



HELMET LINER GAZETTE

The Price of Waging Peace

Author Unknown



From far and wide Canadians with patriotic love, cherish their peacekeepers. In their glowing hearts, peacekeepers command a warm fuzzy feeling in the taxpayers of the true north, not-so, strong and free. Canadian Politicians love it too. It gives them an excuse to slash defence budgets..... Besides no one gets dead keeping the peace do they?

It was a typically hot sunny day with light winds over the eastern Mediterranean on the early afternoon of August the 9th 1974. United Nations flight 51 chugged its way along the centre line of airway, Green 2, maintaining 11,000ft, at a sedate speed of 205kts. It was en route from Ismailia, Egypt to Damascus, Syria via Beirut, Lebanon. The cargo aircraft was an unarmed Canadian Forces de Havilland Canada (DHC) Buffalo, C-115461, painted in the unmistakable, distinctive United Nations livery of blue and white.

It was shortly after the latest round of the never-ending sparring between Israel and its Muslim neighbours. The UN was as usual, trying to referee the latest tension-filled peace settlement. Canada as usual, committed boots on the ground and delegated 116 Air Transport Unit (ATU) to provide logistical air support for the UN observers on the Golan Heights.

Using three Buffalo aircraft, 116's flight crews and ground support were based at Camp Shams, on the outskirts of Cairo. The tented camp, shared with the army, was described by the unit Medical Officer as being a malodorous, unsanitary and vermin-infested facility. At least half the camp dwellers were incapacitated at any given moment by watery diarrhoea and projectile vomiting, the evil twins of "gyppo-gut".

The prime concern of flight crews was not the elapsed time between en route navigation fixes but rather the elapsed time it took to anxiously run from the aircraft's parking position, on stopovers, to the nearest lavatory.

A retired 116 ATU pilot reached at his home near Peace River, Alberta, put it rather succinctly saying, *"Flying was great, country wasn't."*

The unit was tasked to operate scheduled flights six days a week, Monday through Saturday between Ismailia, Egypt and Damascus, Syria, then back to Beirut for the layover. Westerners were not welcome in Syria, being subject to constant shadowing by the military and the, not-so, secret police. It was thought better for the security of the Buffalo and its crew to lay them over in a friendly country, Lebanon.

Unfortunately the peace agreement was hanging by the most tenuous of threads. Navigating the relatively short distance between Ismailia and Damascus necessitated a rather convoluted route to avoid Israeli airspace almost doubling the mileage. The routing took flight 51 out over the Mediterranean, 50nm off shore, then back inland just south of Beirut to cross the Syrian border 25nm east of Damascus under the baleful, prying eyes of everyone's defence radars.

Forty-four year- old Captain Gary Foster commanded flight 51 and 29 year old Captain Keith Mirau was First Officer. Both were rated as superior pilots. The navigator, 39 year old Captain Robert Wicks, volunteered to fly all the extra flights he could get, so much was his hatred of, "tenting", his personal definition of dreary life at the dreaded Camp Shams.

Master Corporal Ron Spencer, the 33 year old flight engineer and 24 year old Corporal, Bruce Springer, the loadmaster, filled out the rest of the crew roster. The four passengers, Master Warrant Officer, Gaston Landry, Master Warrant Officer, Cyril Korejwo, Corporal, Michael Simpson and Corporal, Morris Kennington served on active duty with the Canadian Contingent United Nations Emergency Force (CCUNEF) at Camp Shams.

Foster, his crew and passengers were undoubtedly in good spirits, enthusiastically anticipating the attractions of a Friday and Saturday night in Beirut. This being a Friday flight meant they would enjoy a long layover of 32 hours instead of the usual 16. It would mean clean sheets, edible food without the usual hordes of flies, and allow them two consecutive peaceful nights' sleep without interruption from the noisy camp critters under canvas at Shams.

The crew had filed a standard International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) flight plan as demanded by the peace agreement, guaranteeing them the same protection as civilian airliners. As well, Syrian military over-flight clearances were passed to United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ) for distribution to all appropriate authorities! Or had they?

A few minutes after passing Beirut, First Officer Mirau made the compulsory position report (PX) to Beirut Air Traffic Control over the Dakweh Beacon, Lebanon, at 12:46 local time, (ATC) just prior to crossing the Syrian border. The ancient city of Damascus would have just been coming into view over the snub nose of the Buffalo. Mirau promptly changed to Damascus ATC, repeated the routine PX, including the estimate for Damascus, received the latest weather from them and read back the Damascus approach clearance at 12:51:

"Roger we are cleared to Damascus VOR to maintain 8000 cross Mike Echo Zulu at 10,000 or above."..... This was the last transmission heard from UN flight 51! Or was it?

Six minutes later and 11,000ft below them, an employee of the American Embassy in Damascus was returning from days off in Beirut.

He was casually driving along the Beirut-Damascus highway at a leisurely 55mph due east when, to his astonishment, a missile passed over him traveling in the opposite direction.

He distinctly recalls seeing a second stage of the missile ignite, said he jammed on his brakes, stopped, leapt out his car and tried to visually follow the missile's trajectory.

He stated, "At that time I noticed a silver coloured plane flying in the air and it seemed to be smoking from the tail." He said that he did not see an explosion or pieces falling off the aircraft. He had probably witnessed a glancing blow, or a near-miss by either a proximity or commanded detonation by a soviet made Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) SA 2.

Purpose built as a high altitude interception missile, the SA 2 was not particularly accurate at 11,000ft, it did not have to be; its warhead contained 450lbs of high explosive (HE) fragmentation projectiles with a lethal radius of 215ft. Even a near miss could have done severe damage to UN 51.

Had the crew seen the threat coming? perhaps the launch flash of the missile to the east of them, or its tell tale smoke trail! Had they taken evasive action? According to a retired Buffalo pilot and resident of St. Catharines, "*Buffalo crews often talked, over a few beers, about how to evade a SAM attack, turning into the sun or whatever but we all agreed it was probably futile.*"

Except that an outrageous attempt to make use of one of the Buffalo's unique Short-Takeoff-or- Landing (STOL), feature just might work. Did Foster try it? The props were found against the stops in the STOL mode!

It is impossible to imagine the frantic pandemonium going on the inside the Buffalo as white-hot, flesh-tearing, shrapnel ripped through it. Had the rudder and elevator control cables in the vulnerable T-tail been severed or damaged? Were they on fire? After the first hit it was seen trailing black smoke!

Why didn't they broadcast a distress call? It could be they did! Investigators revealed evidence that the Syrians had clumsily erased two-and-a half-minutes of conversation from the ATC communication tapes!

Was the crew even alive and functioning at this point? Why didn't they bail out?..... Parachutes were not carried on light transports!

The truth of some of the mystifying questions will never be known! The Buffalo carried no flight data or cockpit voice recorders!

Back on the ground the most credible of the witnesses, the American, was horrified to see a second missile strike the Buffalo in the left wing area approximately a minute to a minute-and-a-half later. This time he said, "*it bucked and it shook and I saw pieces fall.*" There was no mistake it was a direct hit!..... The left wing was on fire and the descent attitude had suddenly increased to a steep dive.

Seconds later a third missile struck the burning hulk in the cockpit area at about 500ft above the ground. The witness explained, "*The plane blew apart and she took a nose dive from what was left of it and it went straight into the ground.*"!

A lumbering, defenseless Buffalo was no challenge for the last two, deadly accurate SA6, SAMs', capable of acquiring fast maneuvering targets from 300-69,000ft each with a lethal war head containing 135lbs of fragmentation HE.

It was the first time a Canadian military aircraft had been shot down since World War II.

The Syrians, to their credit, rushed helicopters with medics to the crash site immediately but it was obvious as soon as they arrived that there were no survivors.

Canadian and UN observers were on scene within four hours in spite of a ham-fisted attempt to misdirect the team to the site by the Syrian liaison officer. Even while being threatened by their Syrian minders at gunpoint from doing a full sweep of the debris field, the UN team surreptitiously gathered key material evidence and witness statements from locals under the very noses of their Syrian watchdogs.

The UN relied heavily on the Canadian investigation's conclusions but at the request of Canada's external affairs department, two cause factors in the shoot-down were deleted because they might embarrass the UN and Syria.

The first deletion in the secret document marked, "*For Canadian Eyes Only,*" exposes the usual muddle that so typifies most UN peace keeping operations?

What about the second deletion; it insinuates that UN 51 was nothing more than a pawn in a Machiavellian, international chess game played by Syria to checkmate the west's real or imagined support of Israel?

The Syrian enquiry continued to cling to a theory of an onboard fire and explosion until the incontrovertible evidence of missile parts found in the wreckage of the Buffalo, reliable eyewitness statements and the unmistakable dithering of the ATC communication tapes was tabled. They finally admitted that the Buffalo had indeed been shot down by a missile but that it had taken place in a border area where confused fighting was taking place and was not theirs. The Syrians steadfastly refused to accept any liability for the destruction of the aircraft or for the lives of the peacekeepers.

Sadly in August of 74 the Canadian news cycle was flooded by a media feeding frenzy on the resignation of US President Nixon on August 9th. The Toronto Globe and Mail, touted as Canada's national newspaper, gave scant coverage of the first news of flight 51 on August the 10th, the day after the shoot-down. The Globe's banner headline railed against a Toronto transit strike, eclipsing even the Nixon fiasco!

Would the American news coverage, overshadowing the loss of life of our peacekeepers, have been particularly disappointing to Prime Minister *fuddle duddle?*.....Would keeping casualty lists and worse, Canadian body counts, on the back burner have suited his government's devaluation of the military?

From mid-July to mid-August in 1974 Canada lost 25 soldiers in a 30-day period. It was the greatest loss of life in a month since the end of the Korean War.....more than any single month in Afghanistan to date.

No Highway of Heroes for the fallen nine of 74!

An airman on duty at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Trenton grouched, "*I was in Trenton working the night that they brought the bodies home.....nobody was informed until the a/c [aircraft] was 30 mins out.....The WO [Warrant Officer] on shift had to rush around and try to find enough guys with full uniforms ,(in those times we used to wear working gear) so as to act as a proper honour guard, we had to check out the mess and drag people from the barracks.*"

Members of the Canadian Forces were advised by the military brass not to wear their uniforms in public: it might offend Canadian anti-war sentiment.

The repatriation of what was left of the bodies, of the nine airmen had to represent the most vulgar, obscene..... *low*..... in respect..... *for* and *by*..... the Canadian military in history.

Over the intervening years the families of the nine, felt betrayed by the Government for failing to push for compensation from the Syrians or at least extract an official apology from them. Ottawa seemed more concerned for the sensibilities of the perpetrators and the reputation of the United Nations than for the innocent victims.

Did the government deny families of the casualties the serenity of closure by cruelly insisting the details of the atrocity be kept secret under the guise of national security to cover their shameful, political games?

It was only through the tenacious persistence of Captain Foster's widow that in 2002, the findings of the boards of enquiry were finally declassified under the freedom of information act.

Now after 28 years, the families of the nine peacekeepers would know how and why their loved ones had died.

The nine UN Peacekeepers onboard flight 51 became known as the *Buffalo Nine*. The name sanctifies the sacrifices made by Canadians serving under the UN flag. Peacekeepers are plucked from the ranks of Canada's three services, the RCMP, provincial police forces, diplomats and even civilians. They are cobbled together and sent to stinking hell-holes around the world. Like the members of 116 ATU were, they are usually unarmed, inadequately equipped, forced to live in primitive conditions, eat strange, often contaminated food, communicate in diverse languages, and put up with tortuous chains of command.

They are asked to face-off between better equipped warring factions whose visceral hatred for each other is commonly based on religious dogma or ancient tribal squabbles. On top of that, their predicament is exacerbated by the capricious antics and institutional incest of United Nations Headquarters in New York and Canadian political parties in Ottawa.

The savage Syrian missile attack on August 9th, 1974, represented the single greatest loss of life in a single event by Canadian Peacekeepers.

It was for this reason that the Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping (CAVUNP) representing military and civilian peacekeepers, pestered the government to set aside August 9th, as National Peacekeeper's Day. It wasn't until June 18th, 2008, that Bill C-287 was finally passed in parliament making August the 9th an official day in Canada, commemorating Canada's Peacekeepers.

.....**There would be no phoenix-like resurrection from the ashes for Buffalo, 461.**

The spirits of the *Buffalo Nine* are irrevocably linked forever to the DHC, Buffalo that carried them to their deaths. This rather humble utility aircraft, with Canadian Forces number, C-115461 on its tail, remembered affectionately as simply 461, came to symbolize not only the sacrifice of the *Buffalo Nine* but all Blue Berets who died in Canada's role as peace keeper to the world.

Very little that was recognizable as an aircraft was spread over a large debris field more than a mile and half long and located in a decidedly unfriendly country. Only two salvable fragments of wreckage from 461 survive. A section of the *fin* from the aircraft's *rudder* reposes in the Violent Peace Gallery of Canada's War Museum in Ottawa and one of the *propeller blades* inscribed with the names of the, *Buffalo Nine* is proudly on display at the National Air Force Museum of Canada at CFB Trenton.

Events elsewhere, however, were conspiring to provide a more fitting and tangible icon for the memory of the *Buffalo nine* and their compatriots..... and *fate*, according to famous aviation writer Ernest K. Gann, is the hunter.

On a rainy November afternoon in far off Sudan, a Buffalo construction number c/n 85 carrying registration number, 811, of the Sudanese Air Force (SuAF), attempted a landing to relieve a battalion of government troops dug in against SPLA rebel attacks. It was 1984 and the latest African coup du jour was raging in the Sudan. The rainy season had flooded the low lying airstrip forcing a landing on a nearby ridge smack in the thick of the fighting.

Tall savannah grass obscured a ditch half way down the landing patch. In spite of an otherwise superb combat landing by the Sudanese pilot, it hit the unseen ditch, snapped off the nose wheel damaged the nose structure and stranded the aircraft. As night fell it was bracketed by rebel small arms fire. Mortars thumped most of the night.

The defenders were not deterred. Daybreak found the marooned Buffalo miraculously unscathed in spite of the determined overnight rebel attack. Government forces drove the rebels off, leaving the Buffalo looking like a beached whale on the only dry spot on the muddy plain. There was only one way to get it out..... Fly it off the high and dry ridge!

Thanks to a Canadian Forces Air Attaché in Cairo, Colonel George Miller, a replacement nose wheel assembly was found, transported to the front, welded on, and the aircraft flown to Khartoum with the nose gear extended. It was the beginning of an odyssey that would take this war weary veteran from the tropical regions of the South Sahara to the snow swept ramp of Hamilton's John C. Munro International Airport.

After languishing for three years at the Khartoum airport the SuAF decided to have the aircraft repaired at the Lockheed Martin Company in South Carolina. It crow-hopped through North Africa and Europe then leap-frogged across the Atlantic via all the usual desolate watering holes with the nobbled nose wheel firmly welded down and locked.

Work on SuAF 811 at Lockheed Martin proceeded at a rate commensurate with the flow of cash from Sudan. Payments, timely at first, gradually dwindled to a trickle and finally stopped altogether leaving 811 moldering in the company's open air storage facility until they got tired of looking at it and put it up for auction as scrap metal.

.....Ironically in 2002, while 811 was awaiting its fate in South Carolina, Gloria Frazer, Mirau's widow, was receiving the secret enquiry information from the tight fists of the federal government.

A Montreal company, DAC Aviation International, a company operating Buffalos in Africa, was the successful bidder of the rusting remains of 811. Doug Nagy, one of many sharp eyed volunteers at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, (CWHM), heard of the purchase through his business and noted that DAC was willing to donate SuAF 811 to the CWHM, sans engines. Moreover, DAC would even help support the move to Hamilton by donating their resources.

Not wanting to look a gift horse in the mouth but why would the CWHM want a Buffalo? They were not the least bit sure a Buffalo would fit into the context of their collection of famous historic aircraft.

.....**The ugly duckling**

The Buffalo is a slab sided, unpressurized, twin engine turbo prop aircraft with a high tail out of proportion to its snub nose. Its long springy oleo legs attached to the single axle dual main wheels combined with a stubby nose gear make a smooth landing a real challenge for all but the virtuosity of only the very best of pilots. In short, it has all the alluring lines and charm of a two-ton cube-van with similar handling characteristics.

It wasn't meant be pretty or easy to land rather its purpose was similar to what the aforementioned delivery truck was meant to do; move medium loads of cargo or people over relatively short distances into and out of short, unimproved air strips in all weather

from the tropics to the arctic. Militarily, it fulfilled the role of a heavy-lift helicopter but better, at more than half the initial price and a quarter of the maintenance costs. Its excellent performance makes it ideal for search and rescue.

Design of the Buffalo was initially a joint US-Canadian venture to replace the DHC Caribou used by the US Army so successfully in Viet Nam. A turf-war at the start of production between the US Army and Air Force over which of them would take over fixed wing operations, resulted in the cancellation of DHC's contract and the loss of its biggest customer.

The nail in the coffin for civilian marketing of the Buffalo resulted from a calamitous STOL landing demonstration at the prestigious 1984 Farnborough Air Show. The aircraft spectacularly rolled up in a ball of fire. Fortunately there were only minor injuries giving a whole new meaning to: "any landing you can walk away from is a good one".

Would-be buyers were not impressed. Nevertheless, thanks to the relatively reasonable price tag, no doubt subsidized by the government masqueraded as foreign aid; a niche market for the Buffalo was secured in the Air Forces of third world countries for the measly 126 aircraft that were produced..... Canada bought 15.

.....Meanwhile

Doug Nagy was scratching his head trying to figure out how to convince the CWHM that although ugly, small in production numbers and not well known, the proffered Buffalo should be added to the museum. Not even the fact that the Buffalo was the progenitor of the DHC, now Bombardier, Dash-8 and all its derivatives, undisputed darling queens of the world's commuter airlines seemed convincing enough.

..... that is until one of Nagy's side kicks, Bruce Gall, remembered the 1974 Syrian incident. As Nagy recalls it, "*The "peacekeeper" theme was conceived by CWHM member Bruce Gall in November 2002 and formed the basis of our pitch to CWHM for permission to recover the airframe*".

Once the CWHM realized the significance of the project and what it represented to Canada's vaunted UN peacekeeping reputation, they embraced the project. The replication of SuAF 811, as 461 would, at least in the Canadian context, put it on a par with the museum's famous Mynarski Lancaster..... with one caveat, 811 was too far gone to ever fly again. It would be a static display only. Moreover, the 28 ft 9 in height of its T-Tail, too high to clear hangar doors.....relegated it to the ramp.

CWHM volunteers were dispatched to North Carolina and with the help of the North Carolina Aviation Museum volunteers, DAC aviation, their cranes and flat bed semi-trailers, 811 was dismantled, and trucked to Hamilton. By January of 2003 all the bits and pieces of the jig saw that was 811 were strewn on the icy cold concrete ramp at the side of the CWHM hangar. All the re-construction work, therefore, would have to be done outdoors. It would be up to Nagy to figure out how to somehow put humpty together again! Working outdoors through the finger numbing cold of Hamilton winters and the sun baked stifling humidity of summer, Nagy knew he needed a strong team leader and Keith Urbasik was it. Urbasik's crew of CWHM volunteers, although small at first but which grew over time to 20 or more, was a demographic mix of aviation enthusiasts that cut across the social fabric of the Hamilton-Niagara area and beyond. Many of the team members had no direct links to, or experience with, aviation other than a fascination with flight but what they all had in common was a willingness to embrace new untested skills and above all enthusiastic dedication. The group even included the nephew of the navigator on UN flight 51 Captain Wicks. Surprisingly only two professional pilots were on the team, Bob Yorke, retired Air Canada pilot and retired Canadian Forces Buffalo pilot, Wally Adam. Miscellaneous aircraft parts and services were either donated or paid for out of their own pockets.

Besides the hangar door problem Urbasik had other hurdles to jump. A crane was needed to attach the wings and other unwieldy large bits of fuselage into place on the fuselage. Thankfully a local construction company donated a crane and operator while the CWHM volunteers provided the expertise to make sure all the pieces of the puzzle fit.

The whole nose area including the cockpit floor, not just the nose wheel, had been severely damaged in the Sudan landing. Just by chance one of the volunteers, on a week end jaunt in his car near Newmarket, Ontario, spotted what looked like the unmistakable pug nose of a Buffalo peeking out from a pile of refuse in a roadside junk yard. Remarkably it was the nose section of the first ever Buffalo produced, c/n number one. A deal was haggled and in one day a CWHM crew removed the nose wheel well section using only metal cutting saws, large crow bars and much explicit language. The reclaimed nose wheel-well allowed easier reconstruction of the nose structure and made the aircraft safe for display.

Finally, when DAC donated the aircraft the GE YT-64-GE-4 turbine engines were long gone. Thankfully all the nacelles were intact so sand bags replaced the engines as ballast to balance the aircraft so that it would sit properly on its tricycle undercarriage. Props and reduction gear boxes were available to mount on the front of the nacelles giving the aircraft a flight ready appearance. The work continued on the unprotected ramp until completion six and-a half years and untold man-hours later.

Pilot Adam expressed the spiritual motivation of the team with the words; "*it was truly a labour of love*".

Finally in September 2008, Buffalo 811 or rather 461, was ready for painting. The CWHM briefly considered a modern yellow Search and Rescue, (SAR) scheme but it was discarded quickly when the multiple benefits of the Peacekeeper theme were considered. In a touching ceremony members of the Wicks and Landry families of the *Buffalo Nine*, painted the finishing touches of the distinctive blue and white colour scheme of the United Nations on the bulbous nose of the almost complete aircraft.

It wasn't until July of 2009, that the replication of 811 as 461 was completed with a unique rendering of its interior for display. The port cabin interior is finished in the troop carrying configuration while the starboard side and ceiling has been left naked, as it were, to expose the skeletal tubing, wires and cables of the various operating aircraft systems. There is a photo collage of the *Buffalo Nine* mounted on the forward port bulkhead.

.....The replication was complete but the re-incarnation was not..... and wouldn't be until the aircraft was formally dedicated.

Venerating a Canadian Icon of Peace

Global warming notwithstanding, People in Southern Ontario will long remember the summer of 2009, as the summer that wasn't..... except that is, for the 500-600 spectators but especially the 100 or so parade participants, who attended the dedication of Buffalo 461, August 9th, that proved to be an unexpected exception to the cloudy, cool damp summer.

When Don Bowman headed up the QEW in 2005, from his home in St Catharines towards Hamilton International Airport, he had no idea that he would put his personal touch to a string of serendipitous events that charmed the life of Buffalo SuAF, 811. He was about to embark on a journey for the next three and a half years that would test his organizational skills acquired over 25 years of military service including all three branches Army, Air and Navy.

What led Bowman to the CWHM that day? He meant only to present a cheque to David Rohrer, CEO of the CHWM, a donation on

behalf of the Royal Niagara Military Institute but learning of the Buffalo project tweaked his own connection with the shoot-down in 1974.

..... A short while after the tragedy Bowman served as a peacekeeper at Ismailia, Egypt, home of 116 ATU.

Naturally Bowman's curiosity was mightily piqued, as president of the, Cpl Albert Storm Niagara Chapter of the Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping, (CAVUNP); he was ecstatic. A hand shake clinched a collaboration of the CWHM and CAVUNP to finish and dedicate Buffalo SuAF 811 as UN flight 51, C-115461. Given the pace of reconstruction both parties reverently hoped 461 would be ready on the 35th anniversary of the Syrian atrocity, August 9th 2009.

Energized by grey power, Bowman's elderly web-savvy rangers, netted with veterans' groups world-wide with the tale of 461 and the planned dedication at Hamilton. They committed a total of 71 veterans' organizations, military, and paramilitary units with three bands, and politicians including Ontario's one and only lieutenant Governor to take part in the dedication. Major and individual sponsors were coaxed into defraying the costs of the show. Former members of 116 ATU joined the celebrations and planned a re-union the evening before the dedication.

With so many diverse units ranging from teen-agers to octogenarians and no chance for a rehearsal until the morning of the event; how do you marshal them together for a proper parade? If you are Don Bowman you get your friend, retired, no-nonsense Major Lance Steel to be Parade Commander. Steel was his name and steel was his resolve in the event he would need it.

It was raining steadily the evening of August the 8th, but it didn't dampen the spirits of the 130 pensioners and escorts of the 116 ATU re-union at the CWHM hangar. The museums cherished aircraft were pushed into corners in the hangar to make room for the re-union. Cramped as the dinner tables were what aviator would complain when surrounded by such a grand collection of planes? Many expansive yarns were spun, of ill-spent youth and past exploits that night; who knows some of them might even be true.

Although forlornly parked outside on the ramp in the rain that evening, some of the celebrants ventured out to the Buffalo to probe through it..... perhaps to even sit in the pilots' seats and muse about their role in serving the unit and by extension the UN. It would take an insensitive person not to imagine themselves seated in the aircraft no matter as crew member or passenger on Flight 51, not to sombrely visualize the horror as the missiles tore into the aircraft.

Sunrise August 9th and the celebrated Buffalo squatted bleakly in a thick cold fog. The sobering atmosphere and the promise of afternoon thunderstorms did not bode well for the pomp and pageantry planned for the afternoon. In fact the steely major was denied his promise of a morning pre-parade rehearsal by heavy, rumbling, thunderstorm rain. Somehow if the parade was to come off at all, he would have to wing it.

.....Meteorology is not an exact science!

At precisely 13:30 sharp, half an hour before the planned start of the ceremonies, the rain stopped, the skies cleared and the Buffalo sparkled in its pristine white and blue UN livery. Spectators expectantly took their seats. The prevailing mood was neither mournful nor joyous but rather quietly subdued. From a distance the plethora of Blue Berets, sprinkled liberally throughout the crowd, looked like a flowering field of prairie flax..... and the temperature began to rise.

By 14:00 hrs Major Steel re-took command from the weather elements and within minutes positioned the entire parade. His Honour, David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, arrived 12 minutes later, mounted the dais, accepted a vice regal salute, inspected the veterans, the CWHM restoration crew and the others in the parade. The inevitable speeches began.....and the temperature continued to rise.

Most of the peace keepers' reserved their most enthusiastic applause for speaker, Senator Art Eggleton, the man who manoeuvred the passing of Bill C-287, on June 18, 2008, establishing National Peacekeepers' Day making it an official day in Canada.....and the sun beat down mercilessly on the puddled rain water turning the ramp into a sauna

As Mrs. Ronda Spencer-Lee read the poem she had written in elementary school, the year that her flight engineer father was shot down onboard 461, white tissues suddenly appeared from nowhere to wipe many a leaky eye. Wreaths were laid at the portable cenotaph by dignitaries including the Silver Cross Mother, Mrs. Loyola Helen Park, mother of Cpl Simpson, passenger on 461.....as the humidex hit 43.

At 15:45 hrs August 9th, 2009, 35 years to the day, after the loss of UN Flight 51, Charles P. Beaton (ret'd), RCAF, chaplain of the CWHM performed the consecration of the Buffalo rebuilt as C115461.

This life size icon officially represents, not just the ultimate sacrifice of the crew and passengers aboard UN Flight 51 but all Canadian men and women whether military or civilian who have laid down their lives for their country in the name of peace: may God rest their souls.

Finally the mournful notes of the *Last Post* echoed around the silent ramp followed by the forlorn wail of the *Lament* played by a lonely piper. Now even the eyes of the most hardened veterans were glistening perhaps from the bright sun or more likely the memory of forgotten and fallen comrades. As military custom demands, the two minutes of silence were followed by *Reveille* and the playing of *O' Canada*. The dying notes of the national anthem were drowned out by the sound of Pratt and Whitney engines as a venerable DC-3 of the Museum performed a valiant low pass.....and in its wake, at last, came a cooling breeze.

Major Steel led the veterans in a Column of Route march past to the rousing tune of *The Maple Leaf Forever* played by the massed bands. A more appropriate choice of music to wind up the event could not have been made.

The crowd drifted away to the coolness of the hangar to partake of refreshments before heading home in their cars. They would have much to reflect on at the end of a memorable day..... that would prove to be the hottest day of the non-summer of 2009.

Epilogue

Thanks to the dedicated work and passionate attention to detail of the WCHM volunteers, 461 represents final closure for the families of the victims on flight 51 and in a general sense, all the families who lost friends and loved ones in the name of United Nations Peacekeeping. The humble Buffalo tangibly reflects closure as well for many Blue Berets who over the years have wondered why their efforts did not seem to be fully appreciated by either the government or the people of Canada. They see 461 and the monuments erected in Calgary and Winnipeg built with funds by CAVUNP units in those cities as final recognition of their noble efforts.

It is truly unfortunate that 461 cannot squeeze into the CWHM hangar but it can be viewed and toured at the Museum by requesting a ramp guide, happily supplied by the staff. The left wall of the fuselage is graced with portraits of the *Buffalo nine* and the CWHM re-construction crew.

It may be unkind to suggest that a trip to Hamilton wouldn't top many people's list of places to visit but a trip to the museum is

well worth the effort.

100 years of military presence in Farnham

By Steve Fortin (*The Maple Leaf*)



Gilbert Beaulieu, president of Farnham's local history and genealogy society, was keenly involved in those events. During his research as an amateur historian, Mr. Beaulieu discovered that Camp Farnham has often been at the heart of the area's social and economic life. In his opinion, you can't be interested in the history of Farnham and ignore the CF training centre because it is just so important to the area.

"Camp Farnham's facilities have changed a great deal from 1910, when then Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier gave the go-ahead for the centre, till now," says Mr. Beaulieu. "However, one thing has not changed: its training role. Over the years, the centre has adapted to meet CF needs as they evolved."

More recently, the Farnham training centre was of great help during two major events in recent Quebec history – the Oka crisis in 1990 and the ice storm in 1998. In both cases, when the CF had to step in to lend a hand to the civil authorities, Camp Farnham got the call.

Micheline Lamarche, president of Farnham's heritage committee, remembers it all very well. "I was born and bred in Farnham and the camp has always been an integral part of the community," she says. "After the Oka crisis, the famous Mohawk Ronald 'Lasagna' Cross was held in detention in Farnham. The eyes of Quebec and the entire country were on our little town!"

Ms. Lamarche refers to a more recent event when asked about her most precious memories about relations with the neighboring military community. "We never talk enough about the support the military provides when catastrophe strikes at home or abroad," she says. "During the 1998 ice storm, Farnham and the surrounding area were in the dark for 21 days. An eternity! Many Farnhamians had decided not to evacuate their homes. They'll all tell you that the soldiers provided invaluable assistance. They cleaned up and helped to rebuild the town. I remember that every evening, the soldiers would check the houses to make sure that the residents affected by the crisis had everything they needed. For a while, they even collected and distributed wood so people could heat their homes!"

The military community treasures this support from the local population and made sure the community was front and centre at the 100th anniversary celebrations of the Farnham training centre. Captain Philippe Boutin coordinated the media day held July 22 to promote the big August 22 event. Farnham Heritage Day, truly an excellent occasion to mark the 100th anniversary of Camp Farnham.

"The reaction to our media day was extremely encouraging. We have an excellent relationship with the town's heritage committee and the local people are very proud of the training centre's rich history," explains Capt Boutin. Moreover, to give visitors on media day a taste of just what the Farnham training centre does today, 5 Area Support Group and the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School made arrangements to have visitors take in a simulated attack exercise during a Basic Military Qualification Course and witness, among other things, a brilliant display of pyrotechnics.

The effort paid off, and it was a great success, with local residents, the CF military and civilian communities, and the media all turning out for Heritage Day and the 100th anniversary celebration of the Farnham training centre, a major social and economic hub for the area.

Ceremony honours Canadian peacekeepers

By Mahtab Hamidi-Farahani (*The Maple Leaf*)



National Peacekeepers' Day, established in 2008, commemorates Canadian personnel who have served or are serving on UN peacekeeping missions around the world. This year, it was marked August 8 with a ceremony held at Canada's Peacekeeping Monument in Ottawa. Attendees included serving and retired CF and police personnel, peacekeeping veterans, Assistant Chief of the Land Staff Major-General Alan Howard, representatives from federal departments and agencies, family members and members of the public.

The ceremony provided attendees with an opportunity to reflect on and pay tribute to the meaning of peacekeeping in Canada and to the achievements of Canadian peacekeepers over the last 50 years.

"They have not previously received the recognition I think they deserve," said UN peacekeeping veteran Colonel (Ret) Robert O'Brien.



Col O'Brien believes ceremonies such as these are absolutely vital. Without them, he said, we forget to pay tribute to those who have made sacrifices, whether in peacekeeping or on combat missions. As a result, the reasons why these sacrifices have been made are soon lost.

This year's ceremony recognized Memorial Cross recipient Sandra Good, whose husband, Trooper Brian Good, died while serving in Afghanistan. As well, Lise Ladouceur-Coates and Lisa Gallagher received the UN Dag Hammarskjöld Medal. Their husbands, RCMP Chief Superintendent Douglas Coates and RCMP Sergeant Mark Gallagher, were victims of the January 2010 earthquake while serving in Haiti.



Although Canada has only a small number of peacekeepers on the job now, Col O'Brien believes peacekeeping is an important capability for Canada to maintain. "Peacekeeping—whether it's the original mode of peacekeeping or the more robust peacemaking or peace enforcement—is best done by those who are professionally trained," he said. "We have superbly trained Canadian Forces who can do peacekeeping very well. That's an important role for Canada to play in the world."

Collaborative missions, he said, benefit everyone concerned. Not only do the CF and Canadian police forces contribute to other forces' expertise, but they learn and benefit from the expertise of forces from other participating nations, and from the people they assist. "It's a win-win situation," said Col O'Brien. "It's a benefit to Canada, as well as being a Canadian benefit to the world." He hopes peacekeeping is a role that Canada will continue to play in the years ahead.

Fixed-wings back in New Brunswick

By Capt Kevin Anderson (*The Maple Leaf*)

After an absence of 22 years, fixed wing fighter aircraft have returned to New Brunswick. The 1988 stand-down of 434 Tactical Fighter Squadron at CFB Chatham saw the CF-5 Freedom Fighter become the last military fixed-wing based in the province. It was the end of an era spanning almost 50 years, over which New Brunswick was home to the Fleet Finch II, Anson Mk I and Mk V, Vampire III and the Golden Hawks aerobatic team flying the F-86 Sabre, among others.

Two fixed-wings came home to roost earlier this year. A CF-100 Canuck and a CF-101 Voodoo “landed” at CFB Gagetown, and it was a glorious day for the Air Force despite the fact that they arrived on three flat-bed transports.

“It is nice to have a piece of our history come home,” said Chief Warrant Officer Walter Paon, 403 (Helicopter) Operational Training Squadron chief warrant officer. “Being able to show the future generations how the Air Force has evolved is important.”

The aircraft were transferred from the National Air Force Museum 8 Wing Trenton. The bulk of the recovery work was completed by Warrant Officer Jeff Levesque and his team at the Aircraft Recovery and Salvage Support Section (RASS) of the Aerospace and Telecommunications Engineering Support Squadron at Trenton.

“Normally, the RASS team provides a rapidly deployable centralized aircraft recovery and salvage capability to the Air Force,” said WO Levesque. “We’re experts in aircraft recovery and salvage techniques, so moving museum aircraft is not a typical part of our mandate but it was an opportunity for some interesting training.”

The technicians from RASS were instrumental in moving the aircraft from their original positions at the Air Force Museum to the hangar where they were disassembled and made ready for transport. In order to ensure the aircraft would arrive safely in Gagetown, they had to build support structures to secure the various aircraft parts on the flat bed trailers that were contracted to do the move. Once everything was completed on their end, WO Levesque and his team travelled to Gagetown to oversee the offloading of the aircraft at their temporary home at the 403 Squadron rocket compound. The move could not have gone smoother, a testament to the excellent quality of work provided by the RASS team.

The Voodoo and the Canuck represent aircraft that had been stationed at Royal Canadian Air Force Station/CFB Chatham, will be put on display at the New Brunswick Military History Museum (formerly the CFB Gagetown Military Museum) after restoration work is completed. The museum is undergoing a thorough review to better reflect its current mandate to collect, preserve, research and exhibit artefacts that illuminate the history and heritage of the military forces in New Brunswick, and of New Brunswickers at war, during peacetime, and on UN/NATO duty.

“The addition of these aircraft,” says CFB Gagetown base commander Colonel Michael Pearson, “is just one step in ensuring that the rich Air Force legacy— and [the legacy] of the military as a whole—of New Brunswick lives on.”

Although these aircraft will never fly again, visitors to the Museum will be able to relive the days when the sky overhead was shattered by the roar of jet engines. To learn more about the museum or the restoration project, contact museum director Capt Anderson at 506-422-2000, extension 2563.

New medal recognizes service

By Linda Coleman (*The Maple Leaf*)



CF personnel who served on Operation AUGURAL (Sudan), Op SCULPTURE (Sierra Leone), Op HESTIA (Haiti) and other overseas ops, and who have not yet been recognized, will soon be sporting the new Operational Service Medal (OSM).

Governor General Michaëlle Jean announced September 8 that Queen Elizabeth II has approved the creation of the OSM, a general service award recognizing CF personnel who, on or after October 7, 2001, served in a theatre of operations, but not in the presence of an armed enemy and not for which other medals, such as UN or NATO medals, are available.



“Be it in Haiti, Africa or any of the operations our men and women in uniform are active in, Canada contributes to international stability and security by assisting those in need,” said Defence Minister Peter MacKay. “Our new overseas recognition framework ensures that they receive the recognition that they deserve.”

Similar to the recently modified General Campaign Star and General Service Medal, the OSM is issued with a ribbon specific to the theatre or type of service being recognized. So far, six ribbons have been created, which include Haiti, Sierra Leone, South-West Asia and Sudan. In addition, a Humanitas ribbon was created to recognize humanitarian service, which will include Canada’s most recent relief efforts in Haiti. An Expedition ribbon was created to cover smaller operations conducted in dangerous circumstances outside Canada. Military service in the Middle East with the Office of the US Security Coordinator (Op PROTEUS) is eligible for the Expedition ribbon.



André Levesque, Director of Honours and Recognition, says the OSM is a welcome addition to the Canadian honours system. “The OSM fills a gap in the overseas recognition framework to provide recognition to operations for which there were no medals available and will also enable us to provide more timely recognition to those members of the Defence Team who meet the eligibility criteria.”

About 3 200 CF personnel who have not been recognized for service on a specific overseas operation will soon be receiving the OSM. The date of the inaugural ceremony will be announced by Rideau Hall at a later date.

If you’ve participated in any of the operations listed here, your unit should apply on your behalf. For more information, please visit the Directorate of Honours and Recognition at www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhr-ddhr.

Op GLADIUS: A sword for peace

By Lesley Craig (*The Maple Leaf*)



Between January and June of this year, UN Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF) facilitated the transfer of 8 639 tonnes of apples out of the Golan Heights. It is not, perhaps, what one expects to hear of the blue berets serving in Syria. Nevertheless, it speaks to the fragile calm that blankets the area.

Major Chris Renahan returned recently from a year-long tour of duty on Operation GLADIUS, the two-person Canadian contribution to UNDOF. As the military assistant to the commander of UNDOF, Maj Renahan gained a unique insight into the tensions that pervade the region, buried just under the thin veneer of peace that GLADIUS and UNDOF strive to maintain.



In a tangle of ethnic, religious and political differences, the Golan Heights stretch between Israel and Syria, connecting Lebanon and Jordan to the north and south, an area of separation acts as demarcation between the Israeli-occupied Golan and the Syrian Golan. Ranging along its length are military observation posts manned by UN troops, tasked with enforcing the ceasefire agreement of 1974.



On either side, the ceasefire agreement establishes areas of limitation in which a restricted number and type of Syrian or Israeli military personnel and equipment are permitted. The agreement further states that the area of separation, roughly 80 km long and ranging in width from one km in the south to eight in the north, must be completely demilitarized. As a result, the area of separation is under UN military control, although civil control belongs to Syria.

“I think I see that there is the potential for the two countries to resolve this and come to a solution. That being said, I think that both countries are right now satisfied with the status quo, so any significant progress would first require a big change in the local political relationship.”

—Maj Chris Renahan

“It’s very fertile land compared to a lot of the rest of Syria, so it’s heavily used by farmers for both agriculture and animal farming,” Maj Renahan says. As well as apples, crops include grapes, blueberries and wheat. Grazing land is occupied by herds of cattle, goats and sheep.



“Syria is using that land more than it has in the past. They are repopulating the area and developing civil construction projects,” Maj Renahan says. “The issue with that is – the more Syrians there are in this area of separation, the more chances there are of unintentional violations of the line that defines the Syrian side from the Israeli-occupied side.”

The lines that mark the area of separation are laid out in barrels. However, some of the barrels are several hundred meters apart, and it is not always easy to determine precisely where the line falls. It is in these areas, where there is no obvious barrier to stop people from crossing the line, that misunderstandings can occur and these misunderstandings have the potential to escalate quickly.

“The Israeli Defence Forces are very concerned for their own safety and the safety of their soldiers, and rightly so,” explains Maj Renahan. “The biggest concern is that a farmer or a shepherd will encroach across this line, the Israelis will do what they feel they need to do to protect themselves or to enforce the legitimate ceasefire line, and it’s those kinds of incidents that could quickly escalate, should somebody be detained or a shot is fired.”

In situations such as these, UNDOF moves quickly to intervene and escort the Syrian civilians back to their side of the line. UNDOF is currently adding new barrels, as necessary, to clearly mark the respective lines on the ground and, hopefully, prevent future misunderstandings.

With 1 037 troops from Austria, Canada, Croatia, India, Japan and the Philippines, who are supported by 38 international and 105 local civilian staff, UNDOF is truly a multi-national force. As the only native English-speakers deployed to UNDOF, Maj Renahan and Lieutenant- Commander Scott Guild, who served as the senior staff officer for personnel, found themselves called upon frequently to write or edit a variety of documents, from operations orders to newsletter articles.

“The biggest daily challenge was working in such a multinational organization, where we were working with soldiers and people from different cultures, all with their own military procedures and background, and many who are working in an English-speaking mission for the first time,” Maj Renahan says. “Communicating detailed tasks or information was a very big challenge, and it was important to make sure that you were really careful and thoughtful about what you were saying to make sure there was no room for misunderstanding.”

Their care paid off, helping to keep UNDOF running smoothly. Between January and June, UNDOF assisted the international committee of the Red Cross with the passage of 23 students and 14 civilians through the area of separation. They also provided medical treatment to 85 civilians and continued work on operational mine clearance; landmines sown decades ago continue to pose a threat both to UNDOF personnel and local inhabitants.

UNDOF was established May 31, 1974, in the wake of the Yom Kippur War. CF involvement in the Golan began three days later, with Op DANACA. When DANACA ended in March 2006, GLADIUS began.

“I think I see that there is the potential for the two countries to resolve this and come to a solution,” Maj Renahan says. “That being said, I think that both countries are right now satisfied with the status quo, so any significant progress would first require a big change in the local political relationship.”

Originally, UNDOF was set up with a six-month mandate – a mandate that has been renewed biannually for the last 26 years. The most recent report on UNDOF from the Secretary-General reveals that there have been no negotiations between Israel and Syria since peace talks, initiated by Turkey, were discontinued in December 2008. The UN Security Council held its 6 352nd meeting June 30 in consideration of “The situation in the Middle East”, and renewed UNDOF for a further six months.

Cyprus remembered

By Lesley Craig (*the Maple Leaf*)



Still wearing the same blue beret, Brigadier-General (Ret) Clay Beattie looks at a picture of himself, 26 years younger and standing in Cyprus. Unable to completely still the tremors caused by Parkinson’s, he grasps his cane and rises from his wheelchair, walking over to greet Major-General (Ret) Alain Forand and Sergeant (Ret) Michel Plouffe.

The men are here at the Canadian War Museum to view the new exhibit about the Cyprus peacekeeping mission. The small room is set up to resemble a Cypriot street, complete with an outdoor café. The tables on the café’s “patio” feature photos and artifacts donated by the men who served on the UN mission to the small Eastern Mediterranean Island.

On the other side of the exhibit, standing by the mock UN observation post, Jocelyn Beattie quietly watches her father and takes her own trip down memory lane. She was 14 when her dad, then a colonel, deployed to Cyprus in 1972 as the UN deputy chief of staff and commanding officer of the Canadian contingent. Due to the length of the deployment and the relatively stable situation—the UN had been scaling back the number of troops in Cyprus since 1968—she and her siblings, and mother, went with him.



“We were Army brats,” she says with a laugh. “We moved from base to base every other year or so. For us, it was just another place we were going. A little more exotic, maybe, but just another place.” She attended a school for students who wanted to go on to an English university; many of her classmates were Greek or Armenian. “There were two Turkish boys in our class,” she recalls. “They always sat together in the back corner of the room.”

For the most part, she says, life was pretty normal – until July 15, 1974. That was the day the National Guard, under the direction of Greek officers, staged a coup d’état against the Cypriot government. On July 20, the Turkish government responded with an attack on the north coast of Cyprus, occupying Kyrenia.

“When the invasion started in Kyrenia, the radio stopped working. That was dad’s first clue, and off he went,” Ms. Beattie says. The next three days saw fighting continue on the island, particularly along the Green Line, a buffer zone stretching across the island and running through Nicosia.

On July 23, then-Private Plouffe and Captain Normand Blacquièrre were caught in the cross-fire between Turkish Cypriot fighters and Greek National Guard soldiers outside Camp Kronborg. When Capt Blacquièrre was hit in both legs by machine-gun fire, Pte. Plouffe immediately began first aid. While he was attempting to tie tourniquets on Capt Blacquièrre’s legs, a bullet ricocheted off Pte Plouffe’s helmet and into his jaw. The Airborne paratrooper spat out the bullet and several teeth, pocketed the bullet, and went back to the tourniquets.

Today, his dented helmet and the bullet are part of the exhibit at the War Museum. When the exhibit launched July 20, Sgt Plouffe presented a reproduction of his medal set to the museum, including the Star of Courage he was awarded for his actions in Cyprus. “You only got the worst part of it,” he said, gesturing at the bullet. “You should get the reward, too.”

While Col Beattie was busy attempting to negotiate ceasefires, his family was safely away from Nicosia, in the mountains. “We stayed there for about three days and slept in this barracks,” says Ms. Beattie. “There were a million cicadas just shrieking outside, and I remember sleeping with the blanket pulled over my head because I was scared they would get caught in my hair.”

Ms. Beattie and the rest of the family returned to Canada shortly thereafter, while her father remained in Cyprus until 1976. His detailed recollections, and the 40 banker’s boxes of photographs and archival material he donated, were keys to designing the exhibit.

100 years of Postal Service

By Capt Greg DeWare (the Maple Leaf)

The CF Postal Service (CFPS) will be celebrating its centennial May 3 of this year. Even with the advent of sophisticated technology in modern communications, nothing will ever replace mail coming from a loved one.

“A letter, a card or a package from home is often a soldier’s only reminder of his or her humanity above and beyond the military machine. (A deployed soldier, Falkland Islands Crisis)”.

On May 3, 1911, General Order No. 70 authorized the creation of the Canadian Postal Corps (CPC) as a unit within the Canadian Militia. It had detachments in Toronto (HQ), London and Kingston (Ontario), Montréal, the city of Québec, Halifax, Winnipeg and Calgary.

The First World War presented the CPC with it’s the first opportunity to serve with the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force on active wartime service. By the end of the war, there were 346 CPC members serving in 37 postal units. Five CPC personnel were killed during the First World War.

In December 1939, the CPC again mobilized for active service and headed overseas. The increase in the number of deployed postal service personnel during the Second World War kept pace with the enormous volume of mail and parcels. The CPC grew to 5 080 officers, men, and members of the Canadian Women’s Army Corps and the Royal Canadian Air Force Women’s Division.

During the Korean War, postal units were activated to provide postal services in the Far East theatre of operations. About 35 posties operated 12 CF Post Offices to provide service to Canadian troops serving there.

On June 20, 1961, Queen Elizabeth II approved the addition of the title “Royal” to the Corps on its 50th anniversary. The Royal Canadian Postal Corps (RCPC) received a new badge displaying the international symbol of postal service, the Post Horn. In 1974, due to restructuring initiatives within the CF, the RCPC became part of the Administrative Branch and lost its distinctive branch badge.

The CF Postal Branch was re-established January 1, 1987. Posties wore a newly designed branch badge displaying the traditional Post Horn as its focal point. However, January 1, 2001, the Postal Branch was amalgamated into the Logistics Branch due to restructuring.

Today, the CF Postal Service, as part of the Logistics Branch, continues to proudly provide postal support to CF personnel deployed around the world.

The focal event marking the CF Postal Service’s 100th anniversary will be held in April 30 at Trenton. Activities will also be organized in Edmonton (May 14), Victoria (May 19) and Halifax (June 10–11).

If you are interested in joining in the celebrations, contact Capt Greg DeWare at 613-392-2811 extension 4364 or at gregory.deware@forces.gc.ca.

Lt Governor speaks for Veterans

Article by Aspen Gainer, LFWA Public Affairs, Edmonton

Photos by MCPL Holly Cowan, Army News, Edmonton

Thursday, September 16, 2010

CFB Edmonton, Alberta — “I have spent 38 years and 27 days in the military, and I have some very fond memories of my military career,” says Alberta’s newly appointed lieutenant governor, Colonel (Ret’d) Donald Ethell.



After such a long career of service, Col (Ret'd) Ethell continues to serve his country as an avid volunteer and active champion of veterans' issues, especially with respect to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

"PTSD is an injury, not an illness," he says. "It's an injury, and it will be with you for life, in all likelihood. That's a controversial subject amongst clinicians, but I'm firmly convinced that it's chronic."

Col (Ret'd) Ethell is well aware that many soldiers returning from Afghanistan have PTSD and related operational stress injuries and, because he himself has PTSD, he knows how important comprehensive veterans' services are.

Long standing taboo.

Mental health has been a taboo subject in mainstream society for too long, but the new lieutenant governor is working to change that stigma. Although many veterans still deal with being told to "just suck it up and have a few beers," Col (Ret'd) Ethell says things have gotten much better in the past 10 years with the help of the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada.

Sadly, many soldiers and veterans have PTSD without knowing it. Col (Ret'd) Ethell only learned of his own injury because a colleague, a psychologist with the Canadian Forces Advisory Committee, advised him to get help from a professional after he had shown her a list of things that were bothering him.

"Not that I was doing anything really bad," he clarifies, "but some personal habits were falling off the end of the table." He went to counseling, got help, took his prescribed medication and accepted it as a lifetime injury. "I don't have to get counseling anymore, other than traditional counseling from one's wife. I stay on the medication and life is very normal."

Specialized care

While in Edmonton, Alberta, Col (Ret'd) Ethell visited the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, a hospital that specializes in veterans' care and rehabilitation.

"I had an opportunity in the last couple of days to go to the Glenrose Centre here in Edmonton," he explains, "[which covers] a wide spectrum of physical and mental health issues, working hand-in-glove with the military."

He was impressed with the scope of work done there, saying that both the Glenrose and the University of Alberta hospitals set unparalleled standards across the country for veterans' services.

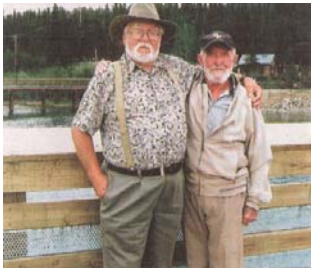
As Canada wraps up its presence in Afghanistan and its soldiers return home from the war zone, Canadian veterans and their families will need support. Col (Ret'd) Ethell is certainly offering his.

"I obviously have a great affection for [our] soldiers and their families," he concludes. "Soldier on. Go on doing what you do; you're doing it extremely well."

It is reassuring for soldiers in Edmonton to know that the attention and resources they deserve are available to them.

Yukon River Rescue

By Sandra Hennessey (Daily Gleaner)



Minto NB – Reunion triggers memories of Yukon River rescue, young life almost lost.

Bravery – Cy Carney of Newcastle Creek saved boy after he fell into frigid river. A dramatic reunion took place recently in Whitehorse, Yukon, between a Minto-area war veteran and the man whose life he saved 55 years ago.

In 1955, Cy Carney was 24 years old and stationed in Whitehorse with the 16th Company Royal Canadian electrical Mechanical Engineers. Carney had served in Korea from 1952-53 and was then stationed in the Yukon for three years.

On July 31, 1955, Carney was fishing off the bridge over the Nares River in Carcross, enjoying a day off with his wife Nancy and young son Richard.

Two young boys were playing near the bridge, and Carney heard one of the boys say he was unable to swim. Shortly afterward, the same boy, 7 fell from the bridge to the cold water below.

Although he's not a strong swimmer, Carney jumped in after the boy, who had disappeared below the surface of the water. He grabbed the boy and the current carried them along until a bystander helped them from the water.

Carney and his wife took Larry Bratvold home to his parents, who had tragically lost another son to drowning six months earlier.

An account of the rescue appeared in the local newspaper, and the following year, Carney was awarded the Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct.

Following his years in the Armed Forces, Carney returned with his family to Newcastle Creek, near Minto on the shores of Grand Lake, where he and wife Nancy still live.

In the summer of 2005, Carney's son Richard accepted a temporary posting to the army cadet training centre in Whitehorse. On July 31, exactly 50 years to the day after his father rescued the boy from the river, Richard Carney visited the bridge in Carcross where the rescue took place.

He also stopped in at the tourist information bureau where he mentioned the 1955 rescue to the woman on duty. By coincidence, the woman at the bureau happened to be Carol Bratvold, whose husband Larry was the young boy saved from the river 50 years before.

The next day, Aug. 1 2005 Cy Carney received a phone call at his home from Larry Bratvold, calling to thank Carney for saving his life.

Bratvold has had an adventurous life in the Yukon, where he is a prospector and author. He sent a copy of his book *Strange Things Done: A Yukon Odyssey*, published in 1999, to Carney. It is signed "To Cy, best wishes. Hope you enjoy these stories of a life that wouldn't have been lived without your courage".

The two men kept in touch after that, by letters and phone calls, separated by more than 7,000 kilometres but hoping to meet again one day.

Carney, now 79, recently fulfilled his long-time wish to meet Bratvold again when he and wife Nancy travelled to Whitehorse on July 26.

Bratvold, now 62, was waiting for them when they arrived at the Whitehorse International Airport.

“It was a very touching moment,” Carney said of the reunion. It was like a closure to what happened years ago, to see him well and happy. We had a great visit.”

The Bratvolds showed the Carneys around the area for several days, and they were the many changes in Whitehorse since they lived there in the 1950’s. It has a population of 26,000 and the roads are now paved, Carney said.

“It was an awesome adventure,” Nancy Carney said of the visit. “Whitehorse is small but modern, with a Wal-Mart, McDonald’s and even a Canadian Tire store. It’s beautiful country, with mountains all around”. “Larry is a friendly, down-to-earth man. I thought he was great. He explained his work (of) prospecting.”

The story of the reunion of Carney and Bratvold was printed in the Whitehorse Daily Star on July 30, with a large photo of them together on the front page.

The next day was the 55th anniversary of the rescue, and the two men visited the bridge in Carcross at the Nares River.

It was another emotional moment for the Bratvolds and the Carneys, re-calling events of July 31, 1955.

“I was on the bridge the day it happened.” Nancy Carney said. “After he was pulled from the water, we went to the house where the boy lived to make sure he was alright. Larry took us back this time and showed us the house.”

Speaking from his home in Carcross following the visit by the Carneys, Larry Bratvold said the emotions evoked by the reunion are hard to put into words.

“My grandson was with me at the airport when they came in,” he said. “It’s overwhelming to think that my seven grandchildren and three children would not be here if I had drowned back then.

“The most profound thought I had was one of gratitude. It was a joy to see Cy and to meet him. It meant a lot to both of us.”

William Hall, VC, a person of national historic importance

By Emeline Thermidor (*The Maple Leaf*)



With his designation as a person of national historic importance and the unveiling of a plaque in his honour October 8 in Hantsport, N.S., Able Seaman William Hall is once again making headlines.

A decorated veteran of the Crimean War, AB Hall thought little of the Victoria Cross awarded him in 1859. During an interview with Canadian Magazine in 1900, he said of the honour, “It isn’t worth very much ... after all, only 10 pounds a year. If it wasn’t for my regular Navy pension of 40 pounds a year besides, I don’t know how we’d get along here. The farm is small and my two sisters live with me.”

Mr. Hall discovered his passion for travel at an early age. He joined the Royal Navy, considering it a point of honour to discharge his parents’ debt to the Royal Navy. They had been African prisoners on board a slave ship bound for the Americas, but landed in Nova Scotia after the Royal Navy saved them from a life of slavery. They took their name from the Nova Scotia farmer for whom they worked.

AB Hall fought hard during the Indian Rebellion of 1857. At Lucknow, India, under the command of Lieutenant Thomas Young, he defended his gun crew for hours until their fire breached the walls of the fort. He is quoted as saying, “After firing each round, we ran the gun forward until, and finally, the crews were in danger of being hit by splinters of brick and stone torn from the wall by the round shot.”

Today, the names and details of places, events and persons of potential national historical interest—such as AB Hall—are submitted to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC). Representatives from all provinces and territories are appointed to the Board by the minister responsible for Parks Canada Agency (PCA). Suggestions from the general public are also included in the nomination process. The committee that proposed the name of William Hall is from Nova Scotia and worked with PCA. According to Carla Wheaton, cultural resource manager with PCA in Nova Scotia, the Board conducts research to determine whether the submission has merit. “In William Hall’s case,” she says, “this process had a successful outcome, with the minister responsible for PCA approving the HSMBC’s recommendation to designate William Hall a person of national historic importance in 2008.”

In February 2010, Canada Post honoured him with a commemorative stamp. A monument has been erected in his honour at the Baptist church in Hantsport. And Hantsport schoolchildren, members of the community and public figures have watched proudly as Canada once again celebrates a great Canadian.

For more information and sources, read DND’s 2004 *For My Country: Black Canadians on the Field of Honour* (ISBN 0-662-68613-6).

The singular history of Paul Dugal

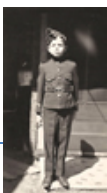
By Steve Fortin (*the Maple Leaf*) this article was written in French

The Royal 22^e Régiment laid to rest one of its own on May 13. Soldiers of the regiment watched with heavy hearts, having established strong ties with the departed in just a short time. It was, ultimately, by his only true family, the Van Doos, that Lance Corporal Paul Dugal was accompanied to his final resting place.

For many years, Paul Dugal had refused to talk about his military past. Taken prisoner of war in Korea in the 1950s, he was presumed dead until the end of the war, when the Chinese released their POWs. According to those who knew him at the end of his life, such as Captain Ghislain Laverdière, the driving force behind Mr. Dugal’s reunion with R22^e R, Mr. Dugal had long carried with him a sense of having been abandoned by his regiment. Fortunately, he was able to make peace with his military past, and R22^e R, in turn, honoured the former prisoner of war.

Some of our older readers may recall the story of Paul Dugal. It was widely covered at the time. The R22^e R has ensured that his story will be remembered by the generations of Van Doos who came after him. Responding to an invitation from Capt Laverdière, Mr. Dugal agreed to participate in the regiment’s indoctrination process, and it is in this way that many new members of the regiment became acquainted with him.

A soldier at heart



Born near the city of Québec in 1931, Paul Dugal began wearing a uniform at an early age. He joined the cadets at 10 or 11—he no longer recalled the exact year—and wore the uniform until he enrolled in the R22^e R. Before he reached 20, Mr. Dugal had completed his basic training (as it was called even in the French-speaking R22^e R at the time) and packed

his bags for Wainwright, Alta., for advanced training – his first trip outside Quebec. Strangely enough, in the next few years, Mr. Dugal would travel literally around the world.

By the beginning of the 1950s, when Mr. Dugal completed his training to become a soldier, the Canadian Army's operations in Korea were well underway. In 1952, when volunteers were sought to augment 2nd Battalion, R22^e R, which had been called to fight in Korea, Private Dugal was one of the first to report to the recruiting office. To his great relief, he was accepted, and that was followed by a long process involving many moves and training: Edmonton, Vancouver, Alaska, the Aleutian Islands, Tokyo and, finally, Korea – a lot of travel for a young man who had left the province of his birth for the first time only a few months before!

Prisoner of war

The singular history of Mr. Dugal really begins in Korea in 1952, when the young soldier was one of the troops sent to reinforce 2 R22^e R.



During his indoctrination address, Mr. Dugal recounted his first contact with the reality of war. “After spending several days in reserve,” he said, “we were taken to the front, which was held by the 2nd Battalion, to replace those who had been killed during the famous battle of Hill 355. My comrades and I were assigned to D Company, commanded by Major Lee Boiron. I was assigned a trench – located right next to the munitions dump!”

Lance Corporal Dugal would learn the hard life of the deployed soldier “on the job”, taking part in “recce patrols”, “standing patrols” and “fighting patrols”, as he called them, reminding the young members listening to him that at the time, even in the Francophone R22^e R, military life was conducted in English.

Deployments during the Korean War lasted one year. Because LCpl Dugal arrived toward the end of the rotation of the 2 R22^e R, he was in place when the 1 R22^e R arrived in April 1952.



Looking back on his trench experience of the Korean campaign, Mr. Dugal liked to tell an anecdote that illustrates the nervousness inherent in trench warfare. “One evening, as I was making my rounds to check that the guards were at their posts,” he said, “a soldier stopped me to tell me that he had heard a noise and seen lights, and because of that he had decided to throw some grenades, but they hadn't exploded. I looked in the box and saw that the poor fellow had forgotten to put the detonators in the grenades. As for the noise, it was caused by field mice

that were nosing about in some cans that we had placed on the ground to alert us to the presence of the enemy. And the sparks of light turned out to be nothing but fireflies!”

June 23, 1952, was the day that would change Mr. Dugal's life forever. On that day, with the Canadians 800 meters from enemy positions, LCpl Dugal was part of a patrol that was to evaluate enemy presence in preparation for a raid aimed at capturing a soldier from the enemy camp.

“We left our positions and the scouts guided us across the valley,” Mr. Dugal said. “We crossed a river and, once we reached the foot of the mountain, the scouts stopped. I undertook to climb up to the enemy positions. At first, I encountered no resistance. I was carrying a US rifle, two magazines of 28 rounds each and several grenades. When I was about 15 feet [4.5 m] from the enemy trenches, the enemy opened fire and I was hit in the right thigh. I fired back with my semi-automatic; I remember emptying a 28-round magazine at the first trench I saw. Shortly after that, I felt a sharp pain in the head. For a moment I was aware of everything around me – the enemy fire; my return shots. Then – nothing. When I woke up, I was a prisoner.”

As is customary, Mr. Dugal's next of kin received official notification from the Department of National Defence. The first letter, dated February 17, 1953, and sent to his mother, Mrs. Yvonne Dugal, announced the presumed death of LCpl Dugal. His family was, of course, devastated. But not long afterward, April 21 of the same year, Mrs. Dugal received a second official missive telling her that her son had, in fact, been a prisoner of war and that he had recently been freed. The Canadian soldier had been held prisoner for 10 months.

Chinese captivity

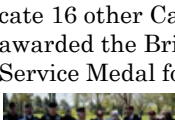
The enemy trench was held by Chinese soldiers. It was they who gathered up the Canadian. Seriously wounded, LCpl Dugal did not receive the care that his condition required; nevertheless, the Chinese kept him alive, for which he was grateful.

“I passed out from time to time, which was to be expected since my jailers had nothing with which to treat me,” he said. “They could not remove the piece of shrapnel lodged in my skull, which left me partially paralyzed on the left side, a condition from which I suffered the rest of my life. Still, they treated me as best they could under the circumstances.”

From time to time the enemy positions were bombed by US aircraft, which made LCpl Dugal wonder about his chances of getting out of captivity alive. “Surely they didn't know that there were UN prisoners there,” he recalls thinking. Moved from one camp to another, the prisoners had to survive the rigors of a North Korean winter—not unlike a Canadian winter—with nothing but rags for blankets and clothing.



During his captivity, LCpl Dugal met a Canadian Army captain, whom he recognized by his shirt. Furtively, because they had been ordered to remain absolutely silent, he learned the identity of the captain, whose name was Joseph Liston, a cousin of the general of the same name! Using cigarette paper and cardboard from the handbook of Communism that they were required to read, LCpl Dugal was able to record the names, nationalities and ranks of some of his fellow prisoners. After the release of the prisoners in 1953, this record enabled the authorities to locate 16 other Canadians who had been presumed dead, as well as a number of US, French and British soldiers. LCpl Dugal was awarded the British Empire Medal, which he wore alongside the Canadian Korea Medal, the Volunteer Service Medal and the UN Service Medal for Korea.



cate 16 other Canadians who had been presumed dead, as well as a number of US, French and British soldiers. LCpl Dugal was awarded the British Empire Medal, which he wore alongside the Canadian Korea Medal, the Volunteer Service Medal and the UN Service Medal for Korea.

Capt Laverdière regrets that Mr. Dugal was cut off from his military family for so long, although he understands that the former prisoner had difficulty accepting that he had been left behind, for reasons beyond anyone's control, in an intense combat situation. It was one of Mr. Dugal's former comrades-in-arms, whose name he did not wish to disclose, who took the first steps toward reconciliation. The man, a native of Western Canada in his early eighties, tracked down his compatriot from Quebec and went to see him, to apologize for not having been able to repatriate him on that dark day of June 1952. It was a gallant gesture. When Capt Laverdière, in turn, visited Mr. Dugal to propose that he tell his story to his military family, the old man initially hesitated. Happily for the military community, Mr. Dugal eventually accepted the invitation.

At the funeral service for Mr. Dugal, Capt Laverdière paid tribute to his fellow soldier. Sadly, too few people know how much the deceased gave to his country.

Discover your military history and heritage online

The Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH) Web site is an excellent tool for CF personnel and their families to use to discover their military heritage. Whether you're writing a historical paper for a professional development course, or your children need to find sources for their school papers, the DHH site is an essential tool for researchers of Canada's military history. Below are some of the resources you will find on the DHH Web site:

Official histories and heritage galleries: All official histories of the First and Second World Wars and several other histories produced by DHH are available in text format. As well, all historical reports of the Canadian Military Headquarters, Army Headquarters Reports and CF HQ can be read, along with many other digitized documents. The official lineages of commissioned ships, combat arms regiments and operational flying squadrons that include the heraldic description of badges, unit marches, mottoes, battle honours and operational history are available for your information. Several galleries also provide interesting historical information such as winners of the Victoria Cross in the service of the CF; Canadian Army Honours and Awards of the Second World War; and official CF Badges, Colours and Camp Flags. This is an evolving catalogue and new material is always being added.

Canadian Military History Gateway: This is a bilingual online portal providing authoritative information on Canada's military and heritage, from earliest times to current day. It is a search engine providing access to Web sites and digitized resources of federal government departments, museums, libraries, archives and other heritage organizations. Searches can be made using keywords, timelines, subjects, types of reference material and organizations providing the material.

National Inventory of Canadian Military Memorials: Go here to find a military memorial in your community or any location across the country. The inventory includes pictures, descriptions, inscriptions and dedication dates.

CF Museums: More than 68 CF museums and several historical collections across Canada preserve and interpret Canadian military heritage. Come discover unique artifacts and stories in our museums.

CF Operations Database – Operations since 1945: This database contains information on many CF operational missions since 1945, including location, dates, mandate, and operation notes. Currently, it offers detailed descriptions of 246 of the more than 420 operations Canada has participated in since 1945.

CF Music Branch: Read about the history of bands in Army Headquarters Reports and learn about authorized bands in your area.

Visit <http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/index-eng.asp> and see what you can discover!

"Just" a Mom ???

A woman, renewing her driver's license at the County Clerk's Office was asked by the woman recorder to state her occupation. She hesitated, uncertain how to classify herself. "What I mean is," explained the recorder, "do you have a job or are you just a...?"

"Of course I have a job," snapped the woman.

"I'm a Mom."

"We don't list 'Mom' as an occupation, 'housewife covers it," said the recorder emphatically.

I forgot all about her story until one day..I found myself in the Same situation, this time at our own Town Hall. The Clerk was obviously a career woman, poised, efficient and possessed of a high sounding title like, "Official Interrogator" or "Town Registrar."

"What is your occupation?" she probed.

What made me say it? I do not know. The words simply popped out.

"I'm a Research Associate in the field of Child Development and Human Relations."

The clerk paused, ball-point pen frozen in midair and looked up

As though she had not heard right. I repeated the title slowly

Emphasizing the most significant words. Then I stared with wonder as my pronouncement was written in bold, black ink on the official questionnaire.

"Might I ask," said the clerk with new interest, "just what you do in your field?"

Coolly, without any trace of fluster in my voice, I heard myself

Reply, "I have a continuing program of research, (what mother doesn't) in the laboratory and in the field, (normally I would have said indoors and out).

I'm working for my Masters, (the whole darned family) and already have four credits (all daughters). Of course, the job is one of the most demanding in the humanities, (any mother care to disagree?) and I often work 14 hours a day, (24 is more like it). But the job is more challenging than most run-of-the-mill careers and the rewards are more of a satisfaction rather than just money."

There was an increasing note of respect in the clerk's voice as she completed the form, stood up and personally ushered me to the door.

As I drove into our driveway, buoyed up by my glamorous new career, I was greeted by my lab assistants -- ages 13, 7, and 3. Upstairs I could hear our new experimental model, (a 6 month old baby) in the child development program, testing out a new vocal pattern. I felt I had scored a beat on bureaucracy! And I had gone on the official records as someone more distinguished and indispensable to mankind than "just another Mom."

Motherhood! What a glorious career! Especially when there's a title on the door.

Does this make **grandmothers** "Senior Research associates in the field of Child Development and Human Relations" and **great grandmothers** "Executive Senior Research Associates"? I think so!!! I also think it makes **Aunts** "Associate Research Assistants."

Last Posting



Michael Archie Roger KLUGH

1946 - 2010

Klugh, Michael Archie Roger, born in Chemainus BC on 13 May 1946 passed away in Vancouver BC on the 23 December 2010. Mike served from 16 November 1962 to 19 April 1966 and from 31 January 1980 to 01 December 1982 during his time he served as a Peacekeeper in Cyprus (OP Snowgoose) in 1980-81.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Almighty Father, may you consider those who stand before you this day, and unite us in the bonds of fellowship.

We think at this time of our peacekeeping veterans and their families.

We thank you for their service.

We pray for grace and strength for each of them.

We remember also those peacekeepers who made the ultimate sacrifice, who have laid down their lives in the service of peace.

For their family members especially, we ask that you would bring the comfort and peace that is yours alone to give.

We do this in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen



Author: Rev Frank Patrick
Chaplain: Branch 52 Royal Canadian Legion
Peterborough Ontario
And member of **The Blue Helmets**



Reminder: *Time to mark your calendar for upcoming events for year 2010*

- **The Blue Helmets** monthly breakfast is held every third Friday of the month, for additional details contact Fred LeBlanc at 506-472-3215
- **09 August: Peacekeepers Memorial Day:** 09:45 for 10:00 Service at the Fredericton Cenotaph and at 10:45 for 11:00 UN Flag Raising at the Fredericton City Hall.
- **Reunion and Annual General Meeting on 30th Sept, 01 and 02 October 2011** (**see Itinerary for details**)
- **24 October United Nations Anniversary:** 10:45 for 11:00 Service at the Fredericton Cenotaph followed by a UN Flag Raising at the Fredericton City Hall.
- **Do you have INTERNET capabilities,** if so would you please send me an e-mail and will place you in The Blue Helmets distribution list?

Notice

The Blue Helmets

NEEDS your assistance in RECRUITING

- Contact fellow Veterans of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in your area and let them know about our association. Tell them about the **new Membership Fee Structure of \$25.00 onetime fee and no worries about yearly renewal.** We could easily double our membership if everyone of us were to recruit at least one new member.

- If they have internet capabilities, they can visit the website at www.thebluehelmets.ca where they can view all the information and also be able to download a membership application form for printing.
- For those who do not have internet capabilities, they can contact me by telephone at 1-506-472-3215 or by mail at 17 DeWitt Acres, Fredericton NB E3A 6S3 and I can send them all the information including recruiting posters for display.
- For the upcoming Reunion we would like to make a Power Point Presentation titled "United Nations Missions & Personnel". For this project we would like to have pictures (Locations and Personnel) of as many of the United Nation Peacekeeping Missions as possible. If you have a scanner send them as an attachment to an e-mail, if you do not have copying capabilities sent the pictures to me via regular mail they will be returned after I scan them. Details pertaining to the pictures would be of assistance. For additional info please contact me at 506-472-3215

Your assistance in either or both of the above would be greatly appreciated

Fred LeBlanc CD, President

In the Service of Peace and for our Veterans

Poppy Quilt

At the end of summer 2010, Mary Schmidt of Calgary Alberta, daughter of one of our fallen peacekeepers (Charlie Vroom) donated a crafted Quilt to be used as fund raising for our association. Sale of tickets was by members of the association and members of the Vroom Family plus staff of the Fredericton Inn where the quilt was left on display. Ticket was drawn John Waite, manager of the Fredericton Inn. Lucky winner was **Georgina Terry of Fredericton NB.**



Ticket drawn Wednesday the 15th December 2010
From Left Fred Gallant, John Waite, Fred LeBlanc
and Fred Doucette



Quilt presented on the 7th January 2011
from left: Georgina Terry and Fred LeBlanc

The fund raising was a success, received \$1260.00 from the sales of tickets. Monies will assist in our continuation as an association; thanks are extended to all who have purchased tickets and to those who have assisted in the sales of tickets, particularly the Vroom Family for the donation of the Quilt and assistance in the sales of tickets and to John Waite and staff of the Fredericton Inn.

Old Age

The other day a young person asked me how I felt about being old.

I was taken aback, for I do not think of myself as old.

Upon seeing my reaction, he was immediately embarrassed, but I explained that it was an interesting question, and I would ponder it, and let him know.

Old Age, I decided, is a gift.

I am now, probably for the first time in my life, the person I have always wanted to be.

Oh, not my body! I sometime despair over my body - the wrinkles, the baggy eyes, and the sagging skin.

And often I am taken aback by that old person who lives in my mirror, but I don't agonize over those things for long. I would never trade my amazing friends, my wonderful life, and my loving family for less grey hair or a flatter belly. As I've aged, I've become kinder to myself, and less critical of myself. I've become my own friend. I don't chide myself for eating that extra cookie, or for not making my bed occasionally, or for buying that silly cement gecko that I didn't need, but looks so avante garde on my patio. I am entitled to overeat, to be messy, to be extravagant. I have seen too many dear friends leave this world too soon; before they understood the great freedom that comes with aging. Whose business is it if I choose to read or play on the computer until 3 a.m., and sleep until noon?

I will dance with myself to those wonderful tunes of the 40's, 50's and 60's, and if I, at the same time, wish to weep over a lost love - I will. I will walk the beach in a swim suit that is stretched over a bulging body, and will dive into the waves with abandon if I choose, despite the pitying glances from the bikini set.

They, too, will get old.

I know I am sometimes forgetful. But there again, some of life is just as well forgotten, and I eventually remember the important things. Sure, over the years my heart has been broken. How can your heart not break when you lose a loved one, or when a child suffers, or even when a beloved pet gets hit by a car? But broken hearts are what give us strength and understanding and compassion. A heart never broken is pristine and sterile and will never know the joy of being imperfect.

I am so blessed to have lived long enough to have my hair turn grey, and to have my youthful laughs be forever etched into deep grooves on my face. So many have never laughed, and so many have died before their hair could turn silver.

I can say "no," and mean it. I can say "yes," and mean it.

As you get older, it is easier to be positive. You care less about what other people think.

I don't question myself anymore. I've even earned the right to be wrong.

So, to answer your question, I like being old. It has set me free.

I like the person I have become. I am not going to live forever, but while I am still here, I will not waste time lamenting what could have been, or worrying about what will be.

And I shall eat dessert every single day.

Author Unknown

Today, I wish you a day of ordinary miracles.

History

By Charmion Chaplin-Thomas

February 7, 1944

On the right flank of the British-American beach-head at Anzio, a little south of Rome, 13 km of the 52-km front line has been held for a week by the 1 233 men of the 1st Special Service Force, an elite and highly secretive joint Canadian-American unit commanded by Brigadier-General Robert Frederick of the US Army.

The seaborne infantry assault at Anzio, called Operation SPLINTER, is the key element of General Mark Clark's plan to break the deadlock at Monte Cassino and begin a great drive through the valley of the Liri River to Rome. The British 1st Infantry Division and the US 3rd Infantry Division under Major-General John Lucas hit the beach on January 22, landing 36 000 men and 3 200 vehicles in only 24 hours. Fortunately, there were almost no Germans in the area on January 22; unfortunately, MGen Lucas decided to secure the beach-head before venturing inland. His delay gave Generalfeldmarshall Albert Kesselring time to organize a highly effective defence under Generaloberst Eberhard von Mackensen and, despite a steady flood of reinforcements, the Allied army is now fighting desperately to prevent the Germans from sweeping it into the sea.

Despite two weeks of rest, the Special Service Force has yet to replace the 1 400 casualties lost in the struggle for Monte Cassino; of its three regiments, only the 3rd is up to strength, and the "Forcemen" are spread very thin—about one man to 10 metres of frontage. Their situation is not desperate, however: the Canale Mussolini on their right is a natural tank trap, and the only approach lies across perfectly flat fields that were once the Pontine Marshes. The opposition is the highly competent Hermann Göring Division. Colonel Tom Gilday, the Canadian officer in command of the 3rd Regiment, has his men lying low during the day and patrolling vigorously at night, terrorizing the Germans with silent killings on their perimeters and apparently random strikes on strong points. To heighten this effect, BGen Frederick has visiting cards printed for his troops to leave in the German lines; they bear the Special Service Force shoulder patch and a single line of text: "Das Dicke Ende Kommt Noch!"—"The Worst is yet to come!"

The Forcemen are highly talented reconnaissance patrolmen encouraged to use their imagination and take the initiative to get results, but even in this exalted company a certain Canadian soldier stands out: Sergeant Thomas George Prince is an Ojibwe from the Brokenhead Reserve near Scantterbury, Manitoba, a crack shot, skilled tracker and all-round raiding genius already famous for daring exploits.

Tonight, Sgt Prince intends to exploit the Canale Mussolini, which serves to defend the Germans from the Special Service Force just as much as it prevents an armoured assault on the beach-head. Taking a field telephone connected to regimental headquarters by 1 500 metres of line, Sgt Prince slips across the canal, paying out the telephone line as he goes, and makes his way to a deserted farmhouse about 200 metres from the German front. In the morning, the German tanks start moving back and forth, shifting constantly to avoid the American artillery. Sgt Prince watches the action until he sees two tanks settle down, and then calls in a fire mission that destroys them both. All goes well until a mortar strike behind the farmhouse cuts the telephone line, but Sgt Prince is not dismayed; he puts on a civilian hat and coat he found in the house and heads outside with a hoe. Working the soil with the hoe, he searches patiently for the broken wire; when he spots it, he mimes a broken shoelace, crouches down and restores the connection. He continues hoeing the field for the benefit of watching Germans, and eventually heads back inside. Before nightfall, he calls in another fire mission and accounts for two more tanks.

For his tank-hunting exploit, Sgt Prince eventually receives the Military Medal from the British and the Silver Star from the Americans, both presented on the same occasion at Buckingham Palace by King George VI.



THE BLUE HELMETS

Annual Reunion

Itinerary for September 30th, 01 and 02 of October 2011

All indoor events will take place at Fredericton Motor Inn, Regent Street, Fredericton, NB

- *30th September 2011*
 - 18:30 Meet and Greet Fredericton Inn Lounge

- *01 October 2011*
 - 1030 for 1100 Memorial Service at Fredericton Cenotaph
 - NOTE: Don't forget your medals and Beret
 - 1200 Luncheon at the Brass Rail Restaurant, Fredericton Motor Inn
 - 1330 for 1400 General Meeting at the Fredericton Inn

- *01 October 2011*
 - 1830 for 1900 Dinner (Jacket and tie)
 - 1900 Three Course Meal
 - Socializing after the dinner

- *02 October 2011*
 - Farewell Breakfast
 - 0800 – 1030
 - 1130 – Safe Trip Home for All.

Fredericton Motor Inn have set aside a block of rooms @ \$95.00 + HST per night
To make your reservation call 506-455-1430 or 800-561-8777 and make sure you mention you are with The Blue Helmets.

Looking forward to seeing you

The Blue Helmets

Annual Reunion

30th September, 01 and 02 October 2011

Registration Form

Yes I/We _____ will attend (check appropriate box)

For planning purposes it will be necessary to have numbers for each of the listed functions, therefore would you please indicate the functions you will be participating in.

Fee: \$40.00 per person, includes wine, tax and gratuity

- () Meet & Greet (Friday)
- () Cenotaph Memorial Service and Luncheon afterwards (Saturday)
"DON'T FORGET YOUR MEDALS AND BERET"
- () Supper (Saturday) choose one of the following:
 - Broiled Filet Mignon Forestiere 8oz, () or
 - Broiled Halibut Steak/Lemon Butter ()
- () Farewell Breakfast (Sunday)

➔ **Note:** For reservation purposes, it will be necessary to confirm number of people attending therefore Registration must to be received by no later than 16th September 2011

Last minute (no later than 16th September 2011) registration will be accepted by contacting Fred LeBlanc via Phone: 506 472-3215 or E-mail: fredleb@nbnet.nb.ca

Make cheque or Money Order payable to The Blue Helmets.

Send all to:

The Blue Helmets
17 DeWitt Acres
Fredericton NB E3A 6S3