

HONG KONG VETERANS' ASSOCIATION QUÉBEC-MARITIMES BRANCH CHRISTMAS, 1995

BANJO GOSSIP NEWSLETTER 3.2 BAMBOO TELEGRAPH

Once again it's Christmas time, a time for friends and family to get together, a time to relax and put aside briefly the cares of the everyday grind, a time to reflect on days gone by. For me, this time of the year brings back memories of a Christmas Day long ago, a day when I lost so many of my friends at that bloody battle at Stanley Village. At some point on Christmas Day each year, I find myself wandering off and remembering the sadness, the utter hopelessness that I felt on Christmas night when we retreated to Stanley Fort with the Japs in front of us and nothing but the sea at our backs. I remember the shelling that followed us all the way back to the Fort and Lance Ross telling me as we crouched together, bombs bursting all around, that I should lie on my side and place my rifle along my body to give me some protection. I remember Major Parker's face as he counted the number of us who returned from the bloody mess in Stanley Village. I must confess (was it cowardice?) that I was relieved to hear that we had to lay down our arms. So, for me, in many ways, Christmas is not a happy time.

REUNION 1996

Mrs. Carolyn Albright, Denzil and Betty's daughter, who lives in Dartmouth, NS, had offered to spearhead the organization of the 1996 reunion in the Halifax area, before her father died. The Executive Committee, whose mandate it was to select a site for the reunion, agreed to go for that suggestion. Therefore, we will be meeting in Dartmouth, (by then, a part of the city of Halifax, I'm told), tentative dates, August 9, 10, 11. More information will be forthcoming after Christmas, when the organizing committee gets rolling. It should be a good reunion, since we have never had one in Halifax. Laurie MacKay will be advising Carolyn and helping to get things going. More later.

OVERDUE PAYMENT

Lionel Hurd sent me a copy of the Sherbrooke Record in which a news item tells an interesting story. In 1941, when we left to go to Hong Kong, our commanding officer placed a total of 260 Pounds Sterling in a safety deposit box in the Hong Kong-Shanghai Banking Corporation. This fund apparently had been established to purchase extras such as badges, etc, and after the war it had been forgotten. To make a long story short, Lionel and one of his acquaintances in the banking business uncovered the oversight, with the result that \$538.71 (Cdn equivalent of the original deposit) and \$1636.71, representing the interest, were turned over to Lionel by the Bank of Montreal Branch in Lionel's home town, Sawyerville. The Bank then put on a supper for the Hong Kong Veterans of the area, and Lionel turned over the money to the Quebec-Maritimes Branch. Bravo, Lionel! And many thanks for your efforts in our behalf. The money is much appreciated and will help to keep the ball rolling.

VIDEOS OF REUNION IN OTTAWA

There were two videos made, one of the medal presentation, and one of the Cenotaph ceremony. These videos are available for \$15.00 each. If you are interested, please let me know. Do not send money to me. The videos will be sent and the money collected by another means, the details of which I do not have at this time. I have already placed ads in several papers and have received quite a few requests. When the time comes, I'll report my list to whoever distributes the videos. You should receive them shortly thereafter. Harry Atkinson is involved, and at the present time he is in Hong Kong on the 1995 Pilgrimage.

PLEASE EXCUSE THE SNAFU. The Xerox machine malfunctioned and I had to do pages two and four over on another machine. Please insert pages 2 and 4 in their proper places. Sorry about that.

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NEWSLETTERS

I would like to congratulate John Stroud and the Ontario Branch for their newsletter. It has taken on a new look and the layout is very attractive. John always has interesting bits of information to share with his members. Bravo, John!

LAST POST

Murray Brown, "A" Company, Royal Rifles of Canada, died in Oromocto, New Brunswick, where he had lived since retiring. He had been sick for some time. Murray spent most of his life after Hong Kong in the military.

Mrs. Vivian (Elmer) Denison. The Denisons had moved to Toronto several years ago. My sources tell me that Mrs. Denison had not been well for a long time. Sincere sympathy to Elmer, my ex-teacher and my ex-platoon officer.

T.W. (Tom) Wilson

Mrs. Eva Pollock (Simon)

CANADA REMEMBERS

On November 3, a group of us Hong Kong Veterans attended a ceremony at the Citadelle in Québec, as guests of the "Canada Remembers" celebration of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. There was a parade at which 250 veterans from all across Québec were assembled in the presence of the Honourable Martial Asselin, Lieutenant-Governor of Québec, and dignitaries from the Royal Canadian Legion, and elsewhere. Hong Kong veterans were honoured by the fact that two of our number were chosen to be recognized in the ceremonies, one in the flame-passing and one in the tulip planting ceremony. Brigadier-General Christian Couture, C/O Camp Valcartier and C/O of the 5th Canadian Brigade accepted the flame from two representatives of the veterans' group.

MERIT AWARD

At a meeting of the executive on November 19, 1994, it was decided to recognize the work of Comrade Richard Keays by recommending him for the Merit Award and Life Membership. The wheels of justice ground slowly, and at last we received the documents and lapel badge for Dick. Since Dick hasn't been well of late and hasn't been able to attend a reunion where he could be properly honoured for his efforts on behalf of his comrades, it was decided to go to his house and perform a simple ceremony. Consequently, a group of us, Reg Law, Henry Lyons, Arnold Ross, Bob Barter, Joe Bujold, and myself, visited Dick and Nellie on November 30, and presented him with the award. Needless to say, we all enjoyed the get-together.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

I was most surprised to get a letter from E.J. Bird, an ex-Royal Navy Marine Veteran who now lives in Northampton, England. He had been pubbing with a cousin of mine who lives there, and from my cousin he got my address. Now, this fellow was serving on the H.M.S. DANAE, a British "Man O' War" attached to the South China Fleet and their ship was one of the escorts that we picked up in Manila in November, 1941. I quote from his letter, which may be of interest to you.

E.J. Bird: "Now I will endeavour to explain why it may be of interest to you and all the gallant men that survived that awful debacle that happened all those years ago. I remember quite vividly the days when we escorted you to Hong Kong, from Manila in the Philippines, and the fact that we of the crew were well aware of the situation that awaited all of you. The whole detachment of Royal Marines aboard the "Danae" (of which I was a member) were, to say the least, absolutely appalled at the predicament that we were placing you in."

Bird says, "What induced me to write this letter? A television programme was screened a couple of months ago, showing Canadians who survived Hong Kong and its horrific consequences, thus brought back to me that memorable voyage. So followed the conversation with Roy (my cousin), in the Navy Club. He then informed me of your part in this era of army life."

BIOKI

Apart from Seldon Stoddard and Ken Court, who remain in hospital, I have heard from Leslie Stickles who is at home, but, according to his wife, Ethel, Leslie is having a lot of health problems. If you haven't already done so, perhaps some of our gang who lives nearby could pay him a visit or give him a call.

Charlie Campbell is in hospital. He has trouble with diabetes and high blood pressure. He also is taking treatment for his breathing. He remains in good spirits, though, and is talking of going home for the weekend.

HONG KONG BAR

On November 10, the Royal Canadian Legion Branch in New Richmond played host to Hong Kong Veterans and widows from the district of eastern Québec and the Maritimes for the presentation of the HK Bar. The Honourable Lawrence MacAuley made the presentation, assisted by National President Roger Cyr, Robert Champagne, Regional Director, VAC, and Mme Lalonde, Quebec Director of VAC. Nine Hong Kong Veterans received the Bar as well as eight widows or next of kin. We were pleased to see Willy Hickey among the Hong Kong Vets. Willie hasn't showed up at reunions for a long time. Let us hope that we'll see him more often in the future. A roast beef dinner was served by the Ladies' Auxiliary of Branch 172 after the ceremony. Everyone had an opportunity to talk with the dignitaries.

For those who have not yet received the Bar, (HK Veterans, widows, next of kin), you may phone Ms. Pat Smith at 613-992-7470 in Ottawa, giving the full name of the HK Vet, his birth date, if known, and his service number, OR, write to. Ms. Pat Smith, Honours and Awards Division, Veterans' Affairs Canada, 66 Slater St, 14th Floor, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A0P4.

CORRESPONDENCE

My pleas for input to the newsletter have been heard. I'm getting more mail, and I'll pass along the information to you. I hope that it gives you as much pleasure as it does me. Here they are in no particular order:

From Fraser and Tara Firth, commenting on his RCMP post in Shamattawa, Manitoba, and comments about his father, Denzil;

From Flash and Jessie Clayton, expressing grief on the recent loss of our comrades, news of Matt Sandford, Ted Barlow, plus news of their planned activities for the winter;

From Betty Firth with thanks for our part in the funeral service for Denzil;

From Harold Englehart with word of his eye operation. Incidentally, the operation was a complete success.

From Ethel Stickles (Leslie) commenting on Leslie's health.

From Frank Corbett (Associate Member. It was he who refurbished the Royal Rifles Plaque which hangs in the Drill Hall in Québec City) He sent a donation in memory of Denzil.

From Lionel Speller. Lionel has arranged for accommodations for me and Edwina in Victoria for a month this winter. Besides that, Lionel always has pertinent comments. I'll cut him down to size when I get out there.

From John Stroud with some addresses I had asked for. Also news of the death of Thomas Wilson, Ontario Branch, and Québec-Maritimes Branch.

From Pat Poirier who attended the ceremonies in Québec City on November 3. Pat was 78 years old that day.

From Bill Tuppert. Bill is off to Florida for the winter.

From Carole Trites, Tara Fraser's mother, who sent a donation in memory of Denzil.

From Lawrence Ross who sent a donation in memory of his brothers, Raymond and Leo.

From Hazel Breakey, with a donation in memory of Denzil

From George MacDonell with good wishes and a copy of a letter he had sent to Ministers Collenette and MacAulay.

From Claris Phillips with news of the "overdue payment" explained above.

From Ray and Dorothy Sauson with comments on the Reunion and Denzil.

From Betty Morse setting me straight on her address
 From Daniel Charron with his father, René's address. Pollock informing me of his mother's death. (Mrs. Simon) (cont'd next page)
 From Walter Henderson with a change of address.
 From Lionel Hurd with the story about the "overdue payment"
 Christmas greetings from Bonnie Vincent, Audrey Murray and John Stroud. These greetings were meant to be passed on to all of us.

DONATIONS

Mrs. Dorothy Lockhart, Mrs. Ruth Kellas, Mrs. Jean Rose, Mrs. Catherine Irving, Miss. Bonnie Vincent, Mrs. Annie Nolan, Mrs. Barbara Henderson, Mrs. Rita Ross, Mrs. Myrtle MacNaughton, Mrs. Mildred MacPherson, Mrs. Rolande Miller, Mrs. Beryl Kaine, Mrs. Willa Allen, Mrs. Eva Lebreton, Mrs. Florence Drover, Mrs. Irene Firlotte, Mrs. Clare Marshall, Mrs. Angele Jessop, Mrs. May Pryce. Mrs. Irene Clark, Mrs. Stella Parkes, Mrs. Evelyn Hachey, Mrs. Sylvia Lackwood, Mrs. Dorothy Davidson, Mrs. Louise Coleman, Mrs. Claris Phillips, Mrs. May Wall, Mrs. Eva Robertson, Mrs. Audrey Murray, Mrs. Ruth Frenette, Mrs. Barbara Strang, Mrs. Joyce Harmon.

AND ALSO

Leonard Wood, Oliver R. Sauson, Robert MacNaughton, Bill Tuppert, Jack Delaney, Douglas Martin, Jean Lalime, Laurie MacKay, Everest Lawrence, Arley Enright, Elmer Denison, Angus MacMillan, Edwin Rodrigues, Grant S Stoddard, Henry Lyons, Girard Bisson, LTS Doull, Leonard Doiron, Algee Pelletier, Thomas Jones, Dr. S.M. Banfill, Clarence Hunt, Samuel Disensi, Richard Keays, Walter O'Hara, William Hickie, Robert Barter.

DONATIONS IN MEMORIUM

Mrs. Beatrice Butler in memory of her husband, Gerard
 Mrs. Agathe St. Onge in memory of her husband, John.
 Mrs. Audrey in memory of her husband, Matthew.
 Mrs. Ruth Frenette in memory of her husband, Joseph.
 Lawrence Ross in Memory of his brothers, Raymond and Leo.
 Mrs Bernice Simons in memory of Vivian Denison and Denzil Firth.
 Mrs. Catherine Irving in memory of Denzil Firth.
 Mrs. Hazel Breakey in memory of Denzil Firth.
 Mrs. Carole Trites in memory of Denzil Firth.
 Mr. & Mrs LTS Doull in memory of Denzil Firth.
 Mr. & Mrs. Glenford Mann in memory of Denzil Firth.
 Mr. & Mrs William Bradley in memory of Denzil Firth.
 Mr. & Mrs Napoleon LeBlanc in memory of Denzil Firth.
 Mr. Frank Corbett in memory of Denzil Firth.

MEMBERSHIP

Lawrence reports 170 members paid up to date. for 1995-96. If you haven't yet paid your dues for this year, please do so. We are not broke, but we do need your financial support to carry on. Dues, \$15.00 annually, should be sent to Lawrence Rattie, 508 Thorncrest, Dorval, QC, H9P 2M6

PERSONALITY

This time I'd like to write a little about Henry Lyons. Most of us know Henry. He was one of the first persons I met in July, 1940, when I arrived in Valcartier for basic training. He and I along with others from his home area of Matapedia, Quebec, were posted to "D" Company. We ended up in the same platoon, the famous (or infamous, take your pick) No. 17 Platoon. Henry fought the war from Valcartier to Sussex, to Botwood, Newfoundland, to Gander, to St. John's, and back to Valcartier and Saint John, New Brunswick. Then on to Hong Kong, Obelisk Hill and finally North Point and Sham Shui Po, where we relaxed and grew fat until August, 1945. Henry lost his brother, Jack, also of No.17 Platoon, on Christmas Day at Stanley Village. Since the War Henry has been a loyal supporter of our cause. He has been a regional director of

the Quebec-Maritimes Branch for many years, and misses very few of the executive meetings. Hats off to Henry. May he be with us for a long time!

COMMEMORATIVE COMMITTEE

Under the chairmanship of Derrill Henderson and Lora Wachtendorf, the Committee is off to a good start. We have wrested some money from the FEPOW fund to cover expenses for the moment. However, please encourage your son or daughter, cousin or brother, sister or aunt, to join and help out. Get in touch with Derrill at the address listed elsewhere in this letter.

TRIVIA

I have room for a few jokes which you probably have already heard, but here goes anyway. They say that strategy is when you are out of ammunition, but you keep right on firing so that the enemy won't know.

I know the King's English; and so is the Queen.

He made a terrible mistake, and he'll regret it till his dying day - if he lives that long.

ALLIED EX-PRISONER OF WAR MEDAL

You may have heard of this medal, and I know that some of you have already purchased it. Derrill Henderson sends me information on the medal, and the way for those interested to purchase it. Derrill writes: "This medal is a commemorative medal produced for the National Ex-Prisoners of War Association which is sanctioned by the British War Ministry. IT IS NOT AWARDED by the Honours and Awards department, therefore if one wants it one must pay for it. It is to be worn directly beneath the regular....medals.

"The cost of the medal is \$51.60 Canadian plus a mailing charge of \$5.50.Miniatures are \$17.20."

If you wish to order please complete the application form which is reproduced on this page and mail it with your cheque or money order made out to the Hong Kong Veterans of Canada for \$57.10 for the large medal plus \$17.50 if you also want the miniature - to Derrill Henderson, REPEAT -- to DERRILL HENDERSON, 75 Priam Way, Nepean, Ontario, K2H 8S7. Derrill will take it from there.

That's it for now. Have a very Merry Christmas and the best of good health in the New Year. Be good to each other and may God bless.

Philip