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# ARMY BIOGRAPHY: LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SAMUEL FINDLAY CLARK, CBE, CD

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Combat Camera ZK-1620

LGen Samuel Findlay Clark

The Canadian Army emerged from the Second World War into a world completely unlike that which had been left behind in 1939. The spectre of atomic warfare loomed unspeakably large over the postwar years, and as the brushfire wars of de-colonization began to proliferate, it became clear that a fresh new set of operational and tactical realities would confront the Canadian Army in the aftermath of V-E Day. It was during the uncertain, transitive time of the late 1950s and early 1960s, that the Army would begin to initiate a series of transformations that would reshape the land forces into the precursor of their present form. One of the main proponents of this transformation was Lieutenant-General Samuel Findlay “Fin” Clark, a senior officer

during the war who came to the forefront of Canada’s military development in the postwar period, eventually rising to become the Army’s commander—the Chief of the General Staff—in 1958.

“Fin” Clark was born in Winnipeg on 17 March 1909, spending his early life and receiving his initial education there. He demonstrated an early talent for technical work which was to take him far later on during the war, and as a young man graduated with a degree in electrical engineering (BSc EE) from the University of Manitoba in 1932, and thereafter obtained a mechanical engineering degree (BSc ME) from the University of Saskatchewan in 1933. His military career began that same year, as he was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Signals and served at Camp Borden, Ontario until 1937. That year, the same one in which he married Blanche Seagram, Clark was re-assigned to Army Headquarters in Ottawa as a technical officer in the Directorate of Signals. In August 1938, freshly promoted to the rank of captain, he was appointed associate professor of electrical and mechanical engineering at the Royal Military College in Kingston. At the time of his appointment, the Commandant of RMC was Brigadier H.D.G. Crerar, and the commander of the cadet company Clark was responsible for was Major Guy Simonds. Clark would find himself rubbing professional shoulders with these officers—Simonds especially—for the rest of his army career, particularly in the looming war.

When the Second World War did finally erupt, Clark, owing to his technical expertise, was removed from RMC and appointed adjutant of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Corps Signals and served in that post in Canada until 1940. His dispatch to the United Kingdom to join the Canadian Army Overseas accompanied a promotion first to major and then to lieutenant-colonel by February 1941, when he was appointed to command the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Division Signals Regiment. His next move came in August 1942, when he was made a General Staff Officer at Canadian Military Headquarters in London.

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During the long wait prior to seeing action against the Germans, Clark attended the staff course at Camberley, England (December 1942 to May 1943) and received his promotion to the rank of colonel while in attendance there. Upon completion of the staff course he was appointed Chief Signals Officer for the headquarters of II Canadian Corps, and with a surprising rapidity that was to be a hallmark of his career Clark received his promotion to the rank of brigadier-general in late January 1944, having gone from captain to brigadier in less than six years, with as of yet no direct experience in combat.

Clark remained with the II Canadian Corps HQ despite tumultuous house-cleaning that occurred there when Lieutenant-General Guy Simonds took command in late January 1944. Simonds, according to Clark, met with his staff officers shortly after his arrival, saying: "Good morning, gentlemen. There are some of you in whom I have not much confidence. I will see you all individually the next day and tell you why." Simonds sacked the corps' Chief Engineer, the Chief Medical Officer, and the Commander Corps Royal Artillery; Clark, owing to his own considerable skills and his previous acquaintance with Simonds, stayed on at the headquarters. He retained his position with II Canadian Corps, in fact until the end of the war, and was part of the victory campaign in Northwest Europe. For his services during the war, Clark was made a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE), was awarded the Order of Orange Nassau, Degree of Commander, from the Netherlands, and held the Legion of Merit from the United States.

Following the war, Clark played a significant early role in the formation and solidification of Canadian connections with the international security networks being developed across the north Atlantic, particularly NATO. In September 1945, Clark returned to Canada from occupation duties in Germany and was appointed Deputy Chief of the General Staff at Army Headquarters in Ottawa. His repatriation was short-lived, however: in 1948 Clark was one of the Canadian officers sent to attend the Imperial Defence College at Seaford House in England. Upon completion of the IDC course, he was appointed Canadian Military Observer on the Western European Union Military Committee, one of the forerunners to the coming NATO alliance. Clark was part of a predominantly American military delegation to the WEU, which was present to observe and consult, but was not formally a part of the WEU defence scheme against the Soviet Union. As Clark would have seen for himself, these preparations, being made in combination by Britain, France, and the Low Countries, were simply not tenable given the dominant continental position of the Russians, and would be doomed to fail without committed military support from the North American nations. The WEU consultations eventually laid the groundwork for the negotiation of the NATO treaty in 1949.

Clark remained the go-to man for the emerging alliance framework and continued his overseas work as the first Canadian military representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in London in November 1949. In the previous month he had continued his explosive scaling of the military hierarchy with his promotion to the rank of major-general; at 40 years of age, he was the youngest officer who had ever attained that rank in Canadian history. As Canada's representative to NATO during the alliance's early formative years, Clark was part of the active planning for the defence of Western Europe and helped to bring about the 1951 commitment of the 27 Canadian Infantry Brigade to Germany as part of the land force defence and deterrence against the Soviet Red Army. This was a period of considerable uncertainty in the NATO countries, with conflicting defence plans and the lack of an overall command structure suited to coalition warfare. However, by the end of Clark's appointment to NATO in May 1951 small group committees had succeeded in formulating the structure of the new command system, the Allied Command Europe (ACE) and its new headquarters, the Supreme Headquarters

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Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), which were formally activated by General Eisenhower in April 1951. Both of these structures reflected significant elements of prior WEU defensive planning.

After the formation of SHAPE and his reassignment from the NATO position, Clark was briefly appointed Chairman of the Joint Staff at the Canadian Army Liaison Establishment in London, and appointment that did not last long before Clark returned to Canada to take up the position of Quartermaster General of the Canadian Army in Ottawa, in August 1951. He served in this capacity until 1955, when he was appointed General Officer Commanding, Central Command, at Oakville, Ontario.

The height of Clark's career came upon his promotion to lieutenant-general and assumption of the position of Chief of the General Staff, the Army's top command, in August 1958. During his term as CGS, Clark oversaw a period of restructuring of the Canadian Army with a view towards increased mobility and enhanced flexibility, and the implementation of new tactical doctrines focused upon the effects of nuclear weapons on the battlefield. At his instruction a new Canadian Army training manual for atomic warfare was issued in 1959 that emphasized the tactical impact of nuclear weapons that Canadian soldiers could expect to face in future battles. The 1960 publication of *The Infantry Brigade Group in Battle*, a Canadian Army operational doctrine pamphlet, further detailed the tactical employment of forces on a nuclear-ravaged battlefield, and how forces could both apply and exploit the effects of these weapons. While this may be an unrealistic proposition in hindsight, the tactical use of nuclear weapons was seen as a force equalizer at the time for the NATO militaries, which faced an overwhelming quantitative disadvantage when facing the Soviet Red Army in Europe.

Simultaneously, Clark, as CGS, was faced with the necessity of restructuring the Canadian Army to meet the demands of the government which, in early 1958, had announced the formation of a Canadian UN Standby Force for rapid deployment overseas as part of peace-support operations. As of the announcement, however, no such force actually existed, and the job of creating one largely fell to "Fin" Clark and his staff, who operated in a conceptual vacuum in terms of what the government wanted such a force to consist of. Under Clark's aegis the idea of the Standby Force as a flexible, highly adaptive formation that could be mixed-and-matched according to mission parameters was first explored, although it was further developed and implemented by his successors.

When Clark stepped down from the CGS position in October 1961, pending his own retirement, he was succeeded by Lieutenant-General Geoffrey Walsh, with whom he had served in Simonds' II Canadian Corps HQ. In retirement, Clark was chair of the National Capital Commission, overseeing many major projects, including the creation of the Garden of the Provinces (now the Garden of the Provinces and Territories) opposite the Library and Archives Canada building in Ottawa.