



Flight Lieutenant Sam Estwick
Photographer: Sarah
Onyango
www.blackottawa411.weebly.com/our-black-veterans.html

Flight Lieutenant Sam Estwick

"He was always a Canadian first and black second." Eric Estwick, son

Samuel Estwick persevered. When in 1940 the coal miner from Glace Bay was rejected by the RCAF as fighter pilot material, he wrote his MP who brought the matter up in parliament. In

1941 Mr. Estwick trained as a radar technician. He was the top of his class in radar school in Clinton, Ontario. In Dec. 1942 he was sent overseas and saw active service in England, Africa and India—on aircraft, ships and air strips. Daughter Leslie Theodore noted, "He worked the radar for the planes on bombing runs and the crews would say, 'I want him on board, in case anything goes wrong.'"

Mrs. Theodore also remembered her father's answer to her question why he served when they didn't want him. Her father had heard about German U-boats cruising in Canada's waters and since his mother lived in Nova Scotia, there was no question—he would serve.

An amateur boxer from his youth, Sam honed his skills in matches with other officers on long ship journeys. Once he considered putting those skills into action when a bartender in Durban, South Africa tried to kick him out. Sam didn't need to fight thanks to an English officer. The 5'7" tall Mr. Estwick later recalled the officer's words: "Hold on, Canada. He's too big. That guy's more my size. Let me do it. And he took the guy down."¹

Sam served in the RCAF until 1963 and then worked in telecommunications in Ottawa. He helped found the Ottawa Lions Track and Field Club and the Gloucester Senior Adults' Centre. He added his leadership skills to these two organizations as president and also served terms of leadership with the Ottawa Vanier Lions Club and the Society for Technical Communication.

Sam never forgot his Armed Forces past. He was a member of the RCAF's Dodo Bird Club and of the Pre-War Club and 410 Wing.

"When Sam Estwick heard ... his name had come up in his grandson's high school history class as part of a lesson on the Second World War, he simply chuckled."² As his family noted after his passing, Sam Estwick simply did what he felt was the right thing. He never intended to be in the history books.

¹ "I remember Sam Estwick" Sept. 21, 2008,
www.atrubutetothercaf.blogspot.com

² "A Canadian Trailblazer" *The Ottawa Citizen*, Feb. 25, 2008