

## Dutch memorial tulips bloom in Bancroft



Dutch-born Corie Twilt explains the meaning of the Dutch donation of tulips. Behind her are Wendy Carser of the Horticultural Society, and Second World War veterans Ivan Gunter and Ewart Wannamaker.

By Tony Pearson

A lot of people have visited the annual Tulip Festival in Ottawa. Now the festival has developed a Bancroft extension ? and with the same source: a donation from Holland as a token of thanks for Canada's contribution to the liberation of the Netherlands in the Second World War.

When Holland was overrun by the Nazis, the Dutch royal family fled to Canada. The heir to the Dutch throne was born in a room at Ottawa's Civic Hospital, which the Canadian government temporarily declared to be Dutch territory (fulfilling the constitutional requirement that the Queen be born on Dutch soil). Then in 1944-45, the Canadian army led the fight against the Germans still occupying Holland. Many Canadian soldiers died in the Battles of the Scheldt, and the liberation of Arnhem.

But for the civilian Dutch population in the area north of the Scheldt, the biggest threat was starvation. It is remembered as the Hunger Winter, when the people were reduced to eating whatever they could ? including tulips. Another Canadian act still in the national memory is ?Operation Manna,? when the Royal Canadian Air Force dropped, not bombs, but food over famine-stricken areas. Some Dutch people wrote ?Thank You, Canada? on their rooftops as the RCAF passed overhead. When the Germans finally surrendered in May 1945, the Canadian armed forces immediately went to work distributing essential food supplies.

In thanks, Holland began shipping thousands of tulips to Ottawa. Each year, 10,000 tulips arrive in the Capital for the Tulip Festival. And last year, 1,400 made their way to Bancroft. Half went to the horticultural society, and half went to the Business Improvement Association. The focus of planting has been the Cenotaph, across from the Legion.

Last Thursday, members of the Legion plus the kids from North Hastings Children's Services gathered at this Remembrance memorial to hear Ewart Wannamaker, a Second World War veteran, and Corie Twilt, a Dutch immigrant to Canada, pay tribute to the Canadian contribution to Dutch liberation and recovery. And the red and white of the flowers glowed in the summer air, as the real meaning of the tulips was explained.