

NEIGHBOURS OF

APRIL 2020

# KANATA *Lakes*



## THE MILLARS

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# Resident Feature

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## The Millars

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PHOTOS BY IRINA FORTEY

### Committed to Service, to Country and Each Other

**It's unusual to meet a family as rooted in Ottawa as the Millars. Both Stuart and Joan were raised here, and despite a military career, Ottawa is primarily where they raised their family and where their three sons live today.**

Stuart, now 90, grew up in the LeBreton area, and attended Lisgar Collegiate. He says he recalls when the area was flat, then developed, then flattened to become the LeBreton Flats, and now watches again as its redevelopment evolves. Joan, two years his junior, grew up in the Riverdale area of Ottawa south and attended another historic Ottawa institution, Glebe Collegiate and Commerce High School.

The couple were introduced by a mutual friend and have been married for 67 years, raised three sons, saw the birth of four grandchildren and so far, two great-grandchildren, with one more on the way this May.

From an early career as a surveyor, Stuart was drawn to the military where he served for 33 “and a third” years. The life of a military family is one of travel, of postings to various locations, and sometimes, raising children in far off locations.

As a Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) pilot during the Cold War, Stuart flew F-86 Sabre jet fighters with the 4th Fighter Wing based in Germany. Here, the couple welcomed their first son, Vance, who was the first Canadian to be born at the base.

Returning to Canada, Stuart was posted to RCAF Station Macdonald in

Manitoba as a flight instructor. Following Macdonald, their next posting was to Winnipeg where they welcomed their second son Brant, followed two years later by David.

Raising a family can be challenging under the most mundane circumstances, but even more so when it involves distance from family and multiple relocations along the way. Joan says that despite the number of times Stuart was away on missions, she found great support among other military wives and families, adding that she would absolutely do it all again.

Subsequent postings saw the family returning to Ottawa, where Stuart flew the McDonnell CF-101 Voodoo; and six years spent in Chatham, New Brunswick with the 416 Tactical Fighter Squadron. He then attended the Air War College (AWC), the senior Professional Military Education (PME) school of the U.S. Air Force headquartered at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama where he represented Canada as the sole student studying at the Post-Graduate level. He obtained a Masters in International Strategic Studies.

While Joan says they loved Germany and their time there and appreciated the many places they lived over the years, it was natural that the family would return to Ottawa, making it their permanent home. Stuart retired from service after 33 “and a third” years with the rank of Brigadier-General.

This was not to be the end of the family's connection to service however. After high school, Vance entered the military, following in his father's

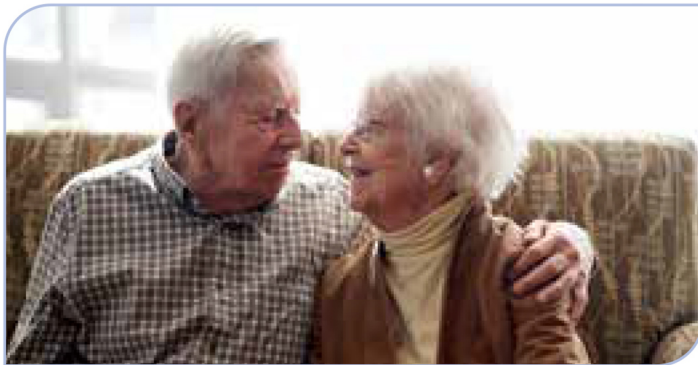


footsteps as a fighter pilot. Youngest son David entered the military as an aerospace engineer and recently retired after 35 years and with the rank of Lieutenant-General. Brant chose to serve in another way and recently retired from 35 years serving in the federal government with Transport Canada.

David says it was quite natural, growing up in a military family and seeing the dedication of his parents in their service to country, that he and his brothers would follow similar paths.

As their sons grew, so did their family with the addition of David's sons, Scott, now an RCMP officer, and Jason, an aerospace engineer like his father; and Vance's children Ryan, also an aerospace engineer and, by coincidence working at the same firm as his cousin, and Nathalie, a PhD working out of the University of Regina. The next generation is also growing with Nathalie adding two sons to the family tree.

As many couples will do, over the years Stuart and Joan made plans for their later years deciding that, when the time was right, they would leave home ownership in favour of retirement living. That time came and a year ago, the couple moved into Red Oak Retirement Residence where they acquired a two-bedroom suite.



Joan credits their sons for ensuring they had a seamless transition from one home to the next, calling it thoughtful and deliberate. She says there was a bit of an adjustment, moving from completely flexible schedules to more regulated meal times but also says it was a minor change and one they adapted to quite quickly. Taking advantage of the bistro, the multi-purpose facility, the amazing dining room, the theatre, the pool hall, the bar/lounge, the residence's library, the heated pool and hot tub, and endless social activities, she says it has opened a new chapter for them. "Had we stayed at home we would have been very set in routines and likely not getting out as much. Here, there are always people to chat with, always things to do and, while you can do as little or as much as you want, it is very hard not to get caught up in all of the social opportunities."

Joan and Stuart's move also required a transition for Brant, who had remained living with his parents to assist them in their daily living. With their upcoming transition, David and Vance also worked to put in place next steps for their brother, moving him into independent living, just a short walk from his parents and a short drive away from David and his wife, all of whom he sees regularly throughout the week.

Looking back at their lives, Joan offers some advice: If you're at that age, don't wait to consider retirement living. Plan to downsize early and do it all when you're younger. Within Red Oak they have found people they had not seen for years but had met over time through the military and other activities, and have truly found 'home'.

She also has advice for parents: "Raising our family, we tried to treat all of the children equally and we hoped for them to be healthy, happy and successful in their own way. We believe they all are. It is important for any child to be credited for their success, to be disciplined, without being too hard on setbacks, and for their happiness to be primary."

