



## BOOK RELEASE

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### *Hurricane Pilot*

### *The Wartime Letters of W.O. Harry L. Gill, D.F.M., 1940-1943*

Edited by Brent Wilson with Barbara J. Gill

“September 25, 1941

Dear Mother,

Boy oh boy, but this flying sure is great and

I sure have had some thrills since I have been here.”

— Harry L. Gill

Nothing fills the mind more with scenes of valour and bravery than imaging the exciting life of a Second World War fighter pilot. With an average lifespan measured in weeks, only the bravest men took on this most dangerous of tasks. Harry L. Gill was one of these men. Born and raised in Devon, New Brunswick, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in the summer of 1940 at the age of eighteen. By April of the following year, he had earned his pilot's wings and was sent to Great Britain to join a Royal Air Force squadron. Soon, he had won the Distinguished Flying Medal and was promoted. In April 1942, his Hurricane fighter bomber squadron was transferred to India. Ten months later, he was shot down over Burma.

Throughout his training and service, Gill corresponded regularly with his parents and siblings, sending sixty letters between August 1940 and November 1942. These letters, his collection of personal photos, and other items (including his flight log) form the basis of this book.

The letters show his growing maturity from a small-town boy to a Canadian serviceman fighting an enemy half a world away from home. His love for home and family is reflected in the letters. He used his wonderful sense of humour to allay his family's, and his own, fears. Self-effacing to the end, he played down his own accomplishments while showing great pride in the RCAF and its accomplishments.

These letters make a valuable contribution to the understanding of war and society and how the war affected those at the front.

*Hurricane Pilot* is volume 10 in the acclaimed New Brunswick Military Heritage Series. Published by Goose Lane Editions in cooperation with the Military and Strategic Studies Program at the University of New Brunswick and the Canadian War Museum, this series is part of the New Brunswick Military Heritage Project.

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## About the Editors

BRENT WILSON holds a BA (Hons) degree in History from Brock University and an MA from the University of New Brunswick. He was Curator of the York-Sunbury Historical Museum in Fredericton from 1978 to 1984 and has worked at the Brigadier Milton F. Gregg, VC, Centre for the Study of War and Society at the University of New Brunswick for the last seventeen years. He is the Executive Editor of the Centre's *Journal of Conflict Studies* and Co-Director of the New Brunswick Military Heritage Project. He also teaches military history courses in UNB's Department of History and has taught at CFB Gaagetown through the Continuing Studies Department of the Royal Military College. He is a specialist in eighteenth-century military history and the First World War. He has written on contemporary subjects like American counterterrorism policy, as well as on New Brunswick's military history in the nineteenth century. He is presently engaged in a study being undertaken by the Gregg Centre on the deployment of Canadian Forces troops to Afghanistan. He is also preparing a study of New Brunswick's contribution to the War in South Africa, 1899-1902, for the NBMHP's book series slated for publication in Spring 2009.

BARBARA J. GILL is a poet, writer, visual artist, and registered nurse. Her service-oriented background includes political, labour, and human rights activism. Her poetry has been published in Canada, the United States, and Israel. In 2006 she published *Soul Gifts: The World's Self-Help Book* and its companion *Soul Rubbing Exercises: A Personal Vision Quest*. Barbara is the oldest niece of Harry L. Gill.

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— *Canadian Army Journal*

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— *The Canadian Historical Review*

-30-

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