

MUSEUM NEWS

Happy fall, everyone!

It has been a great (and busy!) start-off to the year with our Doors Open event bringing in hundreds of new, smiling faces! With a rainy September behind us, however, we are all back into the swing of things here at the museum and that means lots of exciting things on the horizon!

Little Toot Tuesdays are back once again! This weekly kids program runs every Tuesday afternoon from 2-3 o'clock and is included in the cost of admission. This is always lots of fun and includes puppet shows, crafts, games, and special activities, all new and exciting each week. Since this is October - and that means Halloween - we will not only be unveiling an all new Halloween puppet show, but also having a special Little Toot Halloween Party on the last Tuesday of the month, Oct. 29th! Check in on our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/RailwayCoastalMuseum>) throughout the month for more information and get your spook-takular costumes ready!

Speaking of little ones in the museum, the RCM holds birthday parties in the fall and winter for your little train enthusiast! The cost is \$20 per child and includes everything from the cake and pizza, to entertainment, to the coolest conductor party hats, and more. Call us at 724-5929 to celebrate your child's special day with us!

Fall also means tours. We are excited to see new faces in the museum and if you are part of a group that would like a tour of the museum call us today to book. Tours are age appropriate and include fun and educational activities. And remember, our tours are not only for children but are fun for adults too!

On October 14th, come down at 2:30 for a very special 71st anniversary commemoration of the sinking of the SS *Caribou*. Jennifer Morgan, revered author and illustrator, will share her family's story that inspired her graphic novel, *Almost Home: The Sinking of the SS Caribou*. Feel free to bring your own stories about the province during WWII.

We hope to see you soon,

The RCM Staff



Remembering Jack Ford

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Newfoundland Railway retiree and Port aux Basques native Mr. John (Jack) Ford passed away on Tuesday, September 24th at 94 years of age. Ford, who enlisted in the Royal Air Force in 1940 as a young man, served three and a half life-changing years in a Japanese Prisoner of War (POW) camp. He was direct witness to the death and destruction caused by the 1945 dropping of the atomic bomb in Nagasaki - an event which ironically resulted in his freedom and ultimately saved his life - and has since played a critical role in ensuring that Victory Over Japan Day is remembered within our province. Ford was an outspoken activist against the atrocities of modern warfare.

Like many Newfoundlanders before him, a 21 year old Jack Ford joined the war effort in 1940. He volunteered with the Royal Air Force, and was to receive an early taste of the dangers that lay ahead when his England-bound, trans-Atlantic convoy was attacked by German U-boats. However, Ford made it safely to England, and after a year of training in



aero-mechanics, was deployed to the Pacific in March of 1941. He was to be stationed in Singapore. He had never even heard of the exotic locale, but was pleasantly surprised by the tropical palm trees, sandy beaches and colourful local culture. The war in the Pacific had yet to begin, and Britain's hold on Singapore was thought to be impenetrable. Things were to change drastically in December of that year. With Japan's coordinated, surprise attacks on Pearl Harbour, Hong Kong, Malaya and Singapore, World War Two had come to the Pacific, and Ford would spend the next months fighting for the Allies and dodging Japanese capture.

On March 8th, 1942, Ford, along with 100 000 other allied soldiers, became a Japanese POW. The Japanese military was unprepared to deal with prisoners in such massive numbers. Many of Ford's companions were simply murdered at the outset. Those that were spared, however, were transported from prison to prison in the Pacific for some time, overcrowded and underfed. Malaria, malnutrition, sores, and skin ulcers ran rampant, and many soldiers grew fatally ill. Eventually, Ford was loaded onto the *Kamakura Maru* and, along with 1709 other POWs, was carried across the China Sea to Nagasaki, Japan.

Life on the ship was perhaps even more brutal than it had been in the Pacific prisons. The prisoners were forced to stay outside on the decks for the full two week journey. Many died of exposure in the harsh, subarctic conditions, and after arriving in Nagasaki on December 7th, many more perished over the following month of diseases contracted during the voyage.

Ford had arrived at Camp Fukuoka. He was to work 10 hours a day of hard labour in the Mitsubishi Shipyard, subsisting on a meager diet of rice. The POWs were subjected to severe beatings at the hands of the prison guards, forced to live in barracks infested with rats, lice and bedbugs, and deprived of basic sanitation supplies. Ford, who had entered the camps weighing 174 pounds, would weigh just 96 when he was eventually released. It wasn't until 1944 that the wider world would hear of the atrocities committed in the POW camps, the conditions making global headlines.



*"I have nothing to offer you but
blood, sweat, toil, and tears."*

-Winston Churchill

In 1940, having worked for the Newfoundland Railway for three and a half years, Ford ran to the Port aux Basques Post Office on his lunch break to pick up the mail for his family. When he saw the enlistment poster on the wall, with Churchill's famous phrase appealing to volunteers across the British Empire, he felt he had no choice but to enlist in defense of King, Country, and his loved ones in Newfoundland. Ford set out for St. John's to join the Royal Air Force, leaving his loving parents and young fiancé Margaret Payne worrying at home. Later, when asked about his experience during the war, Ford would respond: "Churchill gave all he promised and more."



A PERSONAL KIND OF TORTURE

POWs were typically deprived of any news from home or updates on the status of the war. On December 17th, 1942, guards at Camp Fukuoka - knowing that Ford was a Newfoundlander - planted a British newspaper in his room where he would be sure to see it. Meant to serve as psychological torture for the young man, the newspaper told of the recent torpedoing of the *SS Caribou*, a Newfoundland Coastal Boat, just off the coast of Ford's home town.



The *SS Caribou* - a Coastal Boat that belonged to the Newfoundland Railway. The *Caribou* was torpedoed by a German U-boat off the coast of Port aux Basques in October of 1942.



The barracks at Camp Fukuoka following the drop of the atomic bomb. Notice how the trees lean to the left from the blast.

On August 9th, 1945, Ford was working at the shipyard when he saw an Allied aircraft passing overhead. He was unaware at the time, but this aircraft was the famous *Bock's Car*, and it was carrying an atomic bomb the likes of which the world had never seen. When the bomb went off over the city, Ford had turned his back to get some green tea. He did not see the flash (which likely spared his vision), but he heard the unfathomable roar of the explosion, and felt the heat. The mushroom cloud extended over 40 000 feet into the sky. Ford later said of the experience that he "thought it might be the end of the world." Though the Mitsubishi plant was far enough from the epicenter to spare Ford's life, it was not far enough to spare the young man from witnessing the horrifying aftermath of the explosion. The bomb, nicknamed "Fat Boy", killed over 70 000 people - many of whom were civilians - , leveled 20 neighborhoods, and literally reduced human beings to ashes.

August 9th, 1945 changed Ford's life forever. It was later ascertained that due to his deteriorating health, had the war continued, he likely would not have survived another few months in the camp. As it happened, Ford was freed six days later on the day that the Allies accepted Japan's surrender. He was able to return home to Newfoundland a month later. In this way, "Fat Boy" saved Ford's life. He was able to return to his family, marry Margaret, continue working for the Newfoundland Railway (eventually becoming superintendant) and live a long life.

Rather than holding resentment towards his captors, Ford went on to spend his remaining years recounting his experience and advocating for the recognition of Victory over Japan Day and the memorialization of the atrocities that happened to the people of Nagasaki.

Ford was awarded an honorary degree from Memorial University in 2008 and the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2012 in recognition for his efforts for peace. He will be missed.



GIFT SHOP

OCTOBER FEATURE

The gift shop is chock full of new, sparkly treasures this month! We have just received a beautiful new shipment of Baltic amber pieces- some of which are pictured to the left. Warm and rich hues perfect for autumn.

Also, Steelex fans will be excited! While the new catalogue itself won't come in until November, our shelves are full of brand new merchandise. Get your first peek at the new line here.



FOR THE KIDS!

www.railwaycoastalmuseum.ca

Fun for Little Toots!

Jewelry isn't the only new and exciting merchandise our shelves. We have new Thomas the Tank Engine toys! The collectors among you will want to come in and check out the Wood Chipper pictured here, as well as the Signal Light, Engine Wash, and new Diesel Engine - D199. And don't worry. We still have all the classics as well.

