

"In your sacrifice, in your courage, you ended up giving us your youth, your very lives."
Senator Gildas Molgat at Sai Wan Cemetary

Hong Kong Veterans Association Quebec-Maritimes Branch

Banjo Gossip Newsletter 8.3
Bamboo Telegraph
March, 2001

In the December newsletter, I stated that I would give a report on the activities of our sons and daughters and other family members who accompanied us to Hong Kong and Japan last fall.

I won't list them all by name, but the ones I got to know impressed me with their love and devotion to their parents, and their interest in and commitment to the memories that their fathers have carried for over half a century.

They accompanied us to all of the memorial ceremonies and were attentive and obviously moved by the speeches, the laying of wreaths, and the ceremonies in general. On the social side, they provided us with some lighthearted moments with their youthful buoyancy and enthusiasm.

I have heard from several of them since our return home, and all express their joy of having been part of the pilgrimage, and all want to go back should there be another one. Let us hope there will be, and, if I am still around, I'll be the first to line up.

I wish I could thank all of them personally for their participation, for making me feel that our contribution to the war effort way back then, was indeed of value.

I must also mention the importance of the presence of the widows as well as the wives who accompanied their husbands. They were welcome members.

STANLEY: BEHIND BARBED WIRE
That is the title of a book I received for Christmas. I was written by Jean Gittins, who lived in Hong Kong when the war

started and spent the remaining years in the Stanley Internment Camp.

I had often wondered about the circumstances of that camp, and was not surprised to learn that their lot was not much better than ours. Some of their husbands had been taken to Japan, others remained in Stanley, some were executed, some were placed in the civilian prison at Stanley for real or imagined misdemeanors, all were starved and mistreated in various ways. They did receive a minimum of help from relatives who managed to exist on the outside for the duration, and who managed to smuggle things into the camp.

Her story brought back memories of what we had to endure in Shamshui Po and our labours for his imperial majesty, building an airport, digging defence tunnels, gardening in Happy Valley, existing day to day.

Jean Gittins' book is an excellent account of the civilian internees' life at Stanley.

Another book that is worth investigating. "Ruins of War, A Guide to Hong Kong's Battlefields and Wartime Sites, by Ko Tim Keung and Jason Wordie, describe the defences of the Colony of Hong Kong and illustrate the installations with many photographs and charts, both ancient and modern, the many fortifications established for the defence of the Colony.

VIGNETTES OF LIFE IN SHAMSHUI PO

In the Jubilee Building, which was used as a diphtheria hospital during the epidemic of 1942, there was still electrical power available. Tobacco was limited, and we all will recall how we used to break up a cigarette into four pieces and make four smokes out of it, using that brown toilet paper to roll them in.

To find a light for your smoke was another problem, and perhaps you will remember the story I told a while back about Blackie McLeod and his punk box. In the Jubilee,

"In your sacrifice, in your courage, you ended up giving us your youth, your very lives."

Senator Gildas Molgat at Sai Wan Cemetary

some bright lad invented a cigarette lighter using a tin can full of salt water, a shard of glass with a wire attached to it and another wire attached to the can. When the wires were plugged into the wall, it would glow red, providing a light for your cigarette. Bright lad that I was, I decided to make a lighter. I got everything ready, one wire attached to the shard of glass, one wire attached to the can, both wires plugged into the wall. Perfect! The wire glowed red and my experiment was a success. Bright lad that I was, I grabbed the can with my bare hand to set it back out of the way. POW! I got an electric shock that threw me right across the room. That was the end of my cigarette lighter. I was lucky that nothing worse had happened. I could have been killed, or, if the Japs had found out about it, I would have received a royal hammering. In Shamshui Po the Japs used to take a miscreant to the old tennis court to beat him up. This became known as a "tennis courting".

NEARING THE FINISH

(Another one from Lionel Speller)

As I often remark
When I'm low as can be
It's a terrible rat-race I'm in,
And what is still worse
I'm beginning to see
The rats are most likely to win!

ITEM: JAPAN

WWII GERM WARFARE

"The military dumped swarms of infected fleas on China that triggered outbreaks of bubonic plague in the 1940s, two Chinese doctors said in the first such testimony. Retreating Japanese forces unleashed fleas tainted with cholera, typhoid, anthrax and bubonic plague in one attack in China's southwestern Zhenjian province, one said."
The Gazette, Montreal, January 25, 2001.

LOST

A friend gives me a survival tip. If ever you are lost in the woods, far from anyone and completely disoriented, take out a pack of cards and start playing Solitaire. Before long someone will come along and tell you what move to make next.

MEMORIAL CROSS

The Memorial Cross is back in the news. Very briefly, here is the list of persons eligible: mothers, if alive, or, widows if alive, or, oldest living child, or, oldest living brother OR sister, of veterans who were killed in action or who died as a POW, or who died of a condition for which they were pensioned.

Questions should be directed to Derrill Henderson, and application forms, (available from Derrill), when completed should be sent to him at: Derrill Henderson, National Secretary, HKVA, 75 Priam Way, Nepean, ON, K2H 8S7. tel. 613-829-5033, email: derrill@sympatico.ca

LIONEL HURD

Captain Lionel Hurd was Quartermaster of the Royal Rifles of Canada. He died at his home in Sawyerville, Quebec, on February 2, 2001. Lionel was a past National President of the Hong Kong Veterans Association. He remained active in the Quebec-Maritimes Branch until shortly before his death. He attended meetings faithfully and always had something of substance to add to the deliberations. His experience in business and the advantage of his wisdom was always of help in deliberations of the Executive Committee and his opinion was sought after in all matters concerning the welfare of his fellow Hong Kong Comrades. Of great comfort to him was his wife, Kay, whom he married late in life, and who accompanied him wherever he went, providing help and

"In your sacrifice, in your courage, you ended up giving us your youth, your very lives."
Senator Gildas Molgat at Sai Wan Cemetary

support. He will be greatly missed. We will remember him.

DONATIONS

Donations to the fund have always been an important part of the operation, enabling the Branch to provide services to the members, and to help where help is needed. Thank you for helping to keep the ball rolling.

These are the donations as reported by our membership chairman, Marcel Mondou: Yolande Ross, Louise Coleman, Dorothy Davidson, Irene Firlotte, Helen Cole, Stanley Banfill, Bonny Vincent, Helen Webb, Robert MacNaughton, John Smith, Arthur Roberts, Audrey Murray, Ed Campbelton, James C. MacMillan, Joan Gillis, Ralph MacLean, Raymond Murray, Mildred MacPherson.

Joyce Clarkson Harmon in memory of husband Ken Clarkson;
Colleen "Geraldine" Cunningham in memory of her father, R.L. Vincent, MIA
Lawrence Ross in memory of brothers Raymond and Leo;
Doris Carr in memory of husband Murray.
Mary Bradley in memory of Lionel Hurd

REMINDER

Marcel asks that you check your last membership card. If it is dated 2001, you are OK; if not, send \$15. to Marcel Mondou, 18 rue Barre, Granby, QC, J2H 2E6.

Remember that widows are not required to pay membership dues.

He also reports the following distribution of members: Quebec, 58; Ontario, 19; NB, 14; NS, 3; PEI, 1; NF, 2; USA, 3; for a total of 100 paid up as of February 13.

LAST POST

The names of our departed comrades reported since the last newsletter are as follows:

Armand Bourbonniere, WG
Oliver Ray Sauson, RRC

Lionel Hurd, RRC
James Houston, WG,
Jack Goodey, WG
Bob Jessop, RRC
R.P. Warren, Bde
Raymond Pellor, WG
Isaac Friesen, WG
Mrs. Eric Batley
Mrs. Don Nelson
Mrs. Dorothy Ross
Mrs. McLellan, RRC ? or Mrs. McClelland, WG? I need clarification on this one.

Senator Molgat. Since starting this letter, I received the sad news that Senator Gildas Molgat has died. He was buried in the Ste. Rose du Lac Cemetary in St. Boniface on March 5.

Why report the death of Senator Molgat? Senator Molgat, Speaker of the Senate, was the leader of our pilgrimage to the Far East last fall. He, along with his wife, Allison, accompanied us to all the battle sites, where he spoke so feelingly at all of the ceremonies. He had obviously done his homework. The easy manner and jovial nature of both him and his wife, put everyone at ease, and made them popular with everyone. He insisted that the veterans call him "Gil". I am now thankful that I wrote to Senator Molgat when we returned to thank him for his participation in the pilgrimage.

CORRESPONDENCE

I have received a lot of correspondence, too numerous to comment on in detail. I list them here in no particular order:

From Mary Bradley, expressing thanks to those who attended husband Bill's burial in Sherbrooke; from Alger Collins, brother of Alger, KIA, from Elmer Denison with comments on our school days, from Flash Clayton with comments on the Pilgrimage 2000, from Lionel Speller, the old philosopher, from Carol Hadley, with a much