

AN INTERESTING SECOND WAR 1943 B.E.M. GROUP AWARDED TO A FLIGHT SERGEANT, ROYAL AIR FORCE AND ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE FOR ENTERTAINING THE TROOPS IN CANADA



BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL G.V (MILITARY) 'FLT. SGT. LESLIE S. ROCKEY (R.A.F. 569639) R.C.A.F.', 1939-1945 STAR AND FRANCE AND GERMANY STAR, DEFENCE AND WAR MEDALS; TOGETHER WITH DOG TAGS STAMPED 'GB 53981 OFFICER LS ROCKEY CE RAF'

B.E.M. (Military Division) *London Gazette* 1 January 1943:

'Flight Sergeant Leslie Sydney Rockey, (R.A.F. 569639), No. 31 Operational Training Unit, Royal Canadian Air Force.'

Leslie S. Rockey was confirmed Flying Officer (Technical Branch) from probationary Pilot Officer, on 20 September 1944.



An article in the Westminster news, 30 August 1963 about Leslie Rockey, aged 43, then the LCC Youth Worker for Westminster and Chelsea, tells how at age 15 he joined the Royal Air Force as an aircraft apprentice (circa 1935). Serving for 10 years, including 3 years in Canada and being discharged as a Flight Lieutenant. In the article he jokes about why he was awarded the B.E.M. but it's clear it was for entertaining the troops.

Rockey is also mentioned in 'Portrait of a bomber pilot' as serving as groundcrew in 214 Squadron, which operated Wellington's, Stirling's and later Flying Fortress's from the UK. Dates for this service and how he ended up working in entertaining the troops are as yet unknown.



Condition GVF, campaign medals mounted as worn, B.E.M. with its own pin mounting as issued.

An interesting Second War B.E.M. award

TEENAGERS: 'WE WERE NEVER THEIR AGE'



—says Mr. Rocky

YOU will never hear Mr. Leslie Rockey, the LCC Youth Officer for Westminster and Chelsea, admonishing a teenager with the words, "When I was your age . . ."

"We never were their age," says Mr. Rockey. "When we were brought up we lived in entirely different social circumstances."

Forty-three years old Mr. Rockey went on to say, "It's no good trying to teach young agers in Westminster and

these traditions, Mr. Rockey was more attracted to the RAF and after leaving school in Hove at the age of 15 he became an aircraft apprentice.

He was in the R.A.F. for ten years, three of which were spent in Canada, and left the service a flight lieutenant with the B.E.M. This decoration was awarded to him for social work in Canada.

What kind of social work? "It varied from being professional best man to lifting drunks out of Saturday night hops," he grinned. In fact he did a lot of work in providing entertainment for the troops.

After leaving the R.A.F. he went to Bournemouth where for five years he studied to be an art teacher. This was followed by an appointment in Whitehaven, Cumberland, where he taught poetry in a secondary modern school. The pupils there, he recalls, were more likely to chuck the pots around than anything else.

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Mr. Rockey got his first taste of youth work at this time when he started working with a small boys' club in Whitehaven.

Then he met his wife — a former W.A.A.F. — opened their own youth club. This soon achieved official recognition from the Cumberland County Council which made a big enough grant to it for Mr. Rockey to give up his teaching job and work full time at the club. When he left Cumberland for London in 1961 the club he and his wife had started was going strong.

While talking about how he had started in youth work, Mr. Rockey said, "I don't really know what attracted me in the first place. I think you either have a vocation for the work, or you become involved. I became involved.

"I can tell you this: it's certainly more rewarding than teaching pottery in a mining district."

Next Week's Film

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