor hockey team in Canada. Many of them have told me, they respected and loved him. Honour was important to him. So was serving his community and helping the youth of that community.

He was an outdoors man, a camper and a naturalist. With my mother, he was always happy outdoors, whether he was gardening or feeding the birds in parks. In the backyard he collected and planted trees, and knew the names of most living things, whether plant, bird or insect.

It was part of a kinship to nature that he had and he delighted in nature, as my mother says. It was typical of him to enjoy nature. During a recent lunar eclipse, my father was out late at night with my brother Michael, his wife Alysee, and Ed Kamo our neighbour, to watch the sky. This is what he loved doing, being with people, his family, friends and neighbours.

Julia and Morris had moved to Regent Road in 1952. Throughout the years, the community there has become closer and closer. With the recent deaths of two other neighbours as well as my father, the community has suffered a real loss, but they are rallying together to support each other. This community was very beautiful and precious. Neighbours stayed neighbours for many years.

He was a good father, a good example to guide your life by. I want to tell you a story that my mother probably has never heard before. When I had misbehaved once when I was young, my mother told me that my father would straighten me out when he got home from work. He did get home and took me into my room and asked me what was the trouble. My father was unable, however, to hit me to correct me, it was something he really could not do. He could not hit his children. To give the impression to my mother that he was corporally punishing me, he hit his hands together to make the sound of spanking.

He was honest and trusting, never having a bad word for anyone. He was giving and not blinded by status. He was uncomfortable with rudeness and vulgarity.

He spent his last days active just as he wished. He visited scout camp and also took his English relatives touring. On his last trip to visit me in California, we visited many parks in the western United States. He visited Ottawa often to be with his grandchildren. I believe he was contented with life and then he died quickly. He will be missed by all.

I have known how my father behaved at other funerals. He accepted the passing of his friends and family, as I know he would want us to accept his passing. Thank you.



William Morris Davidson when he was enlisted in the British Army, sometime between 1937 to 1946.



Julia Tilly (nee Gaudesus) and William Morris Davidson in front of Saint Barnabas' Church in Toronto on the day of their wedding September 4, 1948.

Small Corrections and Additions to the Preceding Notes on the English Family of Morris Davidson based on Information from Barb Wrighting

(Barbara.wrighting@btinternet.com) ...

Elsie was born in 1898 in Saltby. Her son David was born in 1917.

Elsie married William Davidson on 12 Feb 1921. William was 60 years old at the time, Elsie was 23 but gave her age as 27. William was born in Bolton Lancashire in 1860. He died in 1923. His father was born in Scotland. William's first wife died in Leicester mental asylum. William Davidson left £1870 in his will but Elsie had to fight to get it from the solicitors

Barb's mum told her Elsie was very pleased when William died, she wanted to leave him but he said he would keep all the boys. She was pregnant with Robert when he died. After William died, Elsie moved down south where her brother was a gamekeeper and in Feb 1926 married Cecil Collins. Eileen was born in June.

William Morris Davidson was William for his father & Morris his fathers mothers maiden name. David (Barb's father) lived in Sproxton with his grandparents until William died when he went to live with the rest of the family.

Note from Barb Wrighting to my brother:

>> I have recently been in touch with a chap called Phil Williams whose grandma had an 8 year 'fling' with William between his wife going into the mental asylum & his marrying Elsie. His mother was the result of said fling. He still lives in Leicester about 20 minutes from me. It would also seem that there is the possibility that when he married his 'mad' wife he was a bigamist. I'm still digging around on that.

The main part of this document is a chapter from the Davidson Family History –

“The Gaudesus and Dabrovolskis Families, and The History of William Morris Davidson” compiled by Michael Davidson (sleepless3@gmail.com) and David Davidson (dfd@stanford.edu) back in 1991 based on anecdotes told to us by our father, William Morris Davidson.