

The War Amps

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Les Amputés de guerre

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H. CLIFFORD CHADDERTON, CC, O.Ont., OStJ, CLJ, CAE, DCL, LLD

Known to Canadians as “Mr. Veteran,” Cliff Chadderton, who held the position of Chief Executive Officer of The War Amps until 2009, was renowned as Canada's most influential developer of innovative programs and services for war, civilian and child amputees, and as a tireless advocate for veterans.

Born on May 9, 1919 in Fort William (Thunder Bay), Ontario, to William Hugh Chadderton and Gladys Muriel (Blackburn) Chadderton, he was raised in Winnipeg.

Prior to the Second World War, he worked as a news editor for Canadian Press in Winnipeg, a reporter for the Winnipeg Free Press and attended the University of Manitoba. He also played for the Winnipeg Rangers hockey team – the farm team for the New York Rangers.

Mr. Chadderton enlisted on October 15, 1939 with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles and went from a non-commissioned officer to company commander. He was four months in combat in France and Belgium. A D-Day veteran, he lost part of his right leg in October 1944 while in command of a company of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles battling for the Scheldt Estuary in Belgium and Holland.

He joined The War Amps on returning to Canada. An active member, he held a number of positions within the Association until his appointment in 1965 as Executive Secretary (later Chief Executive Officer), a position he held until 2009.

Under his leadership, he brought the Association through a transition from a solely veteran oriented organization to a charitable institution which effectively represents all amputees, and particularly child amputees. At the same time, he began the groundwork very early on to ensure that the valuable programs started by returning war amputees would be carried on well into the future.



Chief among his accomplishments was founding The War Amps internationally-renowned Child Amputee (CHAMP) Program, which assists thousands of amputee children across Canada with the cost of artificial limbs, and provides counselling and regional seminars. He also established several other programs including PLAYSAFE, to promote child safety with a “kids-to-kids” approach, Matching Mothers, to bring together new and experienced CHAMP families for advice and support, and JUMPSTART, which ensures that multiple amputee children have the computer skills they need for an independent future.

An advocate for all amputees, in 1987 he made headlines by establishing a task force to assist Thalidomide victims. This included obtaining for The War Amps consultative status to the United Nations as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and appointing a team of delegates that included Dr. John Humphrey, co-author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Dr. Gustave Gingras, honorary president of the Canadian Human Rights Foundation and internationally renowned specialist in rehabilitative medicine. This initiative ultimately resulted in the obtaining of compensation from the Canadian government.

Mr. Chadderton produced The War Amps internationally award winning Military Heritage Documentary Series, as well as published two memoirs about his experiences as a company commander in World War II. In 2008, he started a blog which gained a popular following for its telling of some of the lesser-known stories of war.

Prior to his appointment as Executive Secretary of The War Amps in 1965, Mr. Chadderton held several impressive positions: Adviser to the Minister of Labour in veterans’ rehabilitation, National Secretary of the Army Benevolent Fund, and Director of the Canadian Army Financial Welfare Program.

From 1965 to 1968, he served as Secretary and Executive Director of the Woods Committee, formed to conduct an extensive study on veterans pension legislation in Canada. The final three-volume study, acclaimed as the most important of its kind since the Second World War, made available to veterans for the first time a complete and detailed explanation of virtually every section of the Pension Act as well as resulted in some 148 recommendations to improve the legislation and its administration.

As Chairman and, at the time of his passing, Honorary Chairman, of the National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada (60 member groups), Cliff Chadderton had a long list of credits in his struggle for veterans’ rights. He appeared before hundreds of tribunals established by Veterans Affairs Canada in the pursuit of innovative pension benefits and allowances on behalf of individual veterans, their families and their children, with particular focus on the prioritization of the seriously disabled veteran. An expert in the history and evolution of veteran’s legislation in Canada and throughout the world, he appeared regularly before Committees of the House of Commons and Senate, presenting papers and recommendations regarding legislative amendments for the betterment of Canadian veterans.

He fought a successful battle to see justice served for Canada's Hong Kong veterans. As prisoners of war of the Japanese, they were forced into slave labour during the Second World War. As Patron of the Hong Kong Veterans Association, he led the fight for compensation, both at the UN Human Rights Tribunals in Geneva, Switzerland, and before the Canadian Government in Ottawa. Compensation of \$24,000 was awarded to each surviving PoW or their widow in December 1998.

Mr. Chadderton also worked tirelessly to ensure that compensation was granted to Canada's Merchant Navy veterans and was a leading voice in the successful battle for a new Canadian War Museum. He also lent his expertise and knowledge to the creation of the New Veterans Charter, acting in a consulting role so as to address the needs of releasing Canadian Armed Forces members and their families.

During his life and career, he received numerous awards, including Companion in the Order of Canada, the Order of Ontario, induction into the Canada Veterans Hall of Valour and the Terry Fox Hall of Fame, Knight in the Order of the Legion of Honour of France, the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation, the Royal Bank Award for Canadian Achievement and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal.

Cliff Chadderton considered his greatest achievement to be the creation of the CHAMP Program. It and the solid foundation of programs for amputees that he has ensured will continue well into the Association's second century will long stand as his legacy.

He is survived by his wife, Nina, sons Bill (Marlyn), Brian (Donna), stepson Gleb, stepdaughter Sandy (Clare) Richmond as well as several cherished grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

