



WASURERU-NAI

"Never Forget"



National Newsletter of the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association

Spring 2024 Edition

Editor: [Jim Trick](#)

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President's Message



Mike Babin

The war in Ukraine drags on, and now new horrors are being perpetrated in Israel and Gaza. As is always the case, it's the civilian population that suffers most in wars. As awful was the barbarity experienced by our Canadians in 'C' Force from 1941 until 1945, during the same period the civilian population of Hong Kong was terrorized by the Japanese army and its security force, the Kempeitai. Several hundred thousand Chinese residents of Hong Kong were killed or went missing during that occupation.

We can only hope that a way to bring peace to Ukraine and Gaza can be found sooner rather than later.

The recent passing of Hormidas Fredette has left us with no living link to the Battle of Hong Kong. We must ... and by "we" I mean *all* of us who are related to a Hong Kong Veteran or who counted one among our friends ... step up and take action to ensure their valour is not forgotten. If we don't, within a few years they will simply be a distant, barely remembered item of history.

You can help in several ways:

- By planning to attend the 80th Anniversary of V-J Day reunion in Ottawa on August 14-17, 2025 (please see the article elsewhere in this newsletter for details).
- By volunteering your time as a Director of the HKVCA or in some other capacity. Please see the "Election" item below for details.

- Placing one of our commemorative plaques in your community. This is a great way to tell the Hong Kong story! Schools, Legion branches, retirement homes and service clubs are excellent locations to display one of these. Please visit our [Plaques page](#) for more details.

I expect you know this already, but the HKVCA is a 100% volunteer organization. Our lifeblood is people who are willing to spend some of their personal time to help carry out our mission of educating Canadians about the Battle of Hong Kong. Please consider being one! Jim Trick mentions some of our volunteer needs below, and there are many other ways in which you can help out. Please speak to your Regional Director or send an email to volunteer@hkvca.ca to inquire further.

Michael Palmer, grandson of George Palmer (RRC), gave a very informative talk in January's virtual event about his grandfather's wartime experiences. This was the only one of our virtual events that has focussed on Omine POW camp in southern Japan, where some 150 Canadians were imprisoned. Watch the recording of Michael's talk [here](#) for a fascinating recounting of George Palmer's story.

Do you have a compelling story you'd like to share with fellow HKVCA members in a virtual event? Please contact me at president@hkvca.ca.

As the snow disappears and spring flowers bloom, I wish you all the best.

We will remember them.

Election of Directors and AGM

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 7 at 2pm Eastern Time. Please see the details at the end of this newsletter.

A key item on the agenda of the AGM is the election of the Board of Directors. We are seeking candidates to serve as Directors, and would especially welcome grandchildren of Hong Kong Veterans to volunteer. The role of our Directors is to:

- Ensure that the HKVCA's mission and goals are properly executed.
- Ensure that the HKVCA's financial resources are managed and utilized correctly and consistently with our mission.
- Represent the needs and desires of the HKVCA's members, and to maintain communication with the membership.
- Ensure that Veterans Affairs Canada continues to manage the welfare of the widows of Hong Kong Veterans in accordance with established programs.

Our Board meetings are held once per month via Zoom, so access to and ability to use a computer, phone or tablet equipped with a webcam and microphone/speakers or headset is required.

Please consider volunteering for this vital role in the HKVCA.

Nominations Deadline: April 1, 2024

YES! I would like to put my name forward to join the HKVCA Board of Directors. Please send your name and telephone number, a brief biography, and a brief summary of your skills to volunteer@hkvca.ca by April 1, 2024.

If you know of someone who might be interested, please forward this information to them.

In Remembrance

Harvelyn McInnis, daughter of Hong Kong veteran Kenneth Baird, on Dec 22, 2023. She was a former member of HKVCA and the subject of the book "Letters to Harvelyn". [Obituary](#)

From the Editor



Jim Trick

Help!

Putting the newsletter together requires a commitment of time, plus ferreting out interesting stories, along with helping contributors create and polish their articles. I'm finding this task is one I could use some help with and so I'm putting out this Want Ad. Please contact me if you feel you could help out and, perhaps, learn a few things along the way. New ideas are always appreciated.

Correction

[Tony Banham](#) (author of Not The Slightest Chance) has let me know that his research indicates that Hormidas Fredette was not the last Hong Kong veteran:

In your last newsletter you correctly quoted me as saying (earlier) that there were no known veterans of HK left except for Hormidas. More recently though, I had corrected that by

stating that we knew of Robert Lapsley (in Australia) and William Ng Jit Thye (in Malaysia) of the HKVDC. And just yesterday it was confirmed that Ben William Thompson, RASC, is still with us at the age of 102 in the UK.

Thanks for this update, Tony.

The Dusty Archives

HKVCA keeps everything, especially old publications. Why not pay a visit to our [newsletter archives](#) to see all the old stuff stored there? We recently finished digitizing copies of "Roll Call" and "Tenko", the magazines of HKVA. Thanks to Jim Laidlaw ([read about his efforts](#) in the Autumn Edition) his submitted paper copies are now online and searchable. There are many nuggets contained in these editions that will assist us in updating our 'C' Force database.

We've also come across a copy of *HK veteran Winnipeg 1952. #5* which we'll publish soon. It would be a great help if we could find the other issues. Check your attics.

Online News

Jim Trick and Lori Atkinson Smith

Welcome to the “Vault”

Over the years, thanks to our researchers and submitters, we’ve accumulated many items related to ‘C’ Force members. We have stored them in what we call the “Vault”, which is a series of folders on Google Docs. Assistance in accessing these files can be found near the bottom of each Individual Report in the **Links and Other Resources** block and is quoted below.

→ **Related documentation** for information published in this report, such as birth information, discharge papers, press clippings and census documents may be available via shared resources in our [HKVCA Vault](#). It is organized with folders named using regimental numbers. Use the first letter of the individual's service number to choose the correct folder, then scroll to the specific sub-folder displaying the service number of your interest.

We hope you pay a visit to the Vault when researching any ‘C’ Force member. Suggestions as to how to improve it are welcome as are your questions.

Gallery Reinvented?

Over the years, our [Image Gallery](#) has experienced a huge growth as our members and visitors submit photos and clippings. It badly needs more direct supervision than I (Jim) can devote to it. Are you a history buff with an interest in imagery and structure? Perhaps taking care of the Gallery, reorganizing and developing it is something you’d like to take on? [Contact me](#) and let’s talk.

Membership

Or, perhaps your interest turns more to spreadsheets and numbers? I’m also looking for help in my role as the HKVCA Membership Rep. It involves some work every

‘C’ Force Stamp Covers



Sam Chiu Ph.D.

Those who have viewed [my Zoom presentation](#) on April 20, 2021, know that I collect postal history items of ‘C’ Force and its forerunners. In a nutshell, and highly simplified for those who are not stamp collectors, collecting

three months, and is critical in our efforts to stay in contact with our flock. Interested? Let’s talk.

Organizing Poetry

Many ‘C’ Force members were poets. Scattered through our websites are poems either created by a ‘C’ Force soldier or copied from another warrior due to their focus on the battle and aftermath.

In our “job jar” is the task of creating a Poets’ Page where visitors can have access to the dozens of creations which, in their colourful way, bring the comradeship and horror to light.

Please help us out by sending along poems or links you think we should add to our collection.

Clippings and Scans

We receive a continuous feed of newspaper clippings, photo scans, etc. from our researchers and visitors. Thank you - these help to expand our knowledge. We do our best to file them either with a link to an individual (see the “Vault” article above) or in our Image Gallery. As the web has matured, issues of Copyright have arisen so not all submissions will be published.

Facebook update

Have you joined us on Facebook? The group is called Hong Kong Veterans Tribute. Every week there are some amazing posts full of ‘C’ Force information. Want to help? The easiest way for you to help us spread the word is join our group and invite your Facebook friends. Facebook even has a special 'button' to click on that makes your invite very easy. Try it.

postal history means collecting the covers one uses to send letters.

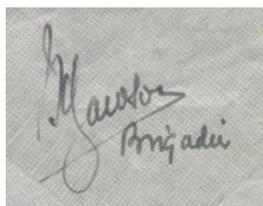
Let me rewind back to the 2016 HKVCA event at University of Toronto’s Hong Kong Library at the Robarts Library, where I had a chance to meet family members of Brigadier John Lawson. When I asked about what he had left behind, I was

told that a family member had possession of related items, but there was no motivation to reveal what these were and no access for others to study them. After hearing this comment, I came to the realization that I might never get to see, let alone own, a Brigadier's cover.

In November 2023, I was overjoyed when I was offered exactly that, a Brigadier's cover. I was already scheduled to fly to Hong Kong later that month. At the HKVCA Zoom meeting in November, I was so anxious and wanted to tell anyone about this but did not, as I had still not received the cover in the mail.

For me as a collector and philatelic exhibitor, it was of paramount importance that I had to have a cover from the Brigadier in my exhibit. Obviously because of his status as the highest ranking official and commander of 'C'-Force. Before this, I only had covers/cards from the rank of Major.

What is the "big deal" about this cover? After looking at what is available in 'C'Force collections in Canada and worldwide for over 30 years, there had been no record of a cover written by the Brigadier in private hands. When you look at the date of the postmark of this letter, it was November 28, 1941. The relevance of this date is, after November 29, 1941, no 'C'Force mail could have left Hong Kong. The last ship that carried mail, before the Japanese attack, eastbound to the US would have sailed. All other 'C'Force mail that was sent after this date would have been "Detained" in Hong Kong until after the war. This applied to both airmail and surface mail. The Brigadier's cover was paying a postage of 20 cents, which was for a surface letter. The last Clipper flight which brought mail from HK to Manila and then onwards to the US and Canada, would have also flown on the morning of November 30. So, this cover would have been the last letter from the Brigadier that was sent to Canada. If there were other covers written by the Brigadier, these would have been "Detained in Hong Kong" and would only have been forwarded to his family after the war ended in September 1945. Then there was also a highly probable scenario that the Japanese knowing these were written by the Brigadier might have been selectively destroyed.



(Lawson signature on back of cover. Photo by Sam Chiu. Published by permission)

The cover was addressed to Colonel L.W. Miller. Colonel Lawrence Walter Miller was later promoted to Brigadier, but soon retired on June 30, 1942. The dealer who was selling Miller's correspondence knew that I collected 'C'Force postal history and had the smarts to approach me with this cover. He told me it was the only HK item in Brigadier Miller's correspondence. It is because this cover was not addressed to Brigadier Lawson's family and therefore not

in the possession of the family member who is still holding the rest of his belongings.



(Photo by Sam Chiu. Published by permission)

On my trip to HK last November, I had planned to take back five covers of 'C'Force members who were buried there, or their names were on the columns at the gate leading to the graves, as three of them were MIAs. Now I am bringing back a sixth.

There has been an effort by younger philatelists to make collecting stamps more relevant to them. Graham Beck created what is known as "Extremely Philately", which is the practice of taking a photo with a stamp in the foreground and the background would be what the stamp used in its design. I am taking this one step forward. I am bringing a cover or card, or letter back to the grave site of a C-Force soldier/officer, using the item as the foreground and the grave, or his name on a column, as the background. Should this be called "Extreme Postal History"? I did even more than that. I took a video of me holding the items and doing a short narration.

I cannot help but get emotional at the grave site as you can see in what I wrote in an article in the Hong Kong Philately Society's Journal about this discovery.

As a Chinese collector, I have been told by many senior philatelists before me, including Dr. Shiu-Hon Chan, about "Philatelic fate or destiny" "郵緣". That it has been written in the stars that I get to see and, Heaven forbid, even to own a cover written by the Brigadier. I apologize if I am getting too philosophical about this.



(Photo by Sam Chiu. Published by permission)

The HKVCA has kindly put my video at the Brigadier's grave site on their YouTube channel. It is at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2p53h8rR2VQ>

This got me thinking. Would adding what I have in my collection of 'C'Force members add value and knowledge to the HKVCA website? I then approached Mike Babin with an offer. I can supply all that I have of 'C'-Force members to the website. These are not just limited to covers/cards from or addressed to 'C'Force members. For example, there are the four pencil-written lists of casualties that Private Duncan Benton WG had documented. Mike agrees and brings in our webmaster Jim Trick to work with me on this project. Subject to Jim's guidance, in the coming months, I will supply Jim with images of material that I own of 40 C-Force members. This will include five other videos that I took while I visited Sai Wan Cemetery. He will then put these in another area (new?) on the website.

80th Anniversary of V-J Day Reunion -2025

Reunion Committee

In our December newsletter, we made an exciting announcement about organizing the 80th Anniversary of V-J Day Reunion to be held in Ottawa on August 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th, 2025. As of March 4th, that's only 527 days away!

Mindful of our theme, "**Legacy of Remembrance**", we are exploring accommodations, speakers, potential tours such as the National War Museum, memorabilia display, a V-J Day service to honour our veterans, with an unforgettable commemorative service at the Memorial Wall. We plan to provide opportunities for families to connect and share stories and much much more.

Don't miss this opportunity to remember and honour our veterans, our fathers, and grandfathers, who fought in the Battle of Hong Kong, making the greatest sacrifice for our country that one can make! We are so proud!

Please help us by spreading the word to family and friends. This event is open to anyone who wants to attend.

The 80th Anniversary committee has been meeting once a month, making a lot of community contacts to organize the best and most enjoyable reunion ever. We have welcomed three more individuals to our committee, now totalling 11 volunteers from across the country. Welcome to Pam Heinrichs from Manitoba, Glenn Miller from Alberta and Ian Englehart from Ontario.

Stay tuned for more exciting updates about the Reunion. We would appreciate your ideas and suggestions, and for planning purposes, it would be great to know if you, family, and friends are interested in attending the Reunion. Please contact us at 2025reunion@hkvca.ca or at our mailing address shown at the bottom of this newsletter.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Prairie Prose



Carol Hadley

Greetings to all our members – We sincerely hope that the New Year came in joyfully with the promise of good health, prosperity, and many wonderful things ahead. This year is certainly an example

of an unusual climate, and we hope that things settle down soon.

The Prairie Region held Zoom meetings in January and February as this is typically very cold and nasty weather here, however this has been an unusual year and we have experienced almost pleasant weather. It was still nice not having to travel and there are more members able to attend due to distance however the camaraderie of a face-to-face was missing. There is not much happening early in the year, so the Zoom meeting was good to touch base with all who attended.

So far, the March Prairie meeting will be in person at Smitty's Restaurant on Pembina and Grant at 11:30 am. If the weather turns bad, the meeting will be via Zoom and notification will be sent out.

Kathie Carlson, Stephanie Mitchell, and I are working on the 80th Anniversary committee. Members have been contacted who have expressed interest to help with the publicity work. We will know more when they can give us a summary of what the course of action should be.

We are soliciting help with the design of a commemorative pin for the event so if anyone has thoughts of a design, please contact a member of the Board.

Also, with the 80th meeting, the Winnipeg Grenadier Cadet Corps has been contacted to see if it's possible to have the cadets attend. More information needs to be exchanged to outline what their duties would be.

Kathie will have a report of the plans in another column and there will be a page on the website. Please consider attending this momentous reunion as we remember and commemorate these Canadian heroes.

I am working with a member to have a plaque placed in the Norwood St. Boniface Legion and met recently to view the site for the placement before I order the plaque. The dedication will be on May 24, 2024 at 7 pm.

We are still trying to present a certificate to one of our city councillors for his assistance with the Arden 7 project.

Stan Lopata and Alex Taylor will be attending the Red River Heritage Fair which is held at the beginning of May. Preparations are in process.

Rev. Paul Lampman updated us on the status of the WG flags and the duplicates to replace them in St. Lukes Anglican Church where the originals were retired.

We still have 3 applications for gravestones for veteran's graves, as the Last Post Fund has a 3-year backlog.

Our crazy weather continues with a cold spell so stay warm, safe and look forward to warmer weather.

Take care everyone, God Bless.

Ontario Offerings



Shelagh Purcell

March is the birthday month for Oda Barlow (Edwin Barlow RCASC) to celebrate 101 years. She is looking forward to a visit from her son from Calgary.

The good weather seems to be encouraging travel as Susan Ewing (Kenneth Ewing RRC) is also expecting a visit from her son and daughter-in-law.

Despite having all the shots, Barry Fair (John Gray Fair RRC) developed covid in January and spent the month in isolation. He has recovered and was able to make suggestions for the 80th VJ Day anniversary in Ottawa.

Irene Firlotte (Lawrence Firlotte RRC) turned 98 in January and while not participating much, is happy to watch what's happening around her.

Gloria Fortune (Herbert Fortune WG), through daughter Vicky, reports that at 95, Gloria is doing okay and likes to keep in touch. And having the newsletter read to her.

As a project for the 80th anniversary, VJ Day, Jim Hurd (Edmund Lionel Hurd RRC) plans to go to cemeteries in the Eastern Townships to see if the Hong Kong veterans have the special Gravestone Markers.

Jean Killoran (John Killoran RRC) was probably out for activities when I called. Her family confirms she is okay.

Mavis Martin (John Martin RRC) has moved back home because she had difficulty walking. She hopes to start exercises to help that problem.

Grace Thornton (Howard Thornton WG) has had frustrating after-effects from covid with memory loss. She's being advised that it will probably come back. Otherwise she's fine.

Cara Worthington (Bert Worthington) now lives at Christie Gardens in Toronto and is enjoying the people and the good programs there. She is doing well.

Donna Drimmie (Victor Oliver Fehr RRC). Her father was 21 years old on board the ship to Hong Kong. When he returned

December 7 Event at Canadian War Museum

Mike Babin

On the eve of the Japanese attack on Hong Kong the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa hosted a very interesting event centred around excerpts from the documentary film “The Fence”, which features commentary from Hong Kong Veterans George Peterson and George MacDonell.



L to R: Viveka Melki, Jon Reid, Mike Babin, Tim Cook and on screen, Dr. Kwong Chi Man (Photo by Canadian War Museum, published with permission)

The audience, numbering around 130, was shown a series of brief clips from the film, each followed by comments from a panel moderated by Tim Cook, War Museum Historian. Panel members were: Viveka Melki - producer of the film; Jon Reid - son of Capt John Reid; Dr Kwong Chi Man of Hong Kong Baptist University; and Mike Babin - HKVCA President. The panel also took questions from the audience.

“The Fence” is available for viewing free of charge on [CBC Gem](#) (you will need to create an account, but this is free). Highly recommended!

Due to space limitations in this printed copy, some detail that appears in the online version has been omitted, and some photos cropped and resized.

Please note: underlined words in articles refer to links that are active in our online version or are active if you view our PDF copy on screen.

Want to contact us by mail? Our postal address is on the next page.

home, Donna said every March 17th, he would wear a green tie and say "I'm Vic o' Fehr - Irish for a day"!

Announcements

Interested in a Trip to Hong Kong?

We would like to see whether there is sufficient interest to organize a guided group tour to Hong Kong and possibly Japan to visit wartime sites. It would take place in late November/early December 2025.

If you're interested, please send an email to hkvca.trip@gmail.com. There's no obligation.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association will be held on: Tuesday, May 7 at 2pm (Eastern Time).

Agenda:

- Approval of Minutes of last AGM, held April, 2023.
- Presentation of 2023 Financial Statement
- Election of Directors
- Appointment of Officers
- Brief presentations by Regional Directors
- President's Remarks
- Questions from Members
- Close

The meeting will be held via toll-free conference call. Watch your email for an invitation containing the instructions in late April.

Lifetime Members (Widows) - please disregard this page.

Regular Membership Application and Renewal Form

Regular Members - Have you renewed for 2024?

It's up to you - [online](#) or Canada Post.

New and Renewing Members

Please complete this form annually (for the purpose of updating our Membership database)

Dues ~ New or Renewing Member Dues - \$20 per Year (Veterans and/or Widows do NOT pay Dues)

Member Information - Please Print Clearly

Type of Membership (Circle One): New Renewing Veteran Widow

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____

Postal Code _____

Telephone (Include Area Code) (____) _____

Email Address _____

Use my Email address to notify me of HKVCA events and newsletters. (circle one) Yes | No (By choosing yes, I understand I will not receive a paper copy of the newsletter by mail.)

Relationship to Veteran

Veteran's Name _____

Regiment _____ Regimental Number _____

Date of birth (if known) _____

Date of death (if known) _____

Relationship (Circle One) Veteran Wife/Widow Son/Daughter

Brother/Sister Grandson/Granddaughter Friend

Other (Specify) _____

Parent Region

Choose which Region you wish to administer your membership (you will automatically receive Regional news (when published) in addition to the National newsletter)

Circle One Choice: Atlantic | Quebec | Ontario | Prairie | BC

Make Cheque for Membership Dues (\$20.00) or Donations Payable to

Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association (use the full name)

Mail to: (choose the appropriate address for your Parent Region from those below.

Membership Reps

Atlantic Region Andy Flanagan 91 Hodgins Street East Belledune, NB E8G 2E4	Quebec Region Lucette Mailloux-Muir 18 rue Barre Granby, QC J2H 2E6
Ontario Region Ms. Lori Atkinson Smith 946 Wyldewood Rd. Sherkston, ON L0S 1R0	Prairie Region Barry Mitchell P.O. Box 381 Winnipeg, MB R3C 2H6
BC Region Murray Doull 258 Elliott Road Clearwater BC V0E 1N2	