



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION

• 44th PARLIAMENT

• VOLUME 153

• NUMBER 46

THE LATE WILLIAM (BILL) FRIDGEN

Statement by:
The Honourable Bev Busson

Thursday, May 19, 2022

THE SENATE

Thursday, May 19, 2022

THE LATE WILLIAM (BILL) FRIDGEN

Hon. Bev Busson: Today, honourable senators, an unsung Canadian hero is being laid to rest. Staff Sergeant (Retired) Bill Fridgen lived to be 105 and was, until last Wednesday, May 11, one of the oldest World War II veterans and the oldest living RCMP veteran.

George William Fridgen was born in Saskatchewan, the first of 10 children, on April 27, 1917. He joined the RCMP in 1941, and after volunteering to be seconded to the Royal Canadian Navy during the Second World War, served 33 years in the force, primarily in P.E.I., Regina, Sarnia, Toronto and Ottawa.

To put Bill's incredible career and legacy in perspective, I should tell you that his RCMP regimental number shows that there have been approximately 55,000 members engaged between then and now. As his grandson stated, he was older than Betty White. Bill's grandson has recounted a couple of light stories that Bill loved to tell his grandchildren.

As part of the personal protection detail in Ottawa in the 1950s, Bill saw his fair share of world leaders.

As a highlight of his career, he and his partner were assigned by the commissioner of the day to guard the U.S. President and Mrs. Eisenhower at a Quebec fishing camp and watch over their VIP party from another boat. They were told sternly, "Never let the President out of your sight!"

The next day, with the police duo losing few fish that bit their lines, they lost a more important catch: in the chaos of a sudden thunderstorm, they lost the President and his fishing party.

As the rain abated, the other boat was finally found nearby — behind the shelter of a small island.

After Bill and his partner gifted their catch to the VIPs, the President departed in an RCMP float plane. Bill never received feedback from his superiors, except a copy of a cryptic letter from President Eisenhower thanking the RCMP for special services.

Ever a peaceful and charming man, Bill only had to draw his service revolver one time. In Summerside, P.E.I., he was assigned the task of breaking up a moonshine operation deep in the bush. After days of suspenseful surveillance in the woods with only cold, canned food to eat, Bill and his partner confronted their unsuspecting targets, pistols drawn. His excited partner blurted out, "Okay, hands, put up your boys," to the confused suspects.

During those days, members of the RCMP were forbidden to marry for five years after joining and were required to obtain permission to do so. Despite this delay, Bill and his wife, Mary, had 4 children — 2 boys and 2 girls — resulting in 11 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grandchildren. Today, in Iroquois, Ontario, a large gathering of family, friends and well-wishers — accompanied by the RCMP Honour Guard — are together to celebrate his long, fruitful and meritorious life.

Thank you for your service, Bill.
