

MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE KITCHING, CBE, DSO, CD

Major General George Kitching, one of the last surviving Canadian divisional commanders from the Second World War, passed away at his home in Saanich, British Columbia on 15 June 1999. Only days earlier, he had been a guest of Prince Bernhard of The Netherlands, when he fell ill. General Kitching's served with the Canadian army for 26 years—his wartime service included operations in Sicily, Italy (twice), Normandy, and The Netherlands, where he was instrumental in securing the surrender of German forces; his post war service included many key appointments. Born on 19 September 1910, in Canton, China, Major General Kitching received his initial military training at the Royal Military College Sandhurst in the United Kingdom. He was commissioned into The Gloucestershire Regiment, and served in Singapore, Malaya and India before resigning his commission and moving to Canada in 1938, with the hope of joining the Canadian army. In 1939, Kitching joined The Royal Canadian Regiment and went overseas with the first contingent in 1939. He served in various line positions before attending Camberley Staff College in 1940. From January to October 1941, Kitching held several staff appointments with Headquarters 1st Canadian Division and Headquarters 1st Canadian Corps. On 1 August 1942, Kitching was promoted to lieutenant-colonel and appointed Officer Commanding The Edmonton Regiment until 13 December 1942. Returning to Headquarters 1st Canadian Division, Kitching served as the General Staff Officer 1st Grade (roughly equivalent to a modern G3) for the invasions of Sicily and Italy. In October 1943, he was promoted to

Brigadier (bypassing the rank of colonel, which was normal for the time) and given command of the 11th Infantry Brigade, 5th Canadian Armoured Division. In March 1944, he became major-general, transferred to England and appointed General Officer Commanding 4th Armoured Division,



An official Portrait of Major-General George Kitching, the General Officer Commanding 4th Canadian Armoured Division, taken in April 1944. (From the J.R. Grodzinski Canadian Army Collection)

which he led during the Battle of Normandy. At the end of his command in August 1944, Kitching was briefly given command of the 13th Canadian Infantry Brigade, a training formation in the United Kingdom. He reverted to the rank of Brigadier and was posted as Brigadier, General Staff (chief of staff) 1st Canadian Corps in November 1944, which he held until July 1945. Kitching played a key roll in all corps operations from this period on, including the surrender of German forces in Holland under Colonel-General Johannes Blaskowitz. After a tour as Vice

Quartermaster General from 1945 until 1947, he became Brigadier General Staff (Plans) at Army Headquarters, followed by Director General of Army Personnel. General Kitching went on to serve as Commandant of the Canadian Army Staff College (1951–1954), Chief of Staff Western Command and Commander 2nd Infantry Brigade in Edmonton (1954–1955), and Commander of British Columbia Area (part of Western Command; 1955–1956), after which he was promoted to major-general. From September 1956 to March 1958, he was Vice Chief of the General Staff, followed by Chairman, Canadian Joint Staff in London. He then became General Officer Commanding Central Command (the geographical area of Ontario) at Oakville from 1962 until 1965, when he retired. Kitching published a memoir¹ and was a Patron of Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific, where he established an endowment fund.² General Kitching's exceptional military career encompassed both the British and Canadian armies. He was a participant and eyewitness of some of the most significant events of this century, and as such will remain a key figure in the history of the Canadian army.



ENDNOTES

¹ *Mud and Green Fields: The Memoirs of Major-General George Kitching*: St Catherines: Vanwell Publishing, 1993.

² Donations can be sent to: General George Kitching Scholarship Endowment Fund Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific, RR 1, Victoria, BC, V9B 5T7