

British Columbia

'A trailblazer': Decorated B.C. war hero George Chow dead at 99

Chow was part of the first all-Canadian crew to shoot down a German plane on English soil

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George Chow was one of roughly 600 Chinese Canadians who served in the Second World War. (Vincent Chan)

Master warrant officer (Retd) George Chow was many things. A soldier. A father. An instructor. A decorated war hero.

Chow died Nov. 6, the day after he turned 99 and just a few days away from Remembrance Day.

"We have lost a trailblazer who broke barriers and showed young children what service, duty and love for one's country are," Canada's National Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan posted on Twitter in Chow's honour.

"You may be gone, my friend, but you will never be forgotten."

Chow was born in Victoria and later settled in Saanich on Vancouver Island where his father grew vegetables for markets.

Two months shy of his 19th birthday, a young Chow walked into the recruitment centre in Victoria and enlisted to serve in the Second World War — all without his parent's knowledge, according to the Chinese Canadian Military Museum.





A young George Chow in England in 1943. During the war, he married his English bride. Eventually, Chow, his wife and their children returned home to Canada. (The Chinese Canadian Military Museum)

After training in both Vancouver and Windsor, Ont., Chow boarded a ship from Halifax to England.

One of the defining moments of Chow's military career came when he was assigned to a base at Colchester, England. It was near that base that his group became the first all-Canadian gun crew to shoot down a German plane.

"He did not shy away from being at the ready to serve," said Sajjan in the tweet.

Harjit Sajjan 
@HarjitSajjan 

I'm deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Master Warrant Officer (Retd) George Chow, who bravely served Canada during the Second World War.

6:49 PM · Nov 9, 2020 

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Chow's service was not marked by one single event; he fought on the beaches of Normandy and his crew moved through France, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands during the war.

"You just live from day to day, actually. If someone says they weren't scared then they're just lying. Darn right you're scared," Chow said [in an article](#) for Veterans Affairs Canada.

And the victory in Europe wasn't enough for Chow, who then volunteered to fight Japan in the Pacific. But after America dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he returned home to Canada with an English wife and his children in tow.

When asked by Veterans Affairs why he got married in wartime, his answer was simple.

"Love at first sight, stuff like that. All that jazz, you know," he said.



George Chow pictured with his artillery group. Chow enlisted in the army at the age of 18, without his parent's knowledge. (The Chinese Canadian Military Museum)

Following WW II, Chow joined the 15th Field Regiment, RCA, in Vancouver as a gunnery instructor, eventually reaching the rank of master warrant officer.

In 1963, Chow was honourably discharged.

But his service always remained a part of him. His daughter Pat Wilson can remember how he loved his uniform.

"He would polish those boots until they shone, he would polish his medals and he would show me how to do it," she told CBC's On The Coast host Gloria Macarenko.

Chow spent much of his retired life touring schools to speak with children about Remembrance Day. Wilson says her father always spoke candidly with them.

"There is no glory in war," she remembers him saying during his speeches.

Among his many accolades, Chow received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012 and he was awarded the rank of Knight of the National Order of the Legion of Honour by the French government and was presented the Medal of Legion of Honour by the consulate general of France in Vancouver, in April 2015.

Wilson says her family plans to visit the cenotaph in North Vancouver on Remembrance Day to honour her father's memory.

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