

JOHN KENNETH MACALISTER 1914-1944

Kenneth Macalister was born on July 19, 1914 and attended the GCVI from September 1928 until June 1933. He was active in extra-curricular activities ranging from rugby to the Literary Society. He was said to be popular and athletic. He graduated from the GCVI and moved on to study law at the University of Toronto where he won many prizes and awards in undergraduate studies. He was elected to Students' Council by his peers and became President in his senior year. He won one of two Rhodes scholarships and enrolled at Oxford University in September 1937 to continue his studies. He graduated first in a class of 142 students. His scholarship was renewed in 1939 and he went to the Institute of Corporate Law in Paris. It was there that he met his wife, Jeanine Lucas, and volunteered for the army. He was not accepted because of poor vision and he returned to his studies at Oxford. He would never see his wife again, although she later gave birth to a child who died. He again stood first in his class at Oxford and won a Certificate of Honour in his final Bar exams in 1940.

The same year, Macalister was admitted to field security by the British. He did various security jobs in the UK from 1940 to 1943, and became a sergeant in the intelligence corps, volunteering for the secret service.

Macalister eventually teamed up with Captain Frank Pickersgill. Both were briefed to take charge of a particular region of France to organise a resistance, and to maintain contact with headquarters in Britain. At this time Macalister attained the rank of lieutenant.

Macalister and Pickersgill were parachuted into France on the night of June 15, 1943. Unknown to them, the network they were working for had already been compromised by the Nazis and the two were captured by the Gestapo. They were imprisoned at Fresnes in France. Macalister was promoted to the rank of Captain in April of 1944 while he was in prison. Macalister and Pickersgill were evacuated from Paris in 1944 and sent to Buchenwald, one of the worst concentration camps. They were kept in a special compound with 37 other allied officers. There was no room to even sit down. They were tortured by half a dozen men, then hung on meat hooks cemented into a wall with piano wire around their necks. They suffered a slow strangulation, as they cried, "Long live France, long live England, long live Canada."

Ken Macalister was a hero who suffered horrible torture, but never told his secrets. He is remembered and missed.

Katrina Blatherwick
Kelly Sheehan
May 1995