
William Foster Higgins

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DOB 4th April 1913

Will was born in Edmonton, London in April 1913. His mother Berta was from Newcastle. His father William was from London and worked as a commercial traveller in the perfumery trade. He had a younger sister, Doris who died in 1988.

Will attended Broomhill Park School, New Southgate from 1920 until 1930 where he became Captain. As a boy he learned to play the piano.

After leaving school he undertook a walking tour of the Rhine. He was a keen photographer and learned to develop his photographs. He played tennis and rugby.

Will started work during the depression years, when it was extremely difficult to find employment. He worked for the Westminster Bank in London where he made the tea and filled the ink wells at first. His parents had to promise to support him financially for two years, as the pay was not sufficient to live on.

Will met his future wife Catherine Miller at the tennis club. They married on 2 September 1939 (the day war was declared) so there was no reception and no honeymoon. His employer would not allow him to marry until the age of twenty seven.

Will volunteered to join the Royal Army Service Corps as a driver and was a Lance Corporal and later a Sergeant. During his service he spent most time in Italy. He was injured in a motorcycle accident colliding with an ambulance, losing part of his right thumb. He spent time recovering in a hospital in Naples, Italy.

During this time Jennifer was born in August 1940 in London, Valerie was born in Wick, Scotland in December 1941. Later Cath and the girls were sent to Wales to avoid the bombing in London. Kenneth was born in December 1946.

After the war, working life at the bank continued. Most spare time was spent growing vegetables, raising chickens and keeping lawns and hedges trimmed. Will continued to play the piano, although the loss of a thumb made this more difficult. A move from Southgate to Potters Bar meant a larger house and a larger garden. This garden also had many fruit trees. No car, no motor mower or hedge trimmer in these days.

Following Will's father's death a caravan was purchased that became the family's holiday retreat at the seaside for several years. The family borrowed Will's mother's car to tow the caravan.

Will undertook several study courses and successfully obtained further qualifications to enhance his banking career. Promotions at the bank led to further changes of home to Wakes Colne in Essex and also Billericay in Essex.

A dairy farm was purchased in Suffolk a few years before Will's retirement from the bank. Will lived in a flat in London during the week while Cath and Ken managed the farm. At weekends they all worked on the farm.

Will retired in 1973, after several years as Manager of the Hanover Square Branch of the National Westminster Bank. During this time computers were introduced into banking, and this branch was one of the first to use a computer.

However, his working life continued as a dairy farmer. He purchased a pedal organ and took lessons for some time. In 1985 he became the owner of a personal computer, and taught himself how to use it, even keeping the farm accounts on it.

Fifteen years later, ownership of the successful dairy farm was transferred to Ken. Will and Cath retired to a bungalow at Southwold on the Suffolk coast.

Will and Cath enjoyed taking long walks in the countryside, and created a new garden. They became active members of the Presbyterian Church. Will was one of the organists. He also joined Probus, Farmers' and Jersey Cattle Clubs.

In September 1989 Will and Cath celebrated their golden wedding in Safety Bay, Western Australia with Jenny and her family, after travelling to visit relatives in Canada and then touring New Zealand, visiting Sydney and crossing the Nullabor by train. Unfortunately, Valerie's unexpected death at the end of the month was a terrible shock for them.

Will and Cath enjoyed several summer holidays visiting Australia and after a few years decided to build a holiday house in Waikiki. They were in the process of applying for permanent residency when Cath was taken ill and died in Fremantle Hospital.

Will decided to continue with his application to stay in Australia. After returning to England to wind up his affairs he made his new home with Jenny in Waikiki in 1995. He made many new friends through the Safety Bay Probus Club, the Uniting Church in Rockingham and the Autumn Centre.

Will and Jenny managed to visit relatives in England several times. They also toured Tasmania, Adelaide, New Zealand, Italy, Cairns, Norfolk Island and Ireland. In Western Australia they visited Monkey Mia, Esperance, Albany, Pemberton and Northern Wildflowers.

In 2001, due to failing eyesight, Will's activities were restricted to some extent. He adapted well to listening to talking books from both the local library and the Association for the Blind, and enjoyed listening to classical music and the news on radio and TV. On 26 March 2004, just a few days before his 91st birthday, Will suffered a stroke resulting in a prolonged stay in Rockingham Kwinana hospital. He was transferred to Rockingham Nursing Home on 21 May 2004 and then to Greenfields Aged Care Facility on 19 September 2004.

Will has nine grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Order of Wearing	Description of Ribbon	Clasp or Emblem (if awarded)
1 1938-45 Star	Dark blue, red and light blue in three equal vertical stripes. This ribbon is worn with the dark blue stripe furthest from the left shoulder.	Battle of Britain
2 Atlantic Star	Blue, white and sea green shaded and watered. This ribbon is worn with the blue edge furthest from the left shoulder.	Air Crew Europe or France and Germany
3 Air Crew Europe Star	Light blue with black edges and in addition a narrow yellow stripe on either side.	Atlantic or France and Germany
4 Africa Star	Pale buff, with a central vertical red stripe and two narrow stripes, one dark blue, either the other light blue. This ribbon is worn with the dark blue stripe furthest from the left shoulder.	8th Army or 1st Army or North Africa 1942-43
5 Pacific Star	Dark green with red edges, a central yellow stripe, and two narrow stripes, one dark blue and the other light blue. This ribbon is worn with the dark blue stripe furthest from the left shoulder.	Burma
6 Burma Star	Dusk blue with a central red stripe and in addition two orange stripes.	Pacific
7 Italy Star	Five vertical stripes of equal width, one in red at either edge and one in green at the centre, the two intervening stripes being in white.	
8 France and Germany Star	Five vertical stripes of equal width, one in blue at either edge and one in red at the centre, the two intervening stripes being in white.	Atlantic
9 Defence Medal	Flame coloured with green edges, upon each of which is a narrow black stripe.	Silver Iced Leaves (King's Commendation for Bravery conduct. Civil)
10 War Medal 1939-45	A narrow central red stripe with a narrow white stripe on either side. A broad red stripe at either edge, and two intervening stripes in blue.	Oak leaf



The Under-Secretary of State for War presents his compliments and by Command of the Army Council has the honour to transmit the enclosed Awards granted for service during the war of 1939-45.

R.A.S.C. Record Office,
Ore Place,
Hastings.

Subject:—CAMPAIGN STARS AND DEFENCE MEDAL

Ref.: — D2R/M/HOF/208/T/18/2.6.5.

DRAWN BY

1. With reference to your claim to entitlement for the award of Campaign Stars (and/or Defence Medal), dated.....*21.11.1946-8*....., I have to inform you that your claim has been verified, and the award of Stars or Medal as shown hereunder, approved.

1939-45 Star
Gilt Star.

2. Initial free issue of sufficient material for two Medal Ribbon Bars, is enclosed. The order in which the ribbons for the Stars or Medals should be worn, is shown in above.

3. The actual Medal or Star will be issued in due course, and no further application from you is necessary, other than a change of your permanent address.

4. A stamped-address envelope is enclosed for the return of your Army Book 64 or A.F. B.108, to enable the processing agencies to be made. Documents will be returned to you as early as possible.

Yours faithfully,
for Colonel i/c R.A.S.C. Records,

Mr. L. E. Higgins...

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