

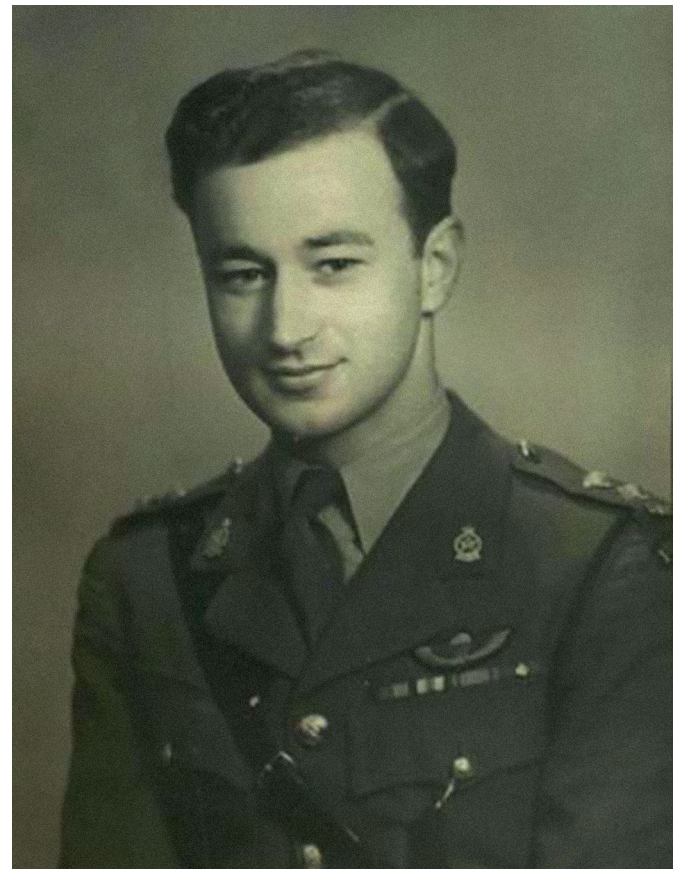


**SUPPLY
LINE**

Keith MacLellan

Canadian Army

When Keith was 25, he witnessed the horrors of war while helping to liberate the notorious Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.



Studio portrait of Keith MacLellan
Courtesy of the MacLellan family

Early Years

Born in Aylmer, Quebec, in 1920, Keith William MacLellan grew up in Montréal. He attended McGill University, where he took

Political Science and pre-law. While at McGill, he joined the Canadian Officer Training Corps.

Witness to the Horrors of War

Putting his academic studies on hold, Keith joined the Royal Montreal Regiment, and became an officer in the Canadian Army. He was sent overseas, arriving in England in February 1944.

In September 1944, he joined the Special Air Service, an elite special forces unit within the British Army. Parachuting into northwestern Europe in November 1944, he took part in secret operations behind enemy lines, ahead of advancing **Allied** forces. During his service, he undertook missions in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, and Norway.

On 15 April 1945, Keith's unit reached Bergen-Belsen – a Nazi concentration camp – before other Allied troops in the area arrived. He was one of the first Allied soldiers to enter the camp, and the first Canadian.

Inside, he found unimaginable horrors. In addition to countless dead, both unburied and in mass graves, there were tens of thousands of sick and starving inmates, many of whom could not be saved. It was at Belsen, just weeks before the Allies entered, that Anne Frank (whose wartime diary was later published) and her sister Margot had died.

Life in Canada After the War

In 1946, Keith married Marie Antoinette LeGrelle, a Belgian countess he had met during the war. They had four children.

In 1947, after Keith completed a Master's degree at Oxford, in England, the family returned to Canada, where Keith joined the Department of External Affairs.

He served as Canada's ambassador to several countries during his diplomatic career, including Pakistan, Yugoslavia and Syria. Both the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Canadian Jewish Congress have recognized his role as a liberator of Belsen. He died in 1998.

Vocabulary

Allied

The countries, including Canada, that joined together in opposing the Axis powers during the Second World War. The largest Allied nations were the United Kingdom, the United States, the Soviet Union and China.