

Hong Kong vets: 'Our forgotten heroes'

On September 19, 1941, Britain asked Canada for military support to aid in the defence of Hong Kong. The Canadian government agreed to send two battalions and a brigade headquarters to reinforce the British enclave.

The troopship Awatea, accompanied by an escort ship the H.M.C.S. Prince Robert, sailed out of Vancouver harbor during the night of October 27, 1941. Onboard the two ships were 1,975 Canadian soldiers and two nurses which formed "C" Force.

The soldiers were from The Royal Rifles of Canada, The Winnipeg Grenadiers, and the various support corps which formed Brigade Headquarters. They arrived in Hong Kong on November 16, 1941.

Unfortunately the mechanized transport consisting of 212 vehicles

destined for use by "C" Force never arrived in Hong Kong. These vehicles were loaded at Vancouver aboard the American freighter Don Jose, which sailed November 4, 1941. The vehicles were diverted December 19 (with Canadian approval) for American use in the Philippines.

Hong Kong was being defended by British and Indian troops as well as the Hong Kong Volunteer Defense Corps. With the arrival of the Canadian soldiers, the allied defenses numbered approximately 14,000.

On Dec. 8, 1941, only hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor, over 50,000 seasoned and well equipped Japanese troops attacked Hong Kong. These troops had the benefit of air and naval support. The brutal battle of Hong Kong lasted 17 days and ended on Christmas

Day, 1941.

Almost 300 Canadian soldiers lost their lives in the battle and many more were wounded.

Similar numbers of Canadians would die in Japanese POW camps during the next three years and 10 months as a result of starvation, disease and slave labor. When the Canadian survivors were repatriated in September and October 1945, doctors did not seem to recognize

the many tropical diseases with which they were afflicted as well as the emotional distress they had experienced.

In 1995, as the Hong Kong veterans were aging and becoming fewer in numbers, a group of sons and daughters of these veterans banded together and formed the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association (HKVCA). Its primary objective was to assist the remaining Hong

Kong veterans and their wives as well as the widows of the soldiers who had died.

Their second objective was to make the Canadian public more aware of the heroic role these Canadian soldiers had played in the defense of Hong Kong. The HKVCA wants to ensure that future generations do not forget the importance of that role, and the sacrifices that were made by the members of "C" Force for their country.

The HKVCA is in the process of raising funds to build a Memorial Wall for the Hong Kong veterans. It is their hope that this Memorial will be located in Ottawa on National Capital Commission land. The Wall is scheduled to be unveiled in August, 2010. This date will commemorate the 65th anniversary of the liberation of "C" Force from Japanese POW camps.

For more information about the Hong Kong veterans and the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association, or if you wish to contribute to the 'C' Force Memorial Wall, please visit their website at www.hkvca.ca

Dufferin has a Hong Kong vet

By WES KELLER
Freelance Reporter

Les Canivet of East Luther Grand Valley is likely the only Dufferin County resident who served in Hong Kong, probably the only one to have survived an executioner's fire, and may be the only one to have been featured in one of Pierre Berton's historical books.

Les, as he prefers to be called, was a member of the regular force Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, stationed in Ottawa. He had friends collecting overseas pay while serving in such places as Newfoundland and Jamaica, so he might

have volunteered for garrison duty in Hong Kong for the extra money it would earn for him.

He recalls that as a 20-year-old soldier he "didn't think much" about the Japanese march through China. He was well aware that one does not volunteer for anything in the military, "but it was the only time in my life I volunteered."

He entrained at Ottawa, bound for Vancouver and thence Hong Kong, on Oct. 8, 1941, and wasn't to see the Capital City again until five years to the day — Oct. 8, 1946. Even then, Les knows he was lucky to have ever seen his

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Contributed Photo
CENTENNIAL HIGHLANDS BOOGIE-THON: Last Wednesday, CHES Halloween Boogie-thon raised \$6100 for their school with the generous support from the community. In preparation for the event, the students, during the daily physical activity time learned dance steps to prepare for the boogie-thon.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

For information on how to include your community event in this calendar, please call (519) 941-2230

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Nov. 9

Orangeville Blood Donor Clinic. New Hope Community Church 4:30 pm - 7:30 pm

Nov. 9

Samaritan's Purse. Operation Christmas Child Shoebox program drop off. 3pm-7pm and Sat. Nov. 10th 9am-12noon. Covenant Community Church. 3 Zina St., Orangeville. For info call 519-940-9479 or 519-941-2707.

Nov. 10

Remembrance Banquet. Orangeville Legion. Guest speaker Wayne Townsend. Call 519-942-2077 for tickets.

Nov. 11

Remembrance Parade 9:15. Form up 7 John St., Orangeville Legion. 9:45 Service at Orangeville Cenotaph (behind Town Hall)

Nov. 11

Westminster United Church Indoor Service for Remembrance Day, 10:30-11:30am Sunday, Nov. 11.

Nov. 12

The Canadian Hearing Society presents a free hearing screening clinic. Mel Lloyd Centre. Call Dufferin County Community Support Services 519-925-5452 for appointment.

Nov. 12

Canadian Diabetes Fundraiser. Wild Wing Orangeville. A portion of the day sales will be donated to the CDA. 11am-11pm. Prizes awarded every 30 minutes.

Nov. 17

Grand Valley Public Library Fundraiser Silent Auction. Bidding closes @ 4:00 p.m.

Nov. 12-17

Grand Valley Public Library Book Sale. Bake Sale Nov. 17 10am-4pm.

Nov. 13

Flu Clinic Mel Lloyd Centre. 167 Centre St., Shelburne 3:00pm-7:00 pm

Nov. 17

19th Annual Candy Cane Fair. 9:30-1:30 at Headwaters Health Care Hospital. Photos with Santa. Free parking.

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Alyssa Heimbecker will play Last Post and Stirling Renzoni will light a candle on behalf of Scouts Canada.

Asked why the service was being held at the same time as the community Cenotaph service in Alexandra Park, the minister said it was decided that in the event of bad weather local residents would have the choice of observing indoors.

At St. Mark's Anglican Church, where members of the Royal Canadian Legion's Col. Fitzgerald Branch 233 attended last Sunday's 10 a.m. service, this Sunday's service has been moved up to 9:30 a.m. to allow parishioners to attend the Cenotaph service.

The staff at

Focus on Decorating

would like to thank all the Veterans.

We will be closed

Sunday, November 11th

THANK A VET NOT ONLY THIS WEEK BUT EVERYDAY.

Benjamin Moore

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FRED CLAUS (PG) FRI 7:00, 9:40 SAT-SUN 1:30, 4:10, 7:00, 9:40 MON-THURS 5:45, 8:40 NO PASSES

GONE BABY GONE (14A) FRI 6:40, 9:30 SAT-SUN 1:15, 4:00, 6:40, 9:30 MON-THURS 5:50, 8:50

BEE MOVIE (G) FRI 7:30, 10:00 SAT-SUN 2:00, 4:45, 7:30, 10:00 MON 5:30 TUES-THURS 5:30, 8:00 NO PASSES

BEE MOVIE (G) FRI 6:30, 9:10 SAT-SUN 1:10, 3:45, 6:30, 9:10 MON-THURS 6:00, 8:30 NO PASSES

AMERICAN GANGSTER (18A) FRI 8:15 SAT-SUN 1:00, 4:30, 8:15 MON-THURS 7:30 NO PASSES

SAW IV (18A) FRI 7:20, 9:50 SAT-SUN 1:40, 4:40, 7:20, 9:50 MON 8:10 TUES-THURS 5:40, 8:10

THE GAME PLAN (G) FRI 7:10, 9:55 SAT-SUN 1:20, 4:20, 7:10, 9:55 MON-THURS 6:10, 8:45

TUES, NOV 13 STARS & STROLLERS - 1 PM - FRED CLAUS GONE BABY GONE

SILVER SCREEN - 1:15 PM - BEE MOVIE