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HONG KONG VETERANS'
ASSOCIATION
QUEBEC MARITIMES
BRANCH
BANJO GOSSIP NEWSLETTER 6.4
BAMBOO TELEGRAPH
JUNE, 1999

Hello, again. Six years have passed since I started doing this newsletter, so perhaps a review of some of the outstanding events that took place in those six years would be appropriate. For one thing, all of our comrades who left us in those years would seem to be the most important, and we remember them with reverence.

In 1993 the National Convention was held in Pointe Claire, Quebec. The Honourable Peter McCreath, Minister of Veterans' Affairs announced the award of the Defence of Britain Medal to HK Vets, and pinned the first one on President Harry Atkinson. Roger Cyr was elected President when Harry declined the nomination.

At this Convention, the Commemorative Association was launched.

Sister Kay Christie died on February 8, 1994.

In 1994 our annual reunion was held at Keddy's Hotel in Fredericton.

In 1995 our Natinal Reunion was held in Ottawa.

At long last the Hong Kong Bar was presented.

In September 1995, a delegation of HK Vets attended a ceremony in Sherbrooke, at which the Royal Rifles cap badge were added to the Guidon of the Sherbrooke Hussars.

On September 27, 1995, our President, Denzil Firth, died at his home in Ste-Foy.

The 1996 Reunion took place in Dartmouth, NS, organized and conducted by Denzil's family, mainly daughter Carolyn. It was great.

The 1997 Convention and Reunion was held in Toronto. Chairman, Fred Mason.

The 1998 Annual Reunion was held in Sherbrooke. Ossie was chairman, and Lucette did most of the organizing.

Just before the end of 1998 we received the long awaited news that compensation for slave labour was finally coming through. We extend again our sincere thanks to those brave souls who saw it through to the end.

CORRESPONDENCE

I have received letters from Alma Wood (Leonard), Flash Clayton, Josephine Tayler (John, WG), Bob Dunlop, Lionel Speller, Alex Archibald, Cameron Wood and Lloyd Doull.

Cameron Wood, son of the late Comrade Leonard, wrote to me on December 18, and somehow I overlooked it when preparing the March letter. For that, Cameron, I am sorry. Let me try to make amends by commenting on your letter, because I'm sure you would like your father's old friends to know your thoughts.

Cameron was in Hong Kong last fall. He visited the Stanley Peninsula and viewed the battle sites and other points that involved the Canadians' part in the defence of the Colony. His letter expresses the deep emotions he experienced, knowing that his father had been there and suffered through the height of the battle, then almost four years of further hardships in the prison camps.

It is heartening to know that our sons and daughters recognize the agony of those years. If enough of our children share Cameron's attitude, we will not be forgotten.

I get a newsletter from Kay Mann (Glen), as I'm sure others of you do. It is always full of news of her activities. A nice way to keep in touch.

LAST POST

Since the last letter, the Grim Reaper seems to have been working overtime. I have news of four ex-Royal Rifles who have left us, namely, EUGENE BOND, WESLEY LEGGO, WALTER HENDERSON, and DONALD SOUTHWORTH

I also hear of the deaths of six ex-Grenadiers: WILLIAM RODGERS, JOHN HAY, JOHN TAYLER, PERCY THOMPSON, RAY BRONSON, and EDWARD GRANTHAM.

ALPHA COULL, (BLAIR) also died since our last letter.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

I should also mention the passing of Jack Delaney. Jack Delaney was a veteran and a brother of Morris, who was killed in the battle in Stanley Village on Christmas Day, 1941. Jack was a staunch supporter of our Association.

VIGNETTES OF LIFE IN SHAM SHUI PO

Do you remember in the early days of Sham Shui Po, someone had the brilliant idea that yeast may help to supplement the protien-free diet of rice and bak choy. Yeast is self-generating, so as long as flour

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and water was added to the existing batch, more yeast would be produced.

Every day we lined up and received a dollop of yeast, foul tasting stuff, but at that time we were grasping at straws to find anything that would fend off beri-beri and pellagra.

Over the pot, someone had placed a sign admonishing us not to waste the stuff. It read "Yeast is yeast. and waste is waste, and never the twain shall meet", paraphrasing a line of Kipling's poem, "The Ballad of East and West."

HUMOUR

The internet gives us, among other things, an unending source of jokes. Here is one that brought a laugh.

A man in BC was offered by the telephone company, a direct line to God for \$100,000. He thought it fair enough, but thought he should check with the other telephone companies. He travelled to Alberta, where he found the service was also provided, but the price was the same, \$100,000. After checking with all the provinces with the same result, he arrived in Newfoundland. He called the telephone company and was told that it would cost him ten cents. "Ten cents?" he said. "Why so cheap? All the other provinces charge \$100,000 for a direct line to God."

The reply, "My son, you are in Newfoundland. It's a local call."

REUNIONS PAST

I found this picture in some of my old files. It is from the Cobourg Star, and was taken at the reunion in Toronto in 1987. Left to right: Don Southworth, Glen Mann, George Hees, Min. of Veterans' Affairs, Ruth Bevan (Bud) and Gladys Spalding.



It seems like yesterday. Twelve years pass quickly. When I printed this, little did I know that Don would be the next to go..

NATIONAL CONVENTION, 1999

A reminder that the reunion and National Convention will be held in Granby, Quebec, from August 12 until August 15. We hope to see you there. If you haven't heard, or have mislaid your "invitation" sent out by Lucette Muir, her address is 18 rue Barre, Granby, QC, J2H 2E6, telephone 450-375-7439.

Lucette wishes me to remind you that there is still time to register. Since this will be my last newsletter before the event, it may be the last reminder you'll get. Please register soon if you plan to go. It will make the Committee's job a lot easier. Remember, they are doing this for us at a lot of effort on their part..

Early to rise and early to bed makes a man healthy and wealthy and dead. (James Thurber)

WORD PLAY

The rules of Parliament will not allow the use of the word "liar". Sir Winston Churchill circumvented the rules by saying that one of his fellow parliamentarians had uttered a "terminological inexactitude."

John Diefenbaker had a few. When Richard Nixon called P.E. Trudeau an A...hole, Diefenbaker is reputed to have said, "It is a disgraceful thing for a head of state use such language, but you have to admit, he certainly knows his anatomy."

Diefenbaker, travelling in Western Canada, was handed a baseball cap with the letters P O O L on it. When he was asked if he knew what POOL stood for, he said, "I can't say what the P stands for, but the other letters mean 'on Otto Lang'". Otto Lang was then a Liberal cabinet minister.

MARITIMES-GASPESIAN BRANCH REUNION

I have a letter from Neil Darrach, President of the MG Branch in which he invites us to their annual get-together. It will be in Florenceville, NB, at the Royal Canadian Legion. It will take place on August 27, 28, and 29. Registration is \$20.00 per person, and that will admit you to all activities.

If you plan to go, please inform Neil. His address is: 179 Good Corner Road, Good Corner, NB, E7K 1P8. His telephone is 506-276-3638. Motels, Florenceville Motor Inn, 506-392-6053, and Beechwood Motor Inn, 506-278-5241. The mailing address for both is simply Florenceville, NB, E0J 1K0

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BIOKI

I have news that Glen Gregoire has been transferred to a hospital in Moncton. Apparently his old problem has resurfaced and he has had to have specialized treatment. Our best wishes go to Glen for a complete and speedy recovery. Recently Glen had moved from his apartment on Aaron St. in Campbellton and had moved into the Veterans' Wing in the Campbellton Regional Hospital. Lance Ross is in hospital in Ottawa. Get well, Lance.

DONATIONS

Lawrence reports donations from the following members:

From the ladies: Mrs. Mavis Frost, Mrs. Vivian Macdonald, Mrs. Grace Cyr, Mrs. Doris Carr, Mrs. Hazel Breakey, Mrs. Pauline Sweet, Mrs. May Price, Mrs. Hilda Grimshaw, Mrs. Hazel Martin, Mrs. Celia Glendenning, Mrs. Patricia Billson, Mrs. Patricia Johnstonn, Mrs. Jean Rose.
From the men: Lloyd Seaward, Robert Dunlop, Frederick Chapman, Donald Southworth, Kenneth Pifher.

In Memorium

Mrs. Elsie Stoddard in memory of husband Grant
Thomas Jones in memory of wife Muriel

BLACKIE

How many of us remember Blackie McLeod? Blackie was a member of "D" Company, and as I recall, he was a bit of a lone wolf, but what I remember most about Blackie is the way he used to provide lights for our cigarettes, those of us who had them in the prison camp.

Blackie had a "punk box", a small round can like the ones that ointment comes in. In the can he had a scrap of cotton which he had burned to a char. To get a light, he would open the can, and with a piece of steel, say an old table knife, and with a piece of stone, he would strike the knife until a spark became lodged in the "punk". When the punk started to glow, he would blow on it until there was a coal big enough to light a cigarette. When he put the cover back on the can, the fire went out and his punk box was ready for the next time.

Needless to say, Blackie's services were often in demand, because matches didn't exist.

DUES

Lawrence reports that dues are steadily coming in. If you haven't paid yours for 1999, you may do so by sending a cheque for \$15.00 to: Lawrence Rattie,

508 Thorncrest Ave. Dorval, QC. H9P 2M6. He'll love you for doing it.

NATIONAL CONVENTION

The Commemorative Association has issued a preliminary copy of the agenda for their general meeting at 7:00 PM on Thursday, August 12. Many interesting topics which affect us directly will be discussed. It will be worth your time to take a look.

The Commemorative Committee has really taken its mandate seriously. It is gratifying to realize that they will see to it that our story lives on.

FRIENDS OF HK VETS

We as a group are fortunate to have many friends who are not Veterans of the Hong Kong fracas, and in some instances, are not connected by family or otherwise.

To name a few, let's begin with Charlie Gordon. Charlie sees to it that the Army, Navy, and Air Force "Hut" is always available for meetings or other activities when we need it. He is always there in the background at our meetings, ready to help out. It was Charlie who made the mobile cenotaph we used at last year's reunion, and I presume that we'll be using it again in Granby.

Then there is Lucette Muir who organized the last reunion down to the last detail, and who is doing the same for us again this year. Lucette, of course is connected by family. She is Ken Muir's widow. Marcel Mendou, having lately arrived on the scene, has assisted in planning the event, and has taken the responsibility of the raffle. He is present when needed and is ready and willing to assist in any way.

There are many others. If you think any one should be mentioned on these pages, please let me know, with a short description of their contribution. Their efforts should be recognized.

END NOTE

That will be all for this time. It is an abbreviated edition, but things seem to be piling up and time is running short. For one thing, the Executive Committee will be meeting here next weekend. That requires a bit of planning. I have to get this letter out, and that requires a bit of running around. So, excuses having been attempted, let me close in the usual way by saying--be good to each other, and may God bless.

Philip

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