

Military Service

There is no known record of any deaf persons who joined the Canadian Armed Forces when World War II (1939-1945) broke out, probably because enlistment requirements were much more stringent than during World War I. This did not stop deaf Canadians from trying to enlist, however. For example, Douglas George Ferguson (b. June 7, 1923) of Edmonton, Alta., deafened at eight years of age from spinal meningitis and a former student at the Manitoba School for the Deaf (1932-1939) in Winnipeg, attempted on more than one occasion to enlist in the Canadian army. In a letter dated Aug. 10, 1943 from the National Selective Services, Mobilization Section of the Department of Labour, Ferguson was told that he would not be accepted into the army and was issued a certificate of medical unfitness (No. N10939) dated April 22, 1943.[23] Similar certificates were also given to other deaf Canadians who tried to enlist, among them Edward Petrone (b. Jan. 27, 1918; d. Dec. 27, 1991) of Hillcrest, Alta., another product of the Manitoba School (1931-1940), who received certificate No. N14358 dated May 18, 1943.[24] Each certificate reads (in part), "... because of his physical condition [deaf], he is not, for the time being, required to report for military training." [25]

23 R. English (assistant to the registrar, Department of Labour, National Selective Service Mobilization Section, Edmonton, Alta.), letter dated Aug. 10, 1943 in regards to Certificate of Medical Examination (no. N10939, Douglas Ferguson), Apr. 22, 1943.

24 Certificate of Medical Examination (No. N14358, Edward Petrone). Department of Labour, National Selective Service Mobilization Section, Edmonton, Alta., May 18, 1943.

25 Ibid.