

DATE: August 28, 2008	STATION: CFRA 580
LOCATION: Ottawa	INTERVIEWER: Steve Madely
American World War II Blanket returned to the United States	

Steve: We are going to be speaking with Ken Paynter, a Canadian veteran. In a couple minutes from now, we are going to tell you this amazing story through which he has been able to get back to the family of an American soldier who was killed at Anzio, a blanket. One of many that were handed to Canadian soldiers by Americans. They were being used to cover the bodies of Americans that were being taken back from the front and the Americans said 'you guys can use these more' and they tossed them these blankets, U.S. Army blankets. Ken has wanted to return it to the family of an American soldier who was killed in Anzio for all these years. He was finally able to do so. Wait until you hear the story, coming right up on CFRA.

Steve: Ken Paynter is a World War II veteran, Canadian veteran, who fought in the battle for Anzio and he joins us now at CFRA. Hi Ken.

Ken: Good morning Steve.

Steve: This is a great story and I want to get you to tell how this blanket came into your possession right off the top. The Canadians are there, and I guess we have to establish ... the Germans had tremendous defences in Italy and there was thrust and counter-thrust. This was a tough, tough battle.

Ken: It was the last of Italy there that was so well established for defensive positions.

Steve: It was absolutely critical. Churchill was the main backer of the notion that you have to attack the German axis from the south. You've got to come at them from their underbelly.

Ken: He was the instigator, apparently.

Steve: So there you were, you and your fellow Canadians. What was taking place at the time that you were tossed this blanket?

Ken: Well, we had been over on the Adriatic right up from Sicily, and things got a little rough for the Americans over by the Anzio and they just weren't making the headway and were going to get pushed back in. Lady luck must have been on my side or somebody up there has been my guiding light, Steve. All the connection with the American blanket tossed at me, in late May 1944 at the battle finally won at the Anzio beachhead, south of Rome in Italy. Actually I have to thank a young lady working for Cliff Chadderton of The War Amputations of Canada, Steve. Verna Zadow via the internet she tracked down one, Marion Chard, of Alger, Michigan, whose late father served with the 540th American Combat Engineers at Anzio.

Steve: Ken, I want to ask you this question just before we bring Marion on. This had for the last several years bothered you. You knew you had this blanket that had at one time been used, along with many other U.S. Army blankets, to cover the bodies of soldiers who had been killed at the front and they were going past the Canadian group that you were apart of and they tossed these blankets and they said 'here, you guys need these, this blanket more than these fellows do'. Is that how it happened?

Ken: Yes, sort of. We Canucks joined in to prevent the German troops from circling the Americans and the British troops at the Anzio beachhead. At the time about 30 ... we took up our position along a railway embankment that was leading into Anzio, just prior to dawn. And at first daylight, a handcar with two Americans came along. Taking no chances, Mark _____ made them stop in front of me and the first thing I noticed a part of a leg was sticking out of the handcar and a blanket was covering a body, at least I could pretty well establish that just by first observation. Without hesitating, the American grabbed the blanket and tossed it to me with the words 'Sergeant, you look like you need this more than he does' and then they took off on me. It was last December when I asked you to have the American Embassy contact me to get instructions as to how I might get in touch with an Anzio veteran so I could turn the blanket over to him so it would be back on American soil and in the hands of a deserving Anzio veteran.

Steve: You wanted this American U.S. Army blanket that had been handed to you as a Canadian Sergeant, because you could use it more at the time, you wanted it to go to a family, an American family, as a memento of either their father's service in the war or somebody else who had served in the war, perhaps had been lost at Anzio.

Ken: Well, as I mentioned to Verna Zadow there at Cliff Chadderton's office ... initially she had got in touch with somebody down in New Orleans, I think it was, who were glad to have it, but it was only a museum type of thing where I felt it would go down there and just sit in a pile somewhere, and I got back to her and I said 'maybe you could track somebody down through your Legion connections there and hopefully latch onto somebody that may have

had something to do with the Anzio beachhead'. At least it would be in the hands of somebody that could really appreciate it, perhaps even one of his own buddies.

Steve: Well they found Marion Chard in Alger, Michigan, and Marion joins us now on CFRA here in Ottawa. Good morning, Marion.

Marion: Good morning Steve and good morning Ken. It is a pleasure to be here.

Ken: Good morning, Marion.

Steve: You lost your Dad at Anzio?

Marion: Well, no. Not at Anzio. What had happened ... I lost my Dad when I was 12 but my Dad was a soldier at Anzio and he had been there for the entire duration ... for almost 4 ½ months and he was with the 540th Combat Engineers.

Steve: So, how did somebody contact you and say 'we've got a blanket a Canadian wants to get to you'.

Marion: Well, it was a real interesting story. I checked my e-mail one morning and there was a nice letter from a lady named Verna and I read it a couple of time and I went back and I thought 'what is she trying to say' so I wrote back to her and I said 'oh, I take it you're in contact with this veteran', and she said 'yes'. And I said 'well, how can I help you?' And she explained that he was trying to reunite the blanket hopefully with the soldier or the soldier's family. And I said 'well, my dear, that's going to be quite a chore because

we don't even know what the unit was or what the gentleman's name was' and I said 'so that's going to be quite a feat' and I said 'however, I'd be happy to assist you and maybe get the blanket into the hands of one of the guys who fought at Anzio' and then I explained my father's story and she wrote back and she said 'well, I called Ken and Ken would like you to have it since your Dad fought at Anzio and you're very active with all the veterans'. And I said 'I don't know what to say, it's such an honour, I'm thrilled'.

Steve: So you have the blanket?

Marion: I certainly do. It's sitting in my office in a proud spot and, my gosh, it has so much history behind it.

Steve: Well it was carefully taken care of by Ken ... right Ken? All these years you've cherished that blanket?

Ken: I've been an old deer hunter and duck hunter and that blanket always came with me for some odd ball reason. Namely, I suppose to keep warm. But in any event, it was just last fall, really Steve, that I was attempting to pack up and get rid of stuff I was hanging on to that I no longer needed or wanted, and that was when, you remember perhaps, I called you ...

Steve: I remember well.

Ken: To try to track down somebody at the American Embassy that might lead my nose in the right direction.

Steve: We got in touch with the fellows from the Devil's Brigade --- you know the joint US / Canadian operation and they said 'well, we'll try and find somebody' but The War Museum beat them to it. So that's great. I think it's terrific.

Ken: Well, I'm rather hoping Marion, that you could follow up with the American military down there and hopefully, and no doubt they do have a record of every soldier that joined up in World War II ... just like we had at DVA down in the old Daly building, and I could ... if I had any inkling of who the guy was or if anybody was enquiring about it, I could go down to central registry and pick up the file and get all the history on that guy.

Marion: That sure would be wonderful.

Steve: You can tell Ken's the guy who gets things done.

Marion: Oh, he's a go-getter (laughs).

Steve: Listen both of you ... thank you so much for joining us. We're happy that that U.S. Army blanket handed to a Canadian soldier at Anzio is now back on American soil.

Ken: Steve, your assistant Tom, made my day yesterday when he called and then when I got a little concerned about whether the blanket got to Marion or not, he said 'I'll phone her now' and as it was Verna Zadow had given me her telephone number down there, and actually I had written her prior to sending the blanket down and we had had about an hour conversation. Marion, that

long distance call you made to me must have cost you a pretty penny down there.

Marion: Honey, it was worth every penny (laughs).

Steve: OK you guys. Thanks a lot for joining us and we're very happy for both of you.

Marion: Thank you for the opportunity. God bless.

Steve: All the best.