

Regional Director's Message

Indeed, it has been six months since we first published "The Spirit of the Torch". I trust that our second issue finds all of our members in fine health and good spirits. As Regional Director, I would like to thank our hard-working Executive Council, and all our Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association members for their contributions to stories, pictures, comments and articles for our Newsletter. We need your input for its success to continue. Please keep sending in those items!

First and foremost, the Hong Kong Veterans Association of Canada, Ontario Branch, held its Annual General Meeting on April 17, 2002 at the Royal Canadian Legion Hall, Branch 22, in Toronto. Motions were passed transferring the commemorative and administrative duties of the HKVA in Ontario to the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association, Ontario Region. The following excerpt from one of the motions makes the relationship very clear.

"It is moved that the Ontario Branch of the Hong Kong Veterans Association of Canada invite the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association to undertake such functions on our behalf and under our wishes and guidance and that we encourage and participate in their undertakings."

This historic vote was passed with Mr. John Stroud in the chair as President, Mr. Fred Mason as Vice President, Mr. James MacMillan as Secretary/Treasurer, and Mr. Robert Clayton as Entertainment Chair. The Executive Council of the HKVCA will indeed abide by the terms of the motion, and, to ensure that we not lose sight of our objectives, its members will include the President, Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer named above.

The gentlemen involved the two motions, Mr. Robert Clayton, Mr. Donald Geraghty and Mr. Kenneth Pifher, also moved that the HKVA donate \$5000. to the HKVCA, Ontario Region, to assist that organization in fulfilling its mandate. The HKVA members present passed this generous motion unanimously. Such a motion was a welcome surprise, and members of both HKVA and HKVCA can be assured that the funds will be used wisely. Needless to say, we thank the HKVA wholeheartedly.

As many of you will already know, we just recently lost HKVA National President, Harry Atkinson. He passed away on March 2, 2002 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. We will never forget you, Harry. Peace be with you, as you rejoin your fellow comrades.

On February 21, 2002, I delivered a letter to the Honourable Janet Ecker, MPP, and Minister of Education. The letter included a copy of the Veterans Affairs pamphlet about the Canadians in Hong Kong. I requested a meeting in which we could make a presentation about the 1975 intrepid Canadian soldiers' defense of Hong Kong, and their subsequent incarceration from 1941 to 1945. The Minister's Assistant, Marilyn Ellis, was briefed regarding the content of our presentation: the inclusion of a Hong Kong Unit in the History curriculum of Ontario Secondary Schools. Recently, a new Education Minister, Hon. Elizabeth Witmer, was appointed. I will pursue this matter until we can make a presentation. The Presentation Committee is comprised of the following members: Mrs. Jesse Clayton, Mrs. Lori Smith, Mrs. Pat Turcotte, Mr. Robert Clayton, Mr. George MacDonell, Mr. Randall Ross, Mr. John Stroud and myself. We hope that you, our members, support such an initiative.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of your Executive Council, to invite your input relative to any of the above issues. Have a great summer!

Best regards,

David J. Murray,
Regional Director, Ontario

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The Word from the Area Reps

Members, please note: The Area Reps have been offering so much good information that their reports have begun to take many different forms. You'll see their names throughout this Newsletter, and we thank them for their contributions!

From South West:

The "New Day" Show

Very, very early one dark, snowy, January 2002 morning, a Winnipeg Grenadier, a Royal Rifle and I met at the Seven Dwarfs restaurant near the city limits of London, Ontario. It was the day we were to make our debut on the local London television station called "the NEW PL".

Every weekday morning from 7 to 9, the NEW PL has a show called "New Day". We three had been invited to be on the show for a short segment. We were to talk about the HKVCA, the awareness in the community of our

association, what we do and what events are planned.

We had some grand visual aids for the set crew. Dorothy Sauson, widow of Ray Sauson, RRC, Wallace "Red" Harrington, WG, and Alfred Babin, RRC, provided artifacts, many of which the men had brought home with them from their time in Hong Kong and the prisoner-of-war years that followed.

The host of the show, Matt Webb, had really done his homework. He had read everything I was able to send him. His questions and statements to "Red" and Babin were well-honed to elicit memories, facts and feelings. He

empathized with us over the struggle to get the Ontario School Boards to update the High School curriculum to include the Battle of Hong Kong. And in his interviewing, he was a true gentleman.

After the show, we were treated to a scrumptious breakfast of Eggs Benedict from the restaurant chef at the Seven Dwarfs. Well worth the early morning hour on the "New Day" Show, eh?

Lori Smith,

South West Area Rep.
London, ON

From West Central:

Remembrance Day in Port Credit

Last Fall, as Remembrance Day neared, Freda Findlay, the widow of Lorne Findlay, RRC, was approached to lay the wreath at the cenotaph in Port Credit in honour of the Hong Kong veterans. It was to be the first wreath ever laid in that community for those veterans, and, since there were relatives of soldiers from the Royal Rifles and Winnipeg Grenadiers living in the area, it seemed appropriate to ask someone like Freda to be their representative.

Freda was very interested in the idea, but hesitated to do so because, so often, in making the effort to attend other years, the cold had aggravated her arthritis to the point that she was in considerable pain. After thinking it over very carefully, she suggested that because the weather was typically very cold on that day, it might be better if her son, Donnie, or her daughter, Kathie, took her place. As it turned out, both Kathie and Donnie wished to be involved, so it was agreed that the two would lay the wreath jointly.

The weather that day was indeed bitter cold, with a blustery wind to make things even chillier. Donnie and Kathie attended the Memorial Service in the church and

followed the marchers as they wended their way to the cenotaph. It had appeared that it would be much too cold for Freda herself, but, when the procession reached the spot where chairs had been set out for the public, not only was Freda there, but she had with her another daughter, Paddy-Jean, along with Paddy-Jean's husband, and her teen-aged granddaughter. She had decided that, freezing weather or not, she wanted to see her two children lay the wreath. Pictures were taken to record the moment, and, afterwards, everyone drove to the Port Credit Legion for the dinner that was laid on for those who had been involved in the ceremony.

The Legion had invited a number of dignitaries, so there were speeches, and a number of things were said in praise of the soldiers who had fought so bravely, and who were being honoured that day. More pictures were taken of Freda and Donnie and Kathie, and, after a very satisfying meal, and the opportunity to chat, those who participated were driven home. Freda seemed to really enjoy the day, and seeing her children lay the wreath, on her behalf, was a happy experience for her. It will almost certainly be one that the family will remember well. Freda Findlay passed away on January 23, 2002.

Rickie Edey,

West Central Area Rep. Mississauga, ON

From Central and South East:

Leon's Report

I have been in touch by telephone with almost all the veterans and widows in my area over the past few months, and it seems that all have managed to successfully survive the long winter.

Fred Cooper just got back from Florida and was still able to enjoy his golf game. I was pleased to inform him that one of his colleagues, **Alan Harper**, has moved in with his daughter, and is now living in Perkinsfield.

Jean McKnight has brought to my attention that the Memorial Cross may be made available to some of the widows. The Memorial Cross was issued as a memento of personal loss and sacrifice on the part of the mother or widow of a soldier of Canada who laid down his life for his country during World War II. If the widow is deceased, the Memorial Cross goes to the eldest child, male or female. Originally, it was given only if the soldier died in the war, but also has been extended to ones who died from causes attributed to service during World War II. Archives can be checked to prove relevancy. Application can be made through the local Veterans' Affairs Canada District Office and the telephone number can be found in the local directory.

Phyllis Lanyon just got back from Florida, and is looking forward to living in her new residence at Wasaga Beach.

Dorothy McKay from Aurora is getting over a broken ankle, I was informed by her daughter.

Coleman Pollock now resides at the Rebecca Nursing Home in Barrie.

Yvonne Southworth is also looking forward to her new home in Peterborough.

Marjorie Dwyer recommended reading the book "Long Night's Journey Into Day" by Charles G. Roland, available at bookstores or at W. L. University Press, Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 3C5, TEL: (519) 885-1212. A number of veterans who have read it claim that it is one of the most authentic published today.

Lloyd Doull of Kingston enjoyed the last Newsletter, and passed on some helpful hints as to the design of the letterheads and membership cards.

William Mayne from Belleville has moved to a nursing home in Thornhill.

I had the opportunity to attend the Hong Kong Veterans Association Meeting in Toronto in April and met **Bob "Flash" Clayton**. After almost 60 years, he is the first Hong Kong veteran that I have met. I am looking forward to taking him up on his invitation to visit him and his wife, **Jess**, in Brechin.

Leon Sokalski

Central & South East Area Rep.
Bracebridge, ON

List of NEW members: Welcome! If we've missed anyone, please let us know!

South West: Lisa Bird, Geraldine Cunningham, Heather Edwards, and Jane L. Smith

North East: Sandi Cameron, Natalie Gibb-Carsley, Joy Hodgkinson

North: Brian Bilodeau, and Darlene Farquhar

Central and South East: Kenneth Bevan, Tom Bevan and Ann Ewing

GTA: Keith Fortune, Tony Fortune, Mark Purcell and Kevin Turcotte

West Central: David Wing

Calling all Hong Kong Veterans: The Memory Project

I'm sure most of the Veterans out there are aware of the Memory Project, but, just in case.....

The purpose of the Memory Project is, of course, for Veterans to share their life stories with schoolchildren. Those who have done so find the experience really rewarding. You may feel that your story is not important, or that you really haven't much to tell, but what you have to say is more valuable than you know.

Anyone who wants to be involved is invited to attend a workshop in the Spring, where presentation techniques are outlined. After this workshop, if you wish to do so, your name is put on a list for your area, and, if a teacher calls asking for someone to speak to his or her students, and you feel comfortable doing so, you would then visit a classroom. The people at the Memory Project stress that, even after the workshop, you are under no obligation to participate if you are not comfortable, but if you would like to be a part of the programme you are most welcome.

A number of veterans that you know have been already been involved, including George MacDonell, "Flash" Clayton, and Alfred Babin. Having been in classrooms many times, "Flash", or Bob, Clayton has received many letters from students, not only as a result of these talks, but also because of his participation in the segment of "The Valour and the Horror" called "Savage Christmas". Having seen a number of these letters, it is very clear that students are impressed by what they have learned, and it is very obvious that you Hong Kong Veterans have experiences to share that no one else can possibly understand or appreciate unless you tell them. Just to give you an example of the sort of response you would get, taking part in such a program, here is a letter from a University student to Bob Clayton who was reacting to having seen the "Valour and the Horror" segment in which the story of the Hong Kong Battle was told.

Dear Mr. Bob
Clayton,

Jan.

31/02

Allow me to introduce myself – my name is Erika Sedge. I'm a third year student at the University of Waterloo, where I study theatre. I am currently taking a course about Canada's involvement in World War 2. Last week our class watched the documentary "The

Valour and the Horror" which is how I learnt about you.

I can't begin to put into words how much your story has meant to me. I was very moved, as were many others in my class. Your strength is an incredible inspiration to me.

I am ashamed to say that before taking this course, I knew very little about World War 2, or that Canadians ever went to Hong Kong. Unfortunately, that's probably true of a lot of people my age. So, I guess the purpose of writing this letter was just to let you know how much I appreciate what you sacrificed for me and my generation. Though my generation has never known tragedy the way your generation has, that only makes your contribution all the more admirable in my eyes.

My promise to you is that I intend to inform people of my generation about the Canadians who went to Hong Kong for our country.

I would like to thank you for taking part in this documentary so that I could hear your story. I am very touched by it. It has, and always will have, a profound effect upon me.

I hope that you and your wife are well and I wish you both the best in the future.

Thank you for all you have done.

*Sincerely,
Erika Sedge*

Such a letter points up the importance of your contribution as veterans in reminding the public of what happened in Hong Kong, and your voices will help remind people that it should never happen again. If you are interested in participating in the programme, the person to contact is:

Jessica Humphreys,

Programme Coordinator,
The Dominion Institute,
183 Bathurst Street, Suite 401,
Toronto, ON M5T 2R7

Editor's Note: John Stroud has even more information about the Memory Project in his column, including phone numbers and e-mail, and Fax addresses. If you want to have a closer look at their Website, the address is:
www.TheMemoryProject.com

HKVCA in Ontario

This association aims to perpetuate the memory of the Hong Kong Veterans of Canada, and to ensure the welfare of the surviving veterans and their spouses, and the widows and their families by:

- Enrolling all of those in the Hong Kong family in the HKVCA.
- Ensuring regular, periodic contact with those members.
- Attending and participating in memorial services on Remembrance Day, V – J Day and other special occasions.
- To orally proclaim our link to the Hong Kong Veterans.
- Educating and increasing the public's understanding of the sacrifice made by the Hong Kong veterans.
- Organizing Reunions and National Conventions, as well as providing opportunities for social events.

Notes from HKVA: Ontario Branch

John Stroud, RRC

Hello, everyone! Hoping you are all well and enjoying the warm weather. Just want to let you know that our Ontario Commemorative Committee is doing a great job, and we congratulate you!

We just received word of the death of Charlie Chesser of our Quebec Branch. Very sorry to hear that. One more reason the veterans should be thinking along the following lines.

The Memory Project is holding Preparation Workshops for veterans again this spring all across Ontario – in London, Toronto, Sudbury and Ottawa – and are looking forward to expanding their 400-strong Speakers' Bureau. The Memory Project has hundreds of World War II and Korean War veterans who volunteer to go into classrooms and share their stories with students. If Hong Kong Veterans are interested in volunteering, please contact:

Jessica Humphries,
Manager, The Memory Project,
183 Bathurst Street, Suite 104,
Toronto, ON
M5T 2R7

Telephone: 416-368-9627 locally
E-mail: staff@dominion.ca
Long Distance: 1-866-701-1867
Fax: 416-368-2111

Be pro-active! Participate!
John Stroud, President,
Ontario Branch, HKVA

A good news bulletin!

Two years ago, George MacDonell wrote a gripping eye-witness account of the behaviour of

the Canadian defenders of Hong Kong, both on the battlefields of the island, and as slave labourers in the dreadful P.O.W. camps of the Japanese. His story tells of the courage and loyalty to their country of the Canadians who, despite their casualties, and against overwhelming odds, refused to surrender until they were ordered to lay down their arms on Christmas Day, 1941.

The Hong Kong Veterans Association published and distributed the book which was entitled "This Soldier's Story" until it was sold out earlier this year. George has now signed a contract with Dundurn Group Publishers of Toronto to publish a substantially larger and re-written version of the book to be ready for sale to the commercial market in September of this year. **We are looking forward to the commercial success of this re-written version because of its moving tribute to the Veterans of Hong Kong, and also because the proceeds from the sale of this new book will also be donated to the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association. Thank you, George, for a wonderful, much-appreciated gesture!!**

Update re the Two Associations in Ontario:
HKVA and HKVCA

The Hong Kong Veterans Association in Ontario and the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association of Ontario are beginning to work together to achieve a smooth transition from one organization to the other. Members of the HKVCA Executive have attended two HKVA Meetings, one on September 19, 2001, and the other just recently, on April 17, 2002. As the HKVA group gradually winds down as an organization, the HKVCA group is looking to work with them, and take on any tasks they would like us to fulfil. To this end, the Executives of both organizations met for the first time on October 10, 2001, and we expect to meet again soon.

The HKVCA Executive now includes three veterans who, together with the HKVCA Executive and the six Area Reps., make up the HKVCA Executive Council. At the most recent HKVA meeting on April 17, 2002, the Veterans offered some much-needed financial assistance to our newly-organized provincial organization. We certainly do appreciate their help, and we thank them for their support. We will be looking for the Veterans' advice and suggestions as we plan for the future.

Two Initiatives of the Ontario Region of HKVCA

1. The "Spirit of the Torch" Fund

As you know, the Ontario Region of HKVCA has as one of its goals, an increase in the public's awareness of the importance of the Canadian involvement in the battle for Hong Kong, and the subsequent treatment of its prisoners-of-war in the camps in Hong Kong and Japan. One of the ways we can bring the situation to the fore is to increase our recognition of those Hong Kong Veterans who made the supreme sacrifice on the battlefield, or suffered in the prison camps, as well as those who are still with us. One of the ways we can do this is to add to the number of Remembrance Day Ceremonies across Ontario which honour Hong Kong Veterans specifically, with a wreath in their name.

This last Remembrance Day, hearing of our plan to sponsor wreaths through the

organization, there were 16 individuals, and groups, that volunteered to look after supporting the cost of wreaths for ceremonies at their local cenotaphs on Remembrance Day. We published the names of those who went ahead with this project last year, and will do so again in the December Newsletter to recognize new sponsors. The object is to add at least one new wreath in each of the six areas of the province each year, so that we broaden the base of the public's understanding of the role that the Hong Kong Veterans played in World War II.

The process is simple, and there are two ways to deal with the project.

1. If you wish to make it a personal gesture, and sponsor a wreath on your own, simply get in touch with your nearest Canadian Legion, and ask to speak to the Poppy Chairperson. That person looks after selling the poppies in that area, but also takes care of the wreaths for the Remembrance Day ceremony as well. The cost varies from \$70.00 to \$80.00 per wreath. It's expensive enough, until you realize that the wreath is not used just once, but is stored by the Poppy Chairperson until the next year, and for many years after.

a) this person will also ask you what you want on the wreath. It was decided last year that the wreath should read:

Hong Kong Veterans
WW II POWs 1941-1945
(In smaller letters) HKVCA

b) The next step is to arrange for someone to present the wreath at the Remembrance Day Ceremony. If you are fortunate, there may be a Hong Kong veteran in your area. If not, a member of the family sponsoring the wreath is certainly acceptable. The Poppy Chairperson will be able to fill you in re the details of the Ceremony.

c) There is usually a service at a church nearby, a short walk to the Cenotaph, and the Presentations of the Wreaths are made at that time.

d) Many of the Legions host a luncheon or reception afterwards, to which participants are invited. The approach makes for a pleasurable day.

2. The second way to be a part of the wreath-laying initiative is to make a donation directly to

the "Spirit of the Torch" fund, being looked after by our Provincial Treasurer, Wendy Campbell. Her contact address on page 11 of this Newsletter is the address to which you would send your cheque or money order. We will use all monies in this Fund to designate the 6 locations, one for each Area, where a new wreath will be established. The number of wreaths we can lay on behalf of the Association will depend on the total of the donations received. Fred Mason, our leading donor to this point, will assist us in choosing the locations of the Association's wreaths.

2.The Introduction of a Unit relating to the Battle of Hong Kong in the High School curriculum in Ontario:

This goal is discussed at some length in other portions of this Newsletter, but it is important to realize that Canadian students need to be aware of what has transpired in war situations such as this. Only by introducing a Unit into the Curriculum in Ontario High Schools can we hope to develop in students a broad awareness of the importance of this piece of our history. The B.C. Ministry of Education has been the first province in Canada to do just that this past year. We plan to be the second!

The Ladies' Side of the Story

The purpose of this column is to shed some light on the role the women connected with members of the Hong Kong Expeditionary Force played during and after the war years, and still play today. Their stories are fascinating. The women, during those war years, gathered together informally to share their news, and to provide support for each other while the men were away. Many helped prepare cartons of food and clothing for prisoners-of-war in warehouses across the country. Of the thousands of packages sent through the Red Cross, few reached the prisoners, but the ones that did provided some relief from hunger, and a feeling of contact with home. Women who did not have young children at home took on many of the jobs that had traditionally been men's, including working at assembly plants building planes, and the weapons needed for the war effort. Others who were able, and unmarried, went into the armed forces as CWACS, WRENS or WAFS, acronyms for the women of the army, navy and air force.

After the men came back, there was a huge period of adjustment for the women as well as the men. The women had become used to having to "go it alone" and be the head of the household. Many had young children whom they had had to raise on their own. Their sons and daughters barely recognized their fathers when they came home. Some children had been born after their fathers left, and met them for the first time after the war, so that there was a long period in which everyone, father, mother and children, had to relearn their roles in the family. This made for a lot of tension, which some handled well, and some not so well. At first, many families had very little money, and, if some had pensions, the pensions were small.

The veterans often needed hospital care to overcome the illnesses that had plagued them during the war. These illnesses left their mark, as did the deprivations, and memories of all sorts, which made living in a normal situation so difficult. All the more reason for the women to share their concerns with others having the same problems, and, for a long time, the women continued to socialize in an informal way. Gradually, because families moved away, and circumstances changed, the ties were not as close for some.

The men in the Toronto area had formed their own Hong Kong Veterans' Association, and there continued to be social events where the wives were involved. It was at a corn roast in 1982 at Ted and Oda

Barlow's that Marjorie Dwyer was asked to be the first President of an organized Ladies' Auxiliary, in conjunction with the Hong Kong men who met at Legion Branch No. 22. She was hesitant at first, as she had never done anything like that before, but, with the exception of two years, she has been President right to the present, a period of nearly twenty years. The Ladies used to meet four times a year, providing a meal for the men after their meeting, as well as meeting themselves. They helped organize social events that their families could enjoy. Typically they would have a dinner and dance at Christmas time, decorating a Christmas tree, arranging door prizes, and getting a disc jockey for the evening's music. They shared in a number of activities with the men, such as the various Conventions, and they watched proudly from the reviewing stand every year as the men marched in the Warriors' Day Parade at the Toronto Exhibition.

Marge Dwyer, and all of the women who have been involved with the Ladies' Auxiliary to this day, have many stories to tell.

Marge herself joined the CWACs (the Canadian Women's Army Corps) when she had just turned 18. She went through all the basic training in Kitchener, and then worked in Ottawa for 2 ½ years in Repatriation. At the end of the war she was discharged in Winnipeg, and went to work in the office at a lumber company. She became reacquainted with her husband, Terry, whom she had known as a child, after a girlfriend had phoned to say that he was in hospital, and that perhaps she should pay him a visit. She did, and not long after they were married. They lived in Winnipeg for seven years, and their first child, Rick, was born there in 1948. Her two daughters, Maureen and Roxanne, followed in the next few years. Terry was working at building aircraft, and, as well, he was in the militia. When he tired of his job, he decided to go back into the armed forces, but this time into the air force rather than the army. The family was based in various places, Camp Borden, Ontario, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and, finally, bases in France and Germany (Baden Baden). To this day, Marjorie is an active, busy lady, and just recently celebrated her 75th birthday. And many more to you, Marge!

Other Ladies will be featured in the coming issues of the Newsletter. Look next time for the two CWACs who were members of the only female Pipe Band in the armed forces in the world during World War II.

Hey Kids (from 12 to 18)
We need your help! Be active!

Many people in Canada have the impression that young people generally have very little understanding what our soldiers, sailors and airmen went through in World War II to ensure the freedom we have today. We hope you agree that it is really important that your grandfather's role in World War II as a Royal Rifle or a Winnipeg Grenadier was an important one. Many of their number never came home. All those who did suffered unspeakable horrors in prison-of-war camps for nearly four years. How can we avoid having their dreadful experiences repeated in your generation or the next generations if we fail to understand what they experienced?

The Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association in Ontario is working to persuade the Ontario Government to include our soldiers' story in the History Studies in Ontario High Schools. You can help us by making copies of this page, taking the pages to your school, and asking your teacher for permission to distribute the sheets to your class (Your History class or home room class). It is a short survey that will give us valuable information to present to the Provincial government representatives we plan to meet.

1. Did you know that 1975 Royal Rifles and Winnipeg Grenadiers went to Hong Kong in November of 1941 to defend the area against the Japanese? _____
2. Did you know that Hong Kong was attacked the same day as Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941? _____
3. Did you know that 290 of the 1975 Canadians died fighting a Japanese force of at least 10,000 men? _____
4. Did you know that the 1975 men held off this huge force for 17 days, the last 3 or 4 days without food and water? _____
5. Did you know that in the 44 months that the survivors were in prisoner-of-war camps 267 died of malnutrition, diphtheria and other diseases, torture and slave-labour? _____
6. Did you know that there are 250 Hong Kong veterans still alive in Canada

and that 63 of those are in Ontario? _____

7. Do you think we need to honour them by including their story in the curriculum of Ontario High Schools? _____

Signed: _____ Gr. ____ H.S.:

Note: The Quiz you see above, or one like it, could well be a part of the initiative being considered this month by a Committee of HKVCA members, interested in seeing a Unit in the Secondary Schools of Ontario which deals with the Battle of Hong Kong, and the difficulties endured by the prisoners-of-war in the years that followed. Any HKVCA members who would like to comment, or who might have suggestions for that Committee, may get in touch with Pat Turcotte at her contact numbers on page 11. Any letters in support of the idea of inclusion of such a Unit in the schools could well be used in a presentation the Committee proposes to make to the Ontario Government in the near future.

Adults take note!

Special Task: #1

As members of HKVCA, we want to do all that we can to ensure that the sacrifice of our veterans is not forgotten. In British Columbia, this year for the first time, there is a Unit in the High School History Curriculum that deals with the specifics of the Battle at Hong Kong. A "hands-on" approach is taken, and students are given different roles to play, as if they were in the prison camp themselves. For example, what would they do to supplement the watery rice, and biscuit, and weak tea that was their daily diet? How would they react when they were put on half rations because they were sick and couldn't do the work they were assigned to do? How would they solve dealing with the cold, or having no utensils with which to eat? These are some of the things that students must face in offering solutions to coping with horrendous conditions in the prisoner-of-war camps.

This year, one of HKVCA's goals is to gain the support of the appropriate Provincial Ministry of Education officials and politicians relative to having a History Unit on the Battle for Hong Kong, and the subsequent internment of our Canadian soldiers in the prisoner-of-war camps, in the Curriculum of Ontario High Schools. As part of the plan, we are considering the use of the survey sheets from the previous page of this Newsletter to document the fact that our students know very little about the important role our soldiers played in World War II.

The Committee will meet for the first time in June, and there will likely be subsequent meetings. We would appreciate any comments or suggestions you might have regarding the survey, and the task we have ahead of us. **If the Committee decides to go ahead with the survey, we will be repeating the information in the December**

- After the Battle (under development). Maps are included, and there is a very detailed look at what happened.

2002 Newsletter, and will have final instructions there regarding the implementation of the survey. Send any comments to Pat Turcotte at her contact address listed on page 11.

***If you, as a parent or grandparent, have a keen interest in seeing this initiative go forward, please encourage the students in your family to be a part of this survey.

Special Task #2:

Calling all parents and grandparents! Your children and grandchildren know how to deal with the Internet. Get them to show you the HKVCA Website.

1. Make sure you look it over.
2. Make sure your children or grandchildren look it over with you!

If the younger generations are going to show any interest in the Project on page 8 of this Newsletter, they need to know the story of the Hong Kong Battle. You'll find everything about it at this [Website: www.hkvca.ca](http://www.hkvca.ca)

All HKVCA members, veterans, widows, and family members should become familiar with the material that is on the HKVCA Website. Even if you are not computer-literate (as they say) or comfortable trying to use a computer, with some help, you can get the information the Website offers. And this Website is GOOD! It has all sorts of information that you would find interesting, informative and worth your while.

Just to give you an idea of what you'll find there...

The opening page just recently had a very warm tribute to Harry Atkinson headed "Last Post". Presently, there is a story by Gary Beecroft, one of our HKVCA members. It's a fascinating look at a brother he never knew, who was with the Royal Rifles in Hong Kong.

Besides the Special Features section there are 18 destinations you can go to, depending on your preference:

- ✓ The HKVCA'S Mission Statement, followed by an e-mail box in case you have any questions.
- ✓ The Interview section features an interview on cassette tape given by Harry Atkinson several years ago, with the webmaster, Linda May, asking the questions. What we see is a direct transcription of that interview, with Harry making some very insightful comments.
- ✓ Three large Sections dealing with the Battle of Hong Kong:
 - Before the Battle
 - The Battle itself

- ✓ A section showing links to other Regiments, to War Memorials, to Peacekeeping sites and many other sites as well.

There is a Membership Information section.

- ✓ A four-page section listing books published about the Battle for Hong Kong.

- ✓ A section listing the Honours and Awards of the soldiers in the Royal Rifles and the Winnipeg Grenadiers. In each case, the story surrounding the Honour or Award is told in some detail.

- ✓ Other Sections include E-mail opportunities, a Discussion Forum, a Guest Book to sign, and a Nominal Roll of every soldier who died in camp or was a prisoner-of-war.

- ✓ There is also a special section open to submissions by HKVCA members. Two of our Area Reps are represented there right now, Ron McGuire, North East Area Rep., and Liana Frenette, North Area Rep. As a sample of what you'll find there, we've included Liana's poem on the next page.

The Royal Rifles and Winnipeg Grenadiers

*We were young, excited and naïvely brave,
Off on the Awatea to fight and to save.*

*The "Japs" attacked Hong Kong hard and fast,
Without reinforcements, we could not last.
Determined and hopeful, we tried to defend her,
Christmas Day '41, we had to surrender.*

*For those we had lost, the battle was done,
Lives tragically ended by sword and by gun.
For those who survived a new battle began,
Such horrendous conditions that tested a man.*

*Torture and beatings performed every day,
Disease and starvation took many away.
How any survived, it's amazing to tell,
Four years we lived in a prison from Hell.*

*American help came in mid '45,
New hope abounded for those still alive.
Time to return to family and friend,
World War II had come to an end.*

*We returned to our lives as best we could,
Wherever we turned, we were misunderstood.
They wanted to help, they wanted to see,
But they had to be there to understand me.*

*Nightmares brought back the horrors endured;
Missing arms and legs could never be cured.
Hardened by years of starvation and pain,
Things would never be normal again.*

*Five decades have passed for those who remembers,
That fateful day we had to surrender.
Not able to forget all that went wrong
The horrors we suffered while in Hong Kong.*

*And so, to this day,
We remain,
Prisoners of War!*

Liana Frenette

granddaughter of John James, RRC

Future events to plan for:

1. The HKVCA National Convention of 2003:
Dates: Wednesday, August 13 to Sunday, August 17, 2003
Location: Victoria, B.C. Venue: Not yet decided
2. HKVCA, Ontario Region: Elections for Regional Director, Secretary and Treasurer in the Spring of 2003
3. Pilgrimage to Hong Kong in 2005
4. 60th Anniversary of the end of WW II in 2005