

Kenneth Franklin Belcher

A Brief History

Alan Belcher

Denville NJ

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Kenneth Franklin Belcher

Short Biography

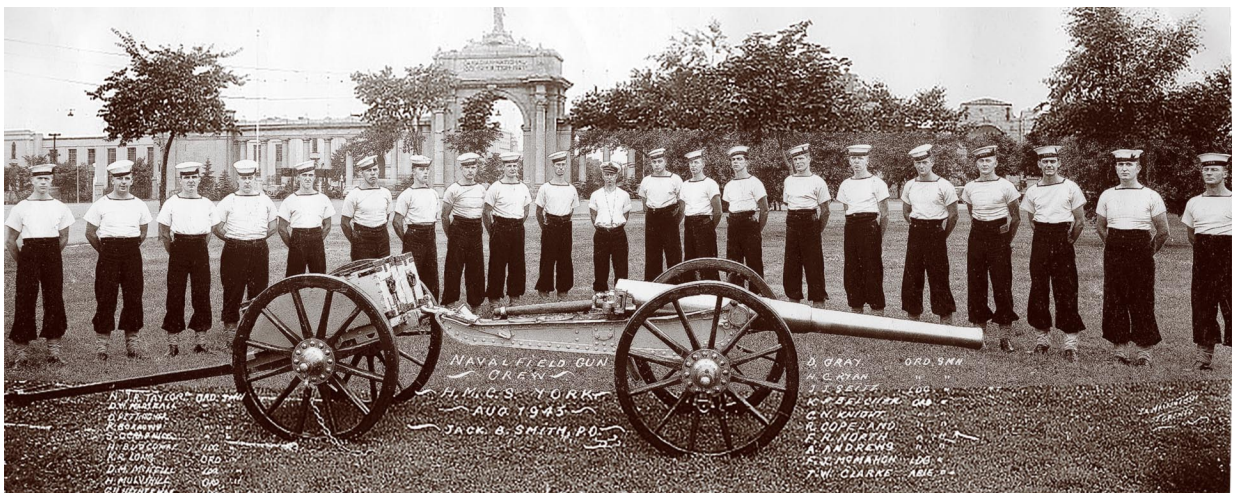
Kenneth Franklin Belcher was born in Toronto on March 25, 1917. Through the 1920s, he grew up on Evans Avenue in Etobicoke with his younger sister, Meryl, his father, Hugh, a Ford Motor Company Engineering Technician and his mother Hazel a farm girl from the Shelburne area.

Through the 1930s, he completed Grade 11 at Western Technical High School and attended Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph for two- and one-half years. It was there he got his first military exposure as corporal in the Canadian Officer Training Corps. Besides studying his favorite subject which was scientific farming, he participated in rugby, baseball, boxing and wrestling.

In the latter half of the 1930s, he supported his education by working as a farm hand in the Bolton and Shelburne areas, a farm manager, a machinist and was employed at Canada Packers in Toronto. His goal was always to farm and, in some way, serve the community as a township councilor, which he did in 1955, or a government agricultural representative.

After the second world war, in 1946, he was able to realize his dream of owning a farm thanks to the Veterans Land Act and moved onto 100 acres near Nashville with his wife, Velma, where he milked 29 Holsteins, raised hogs, raised four children and eventually joined the Vaughan Township Police Force.

Frank entered the service as a volunteer naval reservist at HMCS York in March 1943 at age 26, where he trained and instructed in gunnery.



Frank Belcher (7th from the right) joined the Navy at HMCS York in Toronto in April 1943. He was assigned to gunnery class and worked ordinance (ammunition) below deck on convoy escorts on HMCS Beacon Hill for the duration of the war.

Picture taken from Ian MacNeill collection in Ancestry.com Royal Canadian Navy Community

In November that year he transferred to HMCS Cornwallis, at Digby Nova Scotia, training in gunnery maintenance and military regulations as Able Seaman.

In 1944, he served primarily on HMCS Beacon Hill, a new frigate, from its commissioning at Esquimalt B.C. in May 1944 until March of 1945 in Londonderry. During this time, his duty on the high seas was in the ship's magazine where he was qualified Q.R.III for gunnery maintenance and responsible for feeding large ammunition onto the elevator that delivered the shells up to the gunners on the twin 4 inch guns on the foredeck. He did this while the ship was on escort service for merchant ship convoys originating in New York City, Liverpool, Gibraltar and Southend UK to destinations in Liverpool, Halifax, NYC, Father Point Quebec, Milford Haven UK and Murmansk. In all, 12 escort duties lasting from two days to ten days each, up to six weeks at sea over a nine-month period.

Frank's most vivid memory of that time was while on patrol duty out of Londonderry, he witnessed, while on deck, a ship nearby get torpedoed and as he told it, the concussion was so great and long and loud that when it quieted down, he realized his hands had gone right through the pockets of his heavy navy overcoat without him noticing.



HMCS BEACON HILL K407
River Class Frigate

1944 1945 Senior Officer Escort Group 26
U-Boat Strike Force Londonderry Ireland

Laid down: 16 Jul 1943 Esquimalt BC Can
Launched: 06 Nov 1943
Commissioned: 16 May 1944
Paid off 05 Feb 1946
Re-Commissioned: 16 May 1949
Paid off: 1954 for Prestonian class conversion
Re-Commissioned 21 Dec 1957
Paid off: 15 Sep 1967
Fate: Broken up in 1968

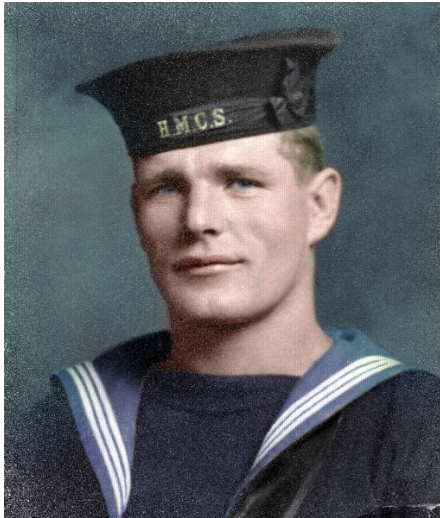


Able Seaman Frank Belcher
Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve
1943 - 1945

Colorized by Alan Belcher

He was honorably discharged from the navy on November 28, 1945. His navy experience developed a love in him for being on the water. From the first day he could afford one, he always had a power boat on Lake Simcoe and the Trent system.

As a member of the Royal Canadian Legion, he hosted annual dance parties for members and wives on his farm, served as president for a term or two, marched in every Remembrance Day parade with them and even took over the bar concession for a few years in the 60's. He remained associated with the Bolton branch 371 until passing away on February 22 1993 in his 76th year



Frank Belcher (2nd from right) with Bolton Legion Branch 371 executives. About 1990.

It was around 1955 that he joined the Vaughan Township police force for a few reasons. First, to supplement his farm income which was a stretch to support

a family of four kids. Second, he wanted to serve the community and third, from his navy experience, he knew he had the discipline to perform well.

He enjoyed the camaraderie with his fellow officers at the Maple headquarters. A few times he was seen to be visibly shaken when talking about fatal accidents he had to investigate. We kids all marveled at the new cruisers he drove with the big cherry on top and the squawky walkie talkie hanging on the dashboard and the rumble of the Nash Rambler's high powered engines provided for car chases, we guessed. He attended the Ontario Police College in Aylmer in what may have been their first graduating class in the early 1960's.

He spent much time de-escalating situations by talking and advising teenagers caught in petty crimes. He was always proud to say that in all his years on the force, he only drew and shot his weapon once and not at a person. As he told it, he was pursuing a stolen car on a back road during an ice storm (1960, I think) and the assailant pulled over and began to run across an open field. Frank waited until the thief was under an ice laden elm tree, pulled his weapon and picked off a branch high in the tree. This caused a shower of ice pellets to rain down on the poor guy who thought he had been shot multiple times. Hands were up and handcuffs were on.



Frank left the force in the mid 1960's and pursued his cash crop barley farming on 200 acres north of Orangeville. On a fateful winters day while getting the mail down the lane, he turned to see his house in flames, and far too late to do anything about it. Many pictures and documents and mementos from his past were

lost. He eventually moved to a quiet cottage on the Burnt River near Bobcageon and it was there that he slipped off the road during a snow storm on the evening of February 22, 1993 and passed away.

Frank was a faithful supporter of the Salvation Army, helping out with their fund drives and contributing regularly to the Bobcageon branch. A large portion of his life savings went to the Salvation Army in the few years leading up to his death.

He was cremated and his ashes were laid to rest in the Burnt River. He left five children and eleven grandchildren all of whom remain alive today living in far flung places from British Columbia, to New Jersey to Ontario to PEI and New Zealand. Seventeen great grandchildren came along too late to ever know him.



Frank Belcher in his 73rd year 1990