



# The Western Torch

**Hong Kong Veterans' Commemorative Association  
British Columbia Region**



December, 2002

## Regional Director's Report

My father used to say, "The older you get, the faster it goes". He sure was right about that. As the end of 2002 fast approaches, I've been thinking about the months past to take note of what we've accomplished. Then I looked at the "Goals of the HKVCA in British Columbia". As I thought over the events and happenings during 2002 and pondered on our "Goals", I realized that the work we have done and the events that have occurred have aligned so beautifully. It was quite amazing at how well they melded together.

I'd like to thank Murray Doull for maintaining our membership lists and corresponding with the many members who send a letter or note along with their membership dues or donations. He never fails to respond to each one and in so doing is developing relationships with them all. Thank you, Murray. To those of you who are sending in the letters, please keep them coming. We love to hear from you.

Lionel Speller, Larry Stebbe, Heather McPherson and Murray Doull are to be congratulated for putting on the luncheons held in Victoria and Vancouver. And to all of you who attended the luncheons - you helped in "Ensuring that regular, periodic contact is made with the Veterans and widows" and "Developing relationships with the Hong Kong family". We also kept in touch with each other through "The Western Torch" in March and July 2002 and this one; and in the National Newsletters. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the newsletters. To all of you who participated in Remembrance Day and Christmas Day ceremonies - you helped achieve our goal of "Attending and participating in memorial services...". The committee members for the National Convention to be held in Victoria, August 13 -17, 2003 are of course "Assisting in organizing reunions, National Conventions, and social events." The May 2002 luncheons were a major social event as well. Also, on a monthly basis, Murray and I attend the on-line meetings of the National HKVCA

thereby "supporting the National Association as well as other regions".

You can be proud of what we have been able to accomplish in 2002 and I would like to sincerely thank each and every one of you for all your hard work during the past year.

Please accept my best wishes for this Holiday Season and every happiness in the New Year to you and your loved ones.

Warmest regards,

Linda Stewart  
BC Regional Director  
HKVCA



### *In this Issue*

Regional Director's Report-----	1
Goals of the HKVCA in British Columbia-----	2
HKVCA National Convention-----	2
"Thank you Heather"-----	2
Remembrance Day ceremonies, 2002-----	3
In Memoriam-----	4
Traditions of Remembrance in Hong Kong-----	4
Profile of a Hong Kong Veteran-----	5
Local Hong Kong Veterans receive medals-----	6
The Royal Canadian Legion's highest award-----	7
Wreath sponsors for the HKVCA in BC-----	8
Membership dues for 2003-----	9
The RRC mascot "Gander"-----	9
Articles and stories for future newsletters-----	9
Parliamentary tribute to Hong Kong Veterans-----	10
Photo from Sendai #2 POW camp-----	10
Treasurer and membership Report-----	11
Donations to the British Columbia HKVCA-----	12
"It's Christmas Day, all is secure"-----	12
An application form for new members is attached	

### **Goals of the HKVCA in British Columbia:**

- Enrolling children, issuance, and friends in the HKVCA.
- Maintaining an address database of the Hong Kong Veterans and widows.
- Ensuring that regular, periodic contact is made with the Veterans and widows.
- Developing relationships with the “Hong Kong Family”.
- Attending and participating in memorial services on Remembrance Day, V-J Day, and other special occasions.
- Review and improve the network and procedures applied in the execution of our mandate.
- Assist in organizing reunions, National Conventions, and social events.
- Support the National HKVCA as well as other Regions.
- Orally and visually proclaim our link to the Hong Kong Veterans.

### **HKVCA National Convention**

The British Columbia Region will be hosting our Association’s National Convention in Victoria from August 13 to August 17, 2003. Please mark these dates on your calendar and plan on attending.

The event schedule has been determined and we will be sending out Registration Kits early in March. Many thanks to those of you who have responded to our appeal for items for the Silent Auction and historical items for the Memorabilia Room. We are hoping that more members will come forward and help us to expand in these areas. Handmade items, or tasteful items donated by a business, are examples of what we can use for the Silent Auction. Please let Linda Stewart or Murray Doull know the type of item you are willing to donate along with a suggested price. There are many costs associated with being the host Region, and the Silent Auction helps us to defer some of these expenses.

We are also hoping to have a Memorabilia Room at the convention. If you have any items pertaining to the Hong Kong Veterans and would be

interested in having them displayed, we would be very happy to hear from you. Also, if you are willing to lend a helping hand at the convention, or help out by joining our convention committee, please let us know. The response from our appeal for assistance in these areas has not been as good as we had hoped. It is not too late to get involved and help us to make this a successful and memorable event.

If you have moved or are planning on moving, please let your membership contact know to ensure that you will continue to receive your mail from both National and Regional levels of the HKVCA. If you know of a HK vet or widow who has moved, please let us know.

Thank you very much for any assistance you can offer in the areas mentioned. We look forward to hearing from you and we will see you all in beautiful Victoria in August.

### **Contacts for the HKVCA in BC:**

- Linda Stewart, Regional Director  
320 – 252 Gorge Rd. E.  
Victoria BC V9A 6W3  
Phone: 1-250-480-0442  
e-mail: [lindaontheisland@shaw.ca](mailto:lindaontheisland@shaw.ca)
- Murray Doull, Treasurer and Membership  
20138 Ditton St.  
Maple Ridge BC V2X 9H4  
Phone: 1-604-465-0579  
e-mail: [mdoull@shaw.ca](mailto:mdoull@shaw.ca)

### **“Thank you Heather”**

In mid September 2002, Heather MacPherson resigned from her position as Regional Secretary for the HKVCA in BC due to personal reasons. Heather was pivotal in the initial development of the BC Region. Heather’s efforts and time spent on HKVCA business is greatly appreciated and she will be missed. We would like to express our gratitude to Heather for everything that she has done for the HKVCA. We know that if we ever need a hand with a project we can make a phone call and Heather will be there for our Region. Thank you Heather.

## Remembrance Day ceremonies, 2002

This year Hong Kong Veterans, sons, daughters, and grandchildren of veterans laid wreaths at cenotaphs across our province. In every town and city large numbers of people gathered. We would like to share the details of some of the ceremonies with you.

It was a cool clear morning in Okanagan Falls on November 11. Services were held at the cenotaph located at Legion Branch #227. Two Hong Kong veterans, Harry White and Ed Query were present, accompanied by their wives Marlene White and Ethel Query and other family members. Harry sponsored a wreath that was placed by his grandchildren. The veterans marched from the school auditorium to the cenotaph, which is located beside the highway. People driving along the highway stopped their cars and got out to pay their respects.

Services were well attended in our capital city Victoria. Municipal and provincial politicians were present, and the Honorable David Anderson; Federal Minister of the Environment was in attendance. Linda Stewart, the Regional Director of the HKVCA in BC laid a wreath. Gerry Gerrard, a Hong Kong veteran, escorted Linda to the steps of the cenotaph.

Mrs. Alberta Rafferty sponsored a wreath that was placed by the Bigras family in Prince George. Sylvia and her husband Roger, accompanied by their children, laid the wreath on behalf of the HKVCA for all Hong Kong Veterans and in loving memory of Sylvia's father, Elmer Wiebe. The Bigras family hopes to lay a wreath on Christmas Day this year.

It was slightly overcast and cool in Armstrong for Remembrance Day services. Two grandsons of William S. Muir were present to lay a wreath honoring all Hong Kong Veterans on behalf of the HKVCA. Over fifty wreaths were placed in this small town. William Muir, WG, resides in Courtenay.



Mr. Muir's grandsons are Richard Muir on the left of the picture, and Jerry Muir on the right. A third grandson, Michael, was out of town at the time and unable to attend. These young men are the sons of Don and Lee Muir. Legion Branch # 35 hosted the ceremonies in Armstrong Memorial Park. WWII Air Force veteran, Mr. Robert Weskett was Parade Marshall. Father Leo Boyd conducted the ceremonies. Richard T. Johnson, a Hong Kong veteran from Victoria, sponsored the wreath that the Muir family placed to honor those that did not come home.

Aubrey Flegg, a Hong Kong Veteran, laid a wreath in Kelowna on behalf of The Hong Kong Veterans of Canada. Participating in Remembrance Day ceremonies is a long-standing tradition for Aubrey. His friend and companion Betty Waldenberger, who has been a very active Legion member for over 47 years, accompanied him.

Two Hong Kong Veterans, Frank Brown and Bill Doull, marched side by side from the Legion in Vedder Crossing to the cenotaph. Mr. Brown had just moved to Chilliwack a few days earlier. Last year Frank and Aubrey marched together in Kelowna. Frank's daughter Jackie attended with her father. Four generations of the Doull family were present, including Bill's wife Claire. Mr. Doull, accompanied by his son Murray, laid a wreath on behalf of the Hong Kong Veterans of Canada. Glenn Mayville, Bill's nephew, flew out from Calgary to be present with the family for this occasion.



## In Memoriam

We regret to inform you of the deaths of the following Hong Kong veterans and family members who have passed away since the release of our last newsletter. Their names have been placed in alphabetical order. Our sincere condolences to the families and friends of:

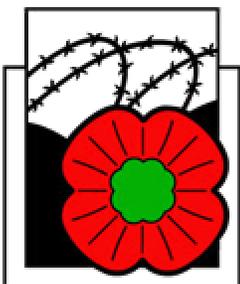
Sidney Blow, WG	July 10, 2002
Paul Dancause, RRC	April 13, 2002
John Davies, WG	July 25, 2002
Morgan Davies, RRC	August 21, 2002
Arthur Diehl, WG	November 24, 2002
Theodore Kurluk, RCCS	October 3, 2002
Lewis McFawn, RRC	August 4, 2002
Raymond Murray, RRC	September 9, 2002
Carl Olsson, RRC	October 21, 2002
William Overton, CPC	November 23, 2002
Ron Routledge, RCCS	September 11, 2002
Berthrand Roy, RRC	December 10, 2002
Allan Whitman, WG	October 29, 2002

### ***“We will never forget them”***

The following deaths have recently occurred within the “ Hong Kong family”:

Edith Adams	April 24, 2002
Ethel Cake	October 14, 2002
Dorothy Davidson	July 18, 2002
Lorna Fox	October 23, 2002
Ann Harbour	Date unknown
Eva Lebreton	October 24, 2002
Wayne Kelso	July, 2002

### Traditions of Remembrance in Hong Kong:



The following is an e-mail received by the BC Region from Comendador Arthur E. Gomes, MBE.

Mr. Gomes is a former member of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defense Corps, who fought during the battle of Hong Kong and was subsequently imprisoned as a POW. Mr. Gomes lives in Hong Kong and is writing in reply to an account of Remembrance Day ceremonies that took place in British Columbia. He has graciously allowed us to use his interesting and informative transcript. Mr. Gomes writes:

“ We held a Remembrance Day ceremony here in Hong Kong on Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, at 11:00 a.m. It was a grand affair but no marching. It was a static ceremony, but well attended on a nice sunny Hong Kong November day. It was headed by the elite and the veterans were almost at the tail end, but this is protocol.

However, I must say that we in Hong Kong observe three Remembrance Day ceremonies! One is on the Sunday nearest August 15<sup>th</sup> when Hong Kong was liberated and it is organized by the Hong Kong Prisoners of War Association and the Hong Kong Volunteers Association. Since our numbers are now so small, we have combined. The second is in October, coinciding with the Chinese Ching Ming Festival which is equivalent to our Remembrance Day. It is a public holiday and the ceremony is organized by the Hong Kong government. We are invited to attend and lay a wreath. The third is the universal Remembrance Day on the second Sunday in November. It is organized by the Hong Kong Ex- Serviceman Association (being personnel who served in the British Army in the Service Corps, such as drivers, cooks, etc.). The British Legion supplies poppies and poppy wreaths on this occasion only.

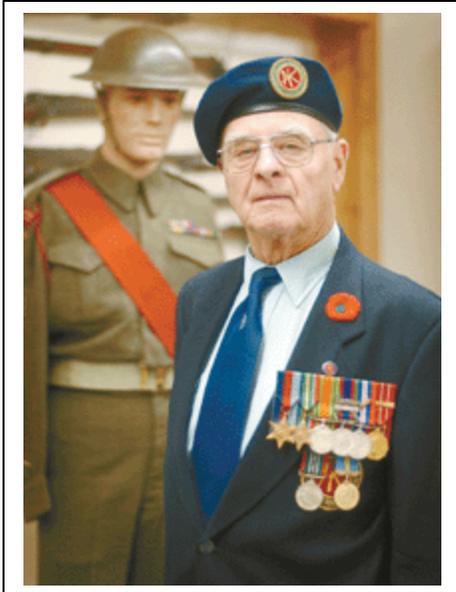
The Canadian Consulate in Hong Kong (Consulate General Mr. Anthony Burger) is holding the annual Canadian Remembrance Day service on Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002 at Sai Wan War Memorial Cemetery. The Canadian Minister of Industry, The Honorable Mr. Allan Rock will be present. I have been invited to attend and also to lay a wreath.

Sincerely, Arthur Gomes”

## PROFILE OF A HONG KONG VETERAN

This part of the newsletter allows us to share with you a brief life history of one of our Hong Kong veterans. Mr. Aubrey Flegg agreed to be interviewed and what follows is his profile.

### Mr. Aubrey Peacock Flegg, Winnipeg Grenadiers.



Mr. Flegg was born on October 18, 1917, in Welland Ontario. His parents, Charlie and Rosemay Flegg, had immigrated to Canada from England in 1912. Aubrey was the second born of six children, two girls and four boys. When Aubrey was three years old his family moved from Ontario to Fort Fraser, British Columbia.

There were no roads in northern BC in those days. The only transportation links by land were the Caribou Pack Trail, and the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway that ran from Jasper to Prince Rupert. The backdrop for Aubrey's youth was the rugged interior of BC and he learned how to hunt, trap, and survive in the bush at an early age. His family had a huge garden and they sold produce to the locals.

When Aubrey was sixteen his mother passed away and he was living on Francois Lake (Francis Lake in those days) running his trap lines in remote areas. At age eighteen he found himself back in Fort Fraser falling large trees with handsaws and using teams of horses to haul the logs to the landing. A year later at nineteen Aubrey was back at

Francois Lake, fishing commercially in the summer and trapping in the winter.

At twenty-three years of age, in June 1940, Aubrey made his way down to Prince George to join the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry. This was the first time in his life he had experienced electric lights and running water. He was recruited in Prince George then spent fourteen months with the PPCLI training in Winnipeg. In September 1941, it was rumored that the Winnipeg Grenadiers were headed overseas. Eager to serve his country, Aubrey transferred to the Grenadiers thinking he was headed for Europe. Instead he found himself (with 1,975 of his mates) on the troop ship "Awatea" en route to reinforce the British in Hong Kong.

On December 8, 1941 hostilities broke out. The Japanese army, navy, and air force vastly outnumbered the defenders of Hong Kong. There was fierce fighting between the Canadian contingent and the invading forces. Aubrey recalls hand-to-hand combat one night while a group of Grenadiers were defending Aberdeen Reservoir from the invading forces. Due to overwhelming odds, the garrison at Hong Kong was forced to surrender on Christmas Day, 1941.

Aubrey spent the next three years and eight months in three POW camps, North Point, Sham Shui Po, and Oeyama. North Point was in Hong Kong, Sham Shui Po was on the Chinese mainland near Kowloon, and Oeyama was on the northwest coast of the Japanese island of Honshu. Aubrey remembers all too well the pain and suffering of over 100 Canadians who spent almost two weeks in the 20 foot by 20 foot hold of a Japanese freighter on the way to Oeyama from Sham Shui Po. They were experiencing dysentery and other tropical diseases when they encountered extremely high seas that caused severe seasickness. The situation became very dismal in the extremely cramped quarters.

Aubrey and about 50 of his comrades were sent to Oeyama in what turned out to be a 22-hour train ride in cattle type cars from where the freighter docked. There were already about 100 Canadians in this camp and approximately 400 to 450 POW's in total. Many of the prisoners were forced to work as slave labor in the open surface mine. If a POW was sick, as most of them were, he did not receive full rations (as little as a full ration was) unless he worked. As a result, many of the men who were too sick to work were forced to do so in order to obtain a bit more rice. This resulted in many deaths of men who were merely trying to get a few more mouthfuls of what was often maggot-ridden food. Ironically, they were praying they could be back in Hong Kong which had also been a living hell.

The day the war was over the men knew something was out of the ordinary when the guards told them they did not have to work and could rest for the day. The next morning the Japanese had vacated the camp, leaving the gates wide open and their radio equipment intact. Within minutes the POW's had used the equipment to contact American forces and confirmed that the war was over. They were told to mark the roof of a building with the letters POW. The date was August 15, 1945. Soon afterwards, American B-29 planes started dropping medical supplies and food into the camp.

The men remained in the camp until September 10, 1945 when they were transported by train to Yokohama. When they disembarked they were greeted by General McArthur who shook the hand of every POW. Aubrey ended up spending ten days in Tokyo Harbor on the American battleship, "Indiana". He was then flown on a C52 transport plane to the island of Guam. Here he spent two weeks in an American military hospital. Aubrey can't say enough about how well the Canadian POW's were treated by their American allies after they were liberated.

Forty-five Canadians left Guam on the "Hedy Lamar", a US freighter headed for San Diego. Many well wishers were waiting on the docks to greet them. Dale Evans was part of the welcoming committee and gave each Canadian a hug and kiss. The long road home to Canada from San Diego passed through Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, and finally Victoria, BC. Once in Victoria, Aubrey and his mates spent time recovering at Gordon Head Hospital.

It is worth noting that Aubrey received two pieces of mail during his interment in Japan. One of them was a censored letter from his father. It said "Dear Son", with everything following removed except "Love Dad". The second piece of mail was a post card from Fort Fraser with over 200 signatures on it.

Aubrey was one of the few returning Hong Kong Veterans who decided to return to military service. Many more wanted to, but were physically incapable. Aubrey served his country again from 1949 to 1966. After retiring from the military he spent time driving semi trucks and Greyhound buses. Aubrey lived on Vancouver Island for 10 years and then Richmond BC for 28 years.

In 2000 Aubrey moved to Kelowna where he currently lives with his good friend and companion, Betty Waldenberger. If you are ever in the Okanagan, chances are pretty good you might find Aubrey and Betty at Legion Branch # 26 in Kelowna. Betty has served with the Ladies Auxiliary for over forty-seven years and Aubrey is also a long time serving member of the Canadian Legion.

*Editor's note:*

*Mr. Flegg has an amazing memory of the events that took place in China and Japan. His account of the events is in the Canadian War Archives in Ottawa. Aubrey has been very active in the HKVA since his return from Japan and has been the Vice President of the BC Branch for over 30 years. The photo is courtesy of the Kelowna Daily Courier.*

**Local Hong Kong Veterans receive medals:**

Three Hong Kong Veterans from British Columbia have been awarded the Queen's Jubilee medal. These Governor General of Canada commemorative medals are used from time to time to mark important occasions for the country.

In this case, the medals commemorate the Golden Jubilee or 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's reign. One of the necessary qualifications states that a person must have made a significant contribution to Canada or to a particular province, territory, region or community within Canada.

Our heartfelt congratulations go out to Lionel Speller, Aubrey Flegg, and Larry Stebbe. Our Association's patron, Mr. Cliff Chadderton, recommended these men to the Governor General of Canada. Mr. Chadderton is the head of the War Amps of Canada, and he also represents the National Council of War Veterans.



### The Royal Canadian Legion's highest award:



The Palm Leaf is the Royal Canadian Legion's highest award for service in the Legion.

Recently our very own Lionel Speller received this prestigious award. Lionel is a long-time member of the Pro Patria Legion Branch # 31 in Victoria and has been the President of the HKVA in British Columbia for many years.

The Royal Canadian Legion has a national network of Service Officers who assist veterans, ex-service members and their families who are in need. In 1998, the Legion contributed 721,00 hours of volunteer time assisting veterans, ex-service members and their families. Lionel was one of those people. He served as a Service Officer for well over 30

years. In this photo, Lionel (without a beret), is being awarded the Palm Leaf at the presentation ceremony. Congratulations to Lionel from the Hong Kong family everywhere for this recognition of service!



### Wreath sponsors for the HKVCA in BC



We are continuing our appeal for HKVCA members to sponsor a wreath on Remembrance Day and other occasions such as V-J Day, and Christmas Day. We would like to see as many wreaths as possible placed at cenotaphs in communities throughout our province in 2003.

If you are willing to participate in this endeavor there are two ways you can help. One way is to inform your Regional Council of your intent to lay a wreath in your hometown on behalf of the HKVCA. Please advise us because we would like to print this information in our newsletters and keep track of where wreaths are being laid. The second way you can help out is by sending a donation to the HKVCA specifying that you would like to see the money

used to sponsor a wreath. If you use this option we will ensure that an HKVCA member places a wreath at a cenotaph and the story will be told in a newsletter. You can even choose the community if you like. Once a wreath has been purchased, it can be retrieved following the ceremony and used again in the following years.

One of the goals of the HKVCA is to “*Attend and participate in memorial services on Remembrance Day, V-J Day, and other special occasions*”. By sponsoring a wreath you will be achieving an important goal and more importantly you will be honoring our Hong Kong Veterans. ***“We will remember them”.***

### **Membership dues for 2003**

This is a reminder that except for the HK Vets and the widows of vets, your membership fee for the HKVCA is now due for 2003. The vets and widows have lifetime memberships in our Association. For the rest of us, the cost of dues is \$15.00 per year.

Please pay your dues as soon as possible to ensure you will continue receiving National and Regional newsletters and other correspondence. Membership also allows you to vote in elections of officers. You will receive a current membership card and a 2003 HKVCA decal, which will show your allegiance to the Hong Kong Veterans. Additionally you will be able to participate in social events such as the National Convention in Victoria in August 2003.

If we are to continue to achieve the goals of the HKVCA we need a strong membership. Please mail your cheque to the address you will find on the membership application form that is enclosed with this newsletter. Only new members need to fill out the form. Please feel free to attach a note if you wish. We would enjoy hearing from you. If your address changes please let us know as soon as possible so that we can maintain an accurate database. Thank you for your interest and continued support.



### **The Canadian Royal Rifle's mascot, "Gander"**

The following story is one that took place over two years ago. We thought that we would include it in this newsletter for those readers that are not familiar with it. It is a story about a dog that sacrificed his life for the humans he loved.

The Royal Rifles of Canada were accompanied overseas in 1941 by their mascot "Gander". This Newfoundland dog gave his life to save his Canadian comrades during the Battle of Hong Kong. He was killed during the battle of Lye Mun on Hong Kong Island when he picked up a Japanese grenade under intense enemy fire and ran away with it. When the grenade exploded Gander was instantly killed. This action saved the lives of several wounded soldiers from the Royal Rifles.

The heroism of Gander was recognized during a ceremony on October 27, 2000, at the official residence of the British High Commissioner

in Ottawa. Sir Roland Guy traveled from England to award the Dicken Medal to Gander's handler, Fred Kelly of Cambleton, N.B. The British have awarded 54 of the medals to animal heroes during and after WW11. Gander's medal, the first awarded since 1949, is the first to a Canadian animal. Sir Andrew Burns, British High Commissioner, and Lady Burns hosted the reception that followed.

The following Hong Kong Veterans were in attendance to honor Gander, their mascot and comrade: Ken Ewing, Al Babin, Pat Poirier, Paul Dallain, Ossie Clark, Dempsey Syvret, George MacDonell, Ray Smith, Bob Olscamp, Vic Bujold, Roger Cyr, Harry Atkinson, Bob Clayton, Fred Chapman, Reg Law, Fred Kelly, Henry Lyons, Bob Barter, Arnold Ross, Phil Doddridge. Sadly, Fred Kelly, Roger Cyr, Harry Atkinson, and Fred Chapman have passed away since this historic event took place.

The Dicken Medal that was awarded to Gander can be viewed at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa. It is displayed to the side of the Victoria Cross that was awarded to Mr. John Osborn, a Winnipeg Grenadier who heroically sacrificed his life for his comrades in the Battle of Hong Kong.

#### ***Editor's note:***

*Thanks to Phil Doddridge for supplying the names of the Hong Kong Veterans in this article, and to Derrill Henderson (who was also in attendance) for the information about the Canadian War Museum. Jeremy Swanson (formerly of the War Museum), and Howard Stutt (former Professor at McGill University), did considerable research and informed the HKVA of the process required to apply for the Dicken Medal on Gander's behalf.*

### **Articles and stories for future newsletters**

We encourage members to send us their stories and ideas. We would welcome any thoughts that you may have to help us improve the newsletter. By contributing, you will help us to keep the newsletter interesting and reflective of the membership in our Region. Please send your suggestions to the contact address for M. Doull. Thank you for your input.

### **Parliamentary tribute to Hong Kong veterans:**

The following story is a year old, but it has just recently come to be known. December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbour. The next day, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1941, tens of thousands of Japanese troops swooped down through Mainland China to attack the enclave of Hong Kong. December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2001, marked the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the attack on Hong Kong.

The government made no mention of this Anniversary in the House of Commons last December 8th. Shortly afterward Mr. Ron McGuire, who is the HKVCA Representative for North East Ontario, contacted his Member of Parliament. The M.P. for the Ottawa area is Mr. Roy Bailey, the Canadian Alliance member for Souris-Moose Mountain. Subsequently Mr. Bailey made the following statement in the House of Commons. Mr. Bailey's statement is followed by a clarification from Ron McGuire, which is printed with his permission.

### **The Veterans of Hong Kong**

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris--Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance);

"Mr. Speaker, December 7, 1941, is a day that most North Americans remember very well. However most Canadians forget that December 8, 1941, was also a very tragic day. That was the day that the Japanese attacked the Canadian contingent at Hong Kong

Almost 2,000 Canadian soldiers and officers from the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers were assigned to defend Hong Kong. Some 290 Canadians were killed, 493 wounded, and in all, after they had been interned in terrible conditions in prison camps, 550 did not return to Canada.

It took nearly 50 years for our government to compensate the Hong Kong vets. That was 10 years after the Canadian government compensated the Japanese and their descendants who were interned in Canada.

Because our federal government neglected to pay tribute to these forgotten veterans last week, it falls upon the official opposition to express our thanks to those heroes".

### **Ron McGuire's comments:**

"Please note that after **"those heroes"** at the end of his statement, Mr. Bailey added this hand written addition to his copy: **"for their services to our country which went way beyond the call of duty"**.

Because the original text had already been sent for translation and on to Hansard, the addition does not appear in the Official Record. Since it is so meaningful, I want readers to be aware of Mr. Bailey's complete statement to the House of Commons on December 10, 2001, which recognized "C" Force, our Hong Kong Veterans and the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the beginning of their tragic ordeal.

You should also be aware that because Mr. Bailey went over his allotted time, the House and recording television audio was cut off by the Speaker of the House. Nevertheless, Mr. Bailey did finish his statement before taking his seat.

I have confirmed that the Speaker often permits Members of Parliament to go over their time allocation to complete their statement. Why the Speaker did not allow Mr. Bailey to do so for such an important, and until then overlooked matter, is most unfortunate, and in my opinion, inexcusable poor judgment.

Signed,  
Ron McGuire"



The picture below was taken at Sendai POW Camp #2 On August 28, 1945, 13 days after Japan surrendered. Photo is courtesy of John D. Pollock.



### **Treasurer and Membership Report:**

By the time you receive this newsletter it will be early in the New Year. I trust that everyone had a safe and Merry Christmas and I would like to take this opportunity to wish for peace, health, and happiness for all in 2003.

As I reflect on the steps forward that the HKVCA made in 2002 to achieve its goals, I have a good feeling. In British Columbia our membership grew considerably. The luncheons in Victoria and Vancouver brought many of us together for the first time and allowed old friendships to rekindle. HKVCA members have been communicating via the telephone, electronically, and by mail. Thanks to Graeme Stacey, the story of our Hong Kong Veterans is being taught in grade 10 History classes throughout our province. Our Association was well represented at Remembrance Day ceremonies throughout BC, and wreaths were placed at cenotaphs in Victoria and Maple Ridge on Christmas Day. Hong Kong Veterans and HKVCA members have generously donated to our Region to assist with expenses. We have established strong and positive lines of communication with National and the other Regions. Canada wide, the Hong Kong family is pulling together and growing together to achieve the goals of the HKVCA. The most rewarding thing for me is the support of our Hong Kong Veterans from coast to coast. The saddest thing for me is their dwindling numbers. For this reason alone, we must continue to work together and keep alive their story and never forget the unselfish sacrifices they made for their country and freedom.

Many thanks to Lionel Speller, Aubrey Flegg, and Larry Stebbe who form the executive for the HKVA in BC. Their continued support and guidance on behalf of all the Hong Kong Veterans in our Region is very much appreciated. They are always there when we need advice and we are grateful.

Thanks to John D. Pollock from West Hill Ontario for his letters, phone calls, and generous donation. John's legs restrict his activities these days but his spirit remains strong. We were very sad to hear that John's dear friend and companion, Ethel Cake, passed away from Alzheimer's on Thanksgiving Day, 2002. Ethel was very active in the Legion and she will be missed.

We received a nice letter from George E. Roylance. Mr. Roylance served with the HK Volunteer Defense Corps in the battle of Hong Kong and has decided to join the HKVCA. George currently lives in Richmond and we welcome him.

Ross and Vivian Purse sent our Region a letter along with a donation. The Purse's live in Nanaimo, and Ross enjoyed reading the profile of his friend and comrade Don MacPherson in our last newsletter. Ross retired from the C.N.I.B. in 1980 as their Managing Director and General Secretary.

Walter and Jean Gray returned in July from their 10<sup>th</sup> cruise to Alaska. Congratulations to Walter who celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on November 27<sup>th</sup>. We all wish him many more to come. The Gray's sent a donation with a nice card and note to the BC Region.

It's always nice to hear from Ken Cambon. Ken livens up his letters with a little Spanish. He is looking forward to the convention in Victoria and has offered to supply a few of his books for the Silent Auction. Thanks for the donation Ken, and for keeping in touch.

We received a note and donation from Lloyd and Roberta Hanna who reside in Nanaimo, BC. Nice to hear from the Hanna's and we wish them well.

Our comrade Jan Solecki sent a short story from his new book "Bitter Cherries". Half of this book is based on Jan's experiences as a POW in Hong Kong and Japan. From 1959 to 1984 Jan was a professor at UBC. One of the lectures he presented was called "Japan during WW11 through the eyes of a Canadian POW. He has graciously volunteered to present this lecture at the Convention in Victoria. Thank you Jan.

Robert Graham recently joined the HKVCA. Robert lives in Mission and has a passion for collecting war medals and memorabilia. I hope to take him up on his offer to visit his home and view his collection.

Ron McGuire is the North Eastern Representative for the HKVCA in Northern Ontario. He was mentioned earlier in the newsletter in the article "Parliamentary tribute to Hong Kong Veterans". Ron is a Postal Historian and is bringing his extensive postal display, as well as a narrated slide display, to the Victoria Convention. His works were very well received at the National Convention in Winnipeg in 2001. Ron is appealing to any of our members that can help supply him with photocopies or original copies of any mail that related to "C" Force. If you

can help Ron out, his mailing address is: 485 Hillcrest Ave, Ottawa, Ontario.K2A 2M8. Ron's phone # is: 613-724-3223. We are looking forward to seeing Ron in Victoria.

Harvelyn McInnis sent us a preview of her new book "Letters to Harvelyn". You can read about this recent release in the article titled "Books to read". We wish Harvelyn well in her literary venture.

We received a nice reply to one of our letters from Yvonne D'Amours. Yvonne is 87 years young and resides in Kelowna. She hopes that her son Michael may be able to help her make her way to Victoria this summer. We sure hope Yvonne is able to make it to the Convention.

Thanks to Mr. And Mrs. Edwards from Okanagan Landing for writing on behalf of Mr. C.E. Roza-Pereira who is now 97. Mr. Pereira was a member of the HK Volunteer Defense Corps and is a member of the HKVCA. Our best wishes go out to Mr. Pereira.

The good news from Oliver is that Ed (Chic) Query is beating cancer and is still in remission. Ed lied about his age to join the Grenadiers in 1941. Ed is fortunate that his wife Ethel takes such good care of him.

Duncan Benton took a cruise to Alaska on the "Golden Princess" last August. Duncan is not able to drive anymore and misses attending the monthly luncheons held by the HKVDC the third Thursday of every month at "Mawings" in Richmond. If anyone can help Duncan out with a ride please let me know and I will contact him for you. Duncan's granddaughter, Sherry Wadell, recently returned from Afghanistan where she served for 6 months with the Canadian Provost Corps. Duncan celebrated his 88<sup>th</sup> birthday on December 16. We wish Duncan good health and many more birthdays.

Thanks to Mr. Arthur Gomes for his correspondence. Mr. Gomes writes a POW newsletter in Hong Kong. You will find the letter that Mr. Gomes wrote to our Region regarding Remembrance Day in Hong Kong on page 4 of the newsletter.

Claude Corbett attended a short service on Christmas morning at the cenotaph in Maple Ridge to pay tribute to his comrades that didn't come home. Claude is active in Legion Branch #88 in Maple Ridge.

Henry Lyons sent a note and donation to BC. He is looking forward to the Convention in Victoria. Henry says "Hello to Lionel and all the boys". We hope to see Henry and Isabel in Victoria.

We would like to extend our thanks to Will and Mona Allister for their letter and donation. Will is also donating an item for the Silent Auction. Mona says, "See you in Victoria!"

Thanks to Richard and Phyllis Johnson for their letter. Phyllis is crocheting an afghan for the Silent Auction. The Johnson's are also looking forward to the HKVCA Convention.

Patrice Brown and her daughter Denise Frank have volunteered to assist in any way they can at the Convention. Thank you ladies, we can certainly use your help. We hope that other sons and daughters will come forward as you have. Patrice's mother is Joyce Brown, who lives in Abbotsford. Joyce, Patrice, and Denise, were at the luncheon in Vancouver on May 25, 2002.

Eleanor Squires sent a very nice card and note to let us know that she is loaning a few items for the Memorabilia Room at the Convention. Mr. Raymond Squires, WG, passed away on June 20, 2002. We are very appreciative that Eleanor is willing to share these treasured items with us.

Glenn Mayville flew to BC from Calgary on Remembrance Day to be with family for services at the cenotaph and to pay his respects. We would like to welcome Glenn as a new HKVCA member, and thank him for his donation to the Association. Thanks also to Glenn's employer, Seventh Energy, who matched his donation.

Due to circumstances beyond our control we have lost contact with five widows from BC. We would very much like to re-unite with them. If you know the whereabouts of the following widows would you please advise Linda Stewart or me as soon as possible: Mrs. Fred Baird, Roberta Galbraith, Barbara Hooper, Alma Price, Christine Sharpe. Thank you for your help in our effort to locate these widows.

Except for the HK Vets and widows, everyone's membership fees (\$15.00) are now due. Please keep the mail lady busy. Attached to the newsletter is an application form. If you have any family members or friends of the Hong Kong Veterans that you think would like to join our Association, please show them this newsletter and encourage them to fill out the form. Take good care of yourselves.

Warm regards,  
Murray Doull, Treasurer and Membership, BC Region

### **Donations to the British Columbia HKVCA**

Since the release of our July newsletter, a number of individuals and one business have chosen to make a donation to the HKVCA in our Region of British Columbia. Their generosity is greatly appreciated, and goes a long way to help our Association with day-to-day operating expenses. We are pleased to mention their names below, and encourage others to follow their lead.

John D. Pollock, WG  
 Ken Cambon, RRC  
 Abe Peters, WG  
 Frank Brown, WG  
 Walter Gray, RRC  
 Ross Purse, WG  
 Lloyd W. Hanna, WG  
 Henry Lyons, RRC  
 Will Allister, RRC  
 Janis Mayville, HKVCA  
 Betty Marsh, HKVCA  
 Glenn Mayville, HKVCA  
 Seventh Energy Ltd., Calgary, Alberta

Mona R. Zane and her daughter Barbara S. Zane-Johnson, made a donation in loving memory of their husband and father, Mr. Roger J. Zane. Mona and Barbara live in sunny Carlsbad, California.



### **“It’s Christmas Day, all is secure”**

A peacekeeping soldier stationed overseas wrote the following poem.

*T’was the night before Christmas, he lived all alone, in a one bedroom house made of plaster and stone.*

*I had come down the chimney, with presents to give, and to see just who in this home did live.*

*I looked all about, a strange sight did I see, no tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.*

*No stocking by the mantle, just boots filled with sand, on the wall hung pictures of far distant lands.*

*With medals and badges, awards of all kinds, a sober thought came through my mind.  
 For this house was different, it was dark and dreary; I found the home of a soldier, once I could see clearly.*

*The soldier lay sleeping, silent, alone, curled up on the floor in this one bedroom home.*

*The face was so gentle, the room in such disorder, not how I pictured a Canadian Soldier.*

*Was this the hero, of whom I’d just read, curled up on a poncho, the floor for a bed?*

*I realized the families, that I saw this night, owed their lives to these soldiers who were willing to fight.*

*Soon round the world, the children would play, and grownups would celebrate a bright Christmas Day.*

*They all enjoyed freedom, each month of the year, because of the soldiers like the one lying here.*

*I couldn’t help wonder, how many lay alone, on a cold Christmas Eve in a land far from home.*

*The very thought brought a tear to my eye, I dropped to my knees and started to cry.*

*The soldier awakened, and I heard a rough voice, “Santa don’t cry, this life is my choice.*

*I fight for freedom, I don’t ask for more, my life is my God, my country, my corps”.*

*The soldier rolled over, and drifted to sleep, I couldn’t control it, I continued to weep.*

*I kept watch for hours, so silent and still, and we both shivered from the cold night’s chill.*

*I didn’t want to leave, on that cold dark night, this guardian of honor, so willing to fight.*

*Then the soldier rolled over, with a voice soft and pure, whispered, “Carry on Santa, it’s Christmas Day, all is secure”*

*One look at my watch, and I knew he was right, “Merry Christmas my friend, and to all a good night”.*



The next issue of “The Western Torch” should arrive at your doorstep in July. Watch for your Convention Kits to arrive in March. Please contact us if there is any way we can be of assistance to a Hong Kong Veteran or a widow in need. If you move, please make sure you inform us of your new address. Thank you.

**Books to read:*****“One Soldier’s Story”***

This version is the Second Edition of George MacDonell’s original book called *“This Soldier’s Story”*. George has increased the written content and has added more photographs. Dundurn Press is the publisher for this second printing.

The HKVCA in Ontario is encouraging companies to purchase a minimum of 250-300 of George’s books for donation to school libraries. Service Clubs are also being encouraged to respond in the same manner. Their goal is to have this material readily available for students so that they can familiarize themselves with the Hong Kong story and how it relates to Canadian History. The eastern Regions are working hard to ensure that a Hong Kong section is inserted as a course of study in their provincial High School history books.

**“Letters to Harvelyn”**

This book has been recently published and released by Harper Collins. The author is Harvelyn Baird McInnis. Harvelyn’s father, Major Kenneth Baird, wrote this collection of extraordinary letters to his daughter while he was a POW. He hid the letters and would have been killed by his captors if they had been found. These letters add much to our understanding of both the Battle of Hong Kong and the POW experience. Harvelyn resides in Victoria, British Columbia, and her book is a must read.

**“Long Night’s Journey Into Day”**

Charles G. Roland wrote this book and the publisher is Wilfred Laurier University Press. This book concentrates on the lives of Canadian, British, Indian, and Hong Kong POWs captured at Hong Kong in December 1941 and incarcerated in camps in Hong Kong and the Japanese Home Islands. It illustrates the relationship between ill health and POW life and death.

**Other books relating to the Hong Kong battle and its aftermath:**

- *“Guest of Hirohito”* by Kenneth Cambon, M.D.
- *“17 Days Until Christmas”* by Leo Paul Berard
- *“The Royal Rifles in Hong Kong 1941-1945”*
- *“Banzai You Bastards”* by Jack Edwards
- *“From Jamaica to Japan”* by Thomas S. Forsyth
- *“Diary of a Prisoner of War in Japan”* by Blacky Varreault
- *“A Handful of Rice”* by William Allister
- *“Hell on Earth”* by Dave McIntosh
- *“The Lasting Honour”* by Oliver Lindsay
- *“The Valour and the Horror”* by Merrily Weisbord and Marilyn Simonds Mohr
- *“King’s War”* by Brian Nolan
- *“No Reason Why: The Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy”* by Carl Vincent
- *“Desperate Siege: The Battle for Hong Kong”* by Ted Ferguson
- *“In Enemy Hands”* by Daniel G. Dancocks
- *“Hostages to Fortune”* by Tim Carew

This was not meant to be a complete listing. If there is a book that you are aware of that you feel should be included, please let us know so that we can advise our readers. Canadian Hong Kong Veterans wrote many of the books that are mentioned.



**Hong Kong Veterans  
Commemorative Association  
Canada**



**Membership Application Form**

Please Print

Name:

Address:

City:

Province:

Postal Code:

Telephone:

**Regular Member:**

Father's Name:

Regiment:

Regimental Number:

Mother's Name:

**Associate Member:**

Related or acquainted with:

Preferred language:    English     French

Signature:

Date:

Newsletter available by e-mail:    e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**(Include cheque for \$15.00 Membership Fee)**

**Please advise us of any change of address. Thank you.**

**Send to:**

*Hong Kong Veterans' Commemorative Association ( B.C. Region)  
c/o Murray Doull  
20138 Ditton Street  
Maple Ridge BC V2X 9H4*