CULTURAL MOMENT
A Kenilworth Soldier's Story of Sorrow and Hope

John Austin Vincent Dinneen was born in 1917, son of Patrick Joseph and Ellen F. (Bodendistle) Dinneen of Kenilworth.

Austin joined the 24th Canadian Field Ambulance Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps in 1939 and served overseas for 6 years. One operation he served in was the brutal Battle of Monte Cassino. When asked about it by his son on the 40th Anniversary, Austin was too overcome to reply. Many of Austin's friends and comrades were lost in that and other battles.

In the Spring of 1943 Private Dinneen met an Irish colleen (colleen in Irish is Cailín and the meaning of Cailín is girl) at a dance in Manchester. They were so taken with each other that he made sure they met at many more dances. Margaret Jane Malloy (Peggy) soon checked out the Church Austin attended and then began a long courtship. The end of European combat meant that Austin might be sent to the Pacific. So Austin and Peggy married on March 15th, 1945 and lived in London for a year. In May 1946, Peggy, pregnant, and on her own, sailed to Canada to meet Austin's family in Kenilworth. They had become acquainted through correspondence beforehand.

Peggy's due date was the middle of August. Austin hadn't been discharged yet and there was great speculation about who would arrive first: Austin or the baby. Austin did arrive first and was in Canada when his son was born.

A few weeks later Peggy encountered one of the parishioners at Sacred Heart Church in Kenilworth. Mrs. Epoch asked Peggy what the baby's name was. Peggy replied that he was named Jerome after a friend of Austin's who did not return from the war. Mrs. Epoch said, "I was Jerome's mother."

War leads inevitably to tragedy, but some tragic stories lead to hopefulness that brings individuals, families, and communities together. Those who have lost their lives in war are remembered in innumerable ways by those who remain.

Edited from Austin Dinneen's story, submitted By Gail Donald, Wellington North Cultural Roundtable with permission by Kevin Dinneen