

Record of Service

Podcast Episode 2: Do No Harm

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[Record of Service](#), a podcast presented by [The Memory Project](#), a program of [Historica Canada](#). In this series, we bring you interviews with Canada's veterans—their stories of life, loss and service. (Click [here](#) to view the entire series.)

These stories from Canadian medical personnel serving during the [Second World War](#) and a sly ship doctor treating sailors during the [Korean War](#) highlight gruesome and absurd moments of both conflicts.

Music Credit: Eveygeny Grinko – Winter Sunshine (FMA)

Transcript

Riley Burns: “I didn’t want to be an Indian, I didn’t know who in the hell I wanted to be. I wasn’t accepted by the white man; I was accepted by my own people in my reserve.”

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Betty Dimcock: “We had to wash out the dirty, old, soiled, infected dressings and hang them on the line in the sun and used them the next night, that night. Boys fanned flies off the wounds in the daytime, to try to prevent the maggots. And we had of course unfamiliar medication and treatment. It was quite a new experience.”

Maia Foster: Welcome to “Record of Service”, a podcast presented by Historica Canada. I’m your host, Maia Foster. In this series, we bring you interviews with Canada’s veterans—their stories of life, loss, and service. This episode, we hear from Canadian medical personnel. We’re all over the map today, with accounts from the North African Campaign, D-Day, the Korean War, and more. But first, tales from the Canadian Dental Corps.

Just a warning to those that may be listening with young ones around, today’s story contains graphic descriptions.

MF: This led to the creation of the Canadian Dental Corps, which trained dental students to use field equipment. Dr. Ralph Yorsh was one such student. He studied dentistry at the University of Toronto, graduating in early 1944 and serving with the Royal Canadian Air Force in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

RY: "Our major job was keeping people healthy and comfortable. About the only thing which was - and this didn't help the war effort but it certainly helped this one man - we had one man on the station and I looked at him and I said, 'Come into the dental clinic, I want to have a look at you.' And he came in. Well, this poor fellow, his upper front teeth literally were so badly crowded that they stuck straight out. He couldn't close his lips. I'm sure he'd never kissed a girl in his life. He came from some village somewhere and no one had done anything about it. I thought he would be much happier, and these were the only facilities available to me at the time, so I said to him, 'We'll take up your upper four front teeth, your central and lateral incisors, I will make you a temporary partial denture to replace these and we will bring these teeth in where I feel we can get them and where they belong.'

"Well, I proceeded to do that and he was the most delighted man in the

"It was sort of crazy when I first started out because they were just building the new hospital building. I swept the floor, scrubbed the floor, shined it and waxed it and after I moved beds in, I was taught how to make a hospital bed and a few more basic things and I became a medical orderly.

"Maybe I caught on quickly, but soon I was put in charge of all the medical orderlies. They noticed that I had my grade 12 and the double-entry bookkeeping and a year and a half of typing and shorthand, so they moved me to the orderly room, where it was only staffed at that time by a major and one sergeant. A letter came in from No. 7 Canadian General Hospital in Debert saying they wanted a "category A" trained clerk to join their unit to proceed overseas immediately. And I had gained the weight, so I weighed 120, so I asked the major for a medical exam, he told me, go see a Medical

RB: "...came streaking just over the treetops and you could see the flashes of the machine gun and the cannon from the wings as they were coming straight at us. But he was so low – and you could hear the snap of the bullets as they went overhead - but he was so low that the bullets were all coming horizontal[ly] above us. So, they would hit somewhere beyond where we were; nobody was injured."

from the same village. They were brothers. Neither one knew the other one was still alive, neither one knew that his brother was in that camp, and yet

