

<https://www.toronto.com/news-story/9097773-long-branch-remembers-honours-veterans-with-tree-planting-project/>

Long Branch Remembers honours veterans with tree planting project

'Jack was an outgoing, jolly sort of guy': Bernice Robinson

BY TAMARA SHEPHARD TORONTO.COM

JAN 10, 2019



Bernice Robinson holds a photo of her late husband Jack, whom she nominated for a Long Branch Remembers memorial tree.
By Dan Pearce/Metroland

When Bernice Robinson looks out onto her large Long Branch backyard this spring, she'll be instantly reminded of her late husband, Jack.

Robinson, 94, recently nominated Jack, a Second World War veteran, for a memorial tree to be planted in the backyard of the Atherton Crescent storey-and-a-half red brick home they built nearly seven decades ago.

Robinson's nomination of her late husband is among the first dozen or so nominations Long Branch Neighbourhood Association has received for its Long Branch Remembers' veterans' tree memorial project.

Recently, the neighbourhood association received an Every Tree Counts community grant from Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation to plant 100 native trees on private property in honour of Long Branch veterans.

Jack and Bernice were married 70 years until Jack's death at age 94 on May 24, 2017.

"Jack was an outgoing, jolly sort of guy," Robinson recalled, seated near her Christmas tree in the living room of their home, where she has lived for 68 years. "Jack had a great sense of humour. Whatever someone said, he made something out of it."

Jack worked at Murphy's Paint, the precursor to Pittsburgh Paints, as a volunteer firefighter at the Thirty-First Street firehall, fixed toys for local children and sang in the choir and sat on the board at nearby St. Paul's United Church.

Private Jack Robinson sailed to Europe with the 48th Highlanders on his 18th birthday to fight in the Allied campaign in Italy during the Second World War.

Shrapnel injuries sent him for rehab in South Africa after which, he returned to the front lines.

Robinson met Bernice, the love of his life, in July when he returned home from war. The couple wed the following March, bought land in Long Branch, built a home and started a family of two sons, Dennis and Glenn.

On Remembrance Day, the association planted the first tree — a veterans' tree, a red maple — out in front of Long Branch Legion, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 101.

“Long Branch people talk to each other,” Christine Mercado, Long Branch Neighbourhood Association chairperson, said of the event. “This whole project is through word of mouth. Nominations have been popping up in our email.”

Email longbranchnato@gmail.com “the sooner, the better,” Mercado said, to nominate a Long Branch veteran for a memorial tree. Planting starts in April and May. The project is expected to run until the end of September.

Take our poll below: Would you nominate a loved one who is a military veteran for a Long Branch Remembers’ memorial tree?

The living memorial project is a natural fit for the still village-like, lakefront Etobicoke community, Mercado said.

“Long Branch developed in 1919 and 1920 in post-World War 1,” she said. “Before the war and after the war, a lot of veterans ended up living in Long Branch.”

Historically, Long Branch was developed as a mix of high-end and lower-end summer cottages and year-round homes, the [Etobicoke Historical Society](#) reported.

Long Branch Remembers aims to memorialize Long Branch veterans.

“We’d prefer if the veteran lived in Long Branch,” Mercado said. “We’ve had some people say, ‘my uncle served in the war and I live in Long Branch.’ We’re also looking at veterans who lived in Alderwood and New Toronto.”

The association may also need sponsors willing to plant a memorial tree on their property in honour of a nominated deceased veteran or one who no longer lives in Long Branch.

Long Branch Legion officials have provided a list of veterans for consideration, Mercado said.

Bill Zufelt, chair of the association’s history and culture committee, and his committee will also research leads from area church records, including the former St. Paul’s and [St. Margaret’s New Toronto](#), which also has submitted veterans for consideration, she added.

The project will plant native tree species, including red maple and red oak, to maintain the biodiversity of Long Branch, in consultation with University of Toronto's Urban Forestry faculty.

Last summer, two U of T biology students who are Long Branch residents worked with the association's Neighbourwoods program to inventory 2,000 Long Branch trees. Two students will continue the work this summer.

"It's all part of raising awareness of the tree canopy, the need for stewardship and the benefit of trees," said association vice-chair Judy Gibson, tree committee chairperson.

In the end, the association's veterans' memorial tree project will come full circle.

The final tree will be planted in memory of an unknown soldier at the Long Branch Legion.

Something went wrong...

RELATED LINKS

- [🔗 New Long Branch Neighbourhood Association aims to enhance community](#)
- [🔗 Long Branch's towering red oak designated a Heritage Tree](#)
- [🔗 Long Branch Neighbourhood Association launches Neighbourwoods program](#)
- [🔗 City to examine Long Branch lot severances and tree loss](#)

Tamara Shephard

Reporter

Tamara Shephard is a journalist in Etobicoke reporting hard news, politics and health and human-interest stories. Tamara loves to travel and is a fan of foreign and independent films.