

# WASURERU-NAI

## New Editor

As a result of my sitting and talking with Derrill Henderson at the last convention in Toronto, I am now the new editor of our HKVCA newsletter. Come to think of it, I didn't even hold out for a coffee.

Having never met any of my dad's fellow comrades or been told much of his military experiences, I didn't know what to expect. But, after having met and spoken to several of the members and veterans, I knew I'd be proud to be a part of this and contribute something hopefully worthwhile.

That being said, I am asking you to please help me with this. I would appreciate any contributions or comments with respect to anything concerning the newsletter. I will discuss these ideas with our executive with a view to being as inclusive as possible.

Please include your e-mail address where applicable, and your phone number. If you send electronically, I have WP 7 and MS Word 7 and their associated programs.

I am bilingual, also ambidextrous (both-handed) and amphibious (scuba diver) ;-)

I look forward to hearing from you and I hope I'll be able to do a good job for you and for all of us.

Your Editor,  
Len Cotton

## CONTENTS

New Editor	1
Projects On-the-Go	1
Diary of a HK veteran	1
Our first Convention	2
President's Report	2
History of the H.K.V.A.	2
Our "father's" blessing	3
News from the West	3
1941-Wounds That Will Not Heal	3
Report of General Meeting	4
Membership Reminder	5
Newsletter Distribution	5
TO DO	5
Contacts	6

## Projects On-The-Go

### - Erecting of plaques in Hong Kong

We are awaiting instructions from Foreign Affairs Canada as to how we might best approach this subject with the Chinese government.

### - Lost Trails

The search continues for H.K. veterans or widows that have discontinued participation in the H.K. Veterans events. If you hear of any, please mail in their names and addresses.

### - Visitations

This continues to be one of our main concerns as an association. It has become apparent that not all local groups will be able to follow a similar approach, so it will be left to each council to develop its own system.

### - Monument Badges

These are now available. They were a hit with the veterans at the convention. The badge is 2½ inches in diameter and is mounted on the grave stone by drilling a small hole and inserting an anchor. Installation time is less than an hour. The cost of the badge is \$43.75 taxes included plus \$2.00 shipping.

We had hoped to mount a financial campaign to cover the cost of these for all the Canadian H.K. veterans buried in North America, but we are not as yet sufficiently organized to mount any such campaign. Families wishing to have this for their husbands/fathers must cover the full cost, as well as actual installation.

It is our association's intent to have every Hong Kong veteran's grave marked by this emblem. This will be a most notable act of remembrance that will trigger the memory of that page of history each time a visitor sees the distinctive emblem.

If you are interested in obtaining one for your father, husband, or for that matter, any deceased H.K. veteran, please send your cheque to the address listed at the end of this newsletter.

### - Erection of a cenotaph/monument in Canada

Nothing to report on this project.

### - Production of interview videos

The first sweep across Canada has been made and we have forty-eight interviews "in-the-can". There was a problem with many veterans not showing up as scheduled. We have been advised that another cross-Canada filming will be done next year. We are working with Veterans Affairs Canada and Public Archives to get as many H.K. veterans as possible on record for our country's archival records.

### - Hong Kong Bars

We have received from Gerry Osborn approximately 50 Hong Kong Bars for miniature medals. This is the battle bar awarded in 1995 in Ottawa. If any widow or children of deceased H.K. veterans want a set for your father's medals, we would be pleased to send one. Please write to Derrill Henderson at the address in the contacts section at the end of the newsletter.

## Diary of a Hong Kong Veteran

*Diary of a Prisoner of War in Japan 1941-1945* is the newly published English translation of L-Cpl. Georges "Blacky" Verreault's personal war diary tracing his experiences with the Royal Rifles of Canada.

The book itself is a project of "Blacky" Verreault's son, Michel Verreault, who collated the original papers after his father's passing and, upon enlisting the help of many people, succeeded in bringing the finished work to publication.

This diary is unusual in that a diary of this sort was written on bits and pieces of paper and hidden during the period of incarceration. "Blacky" Verreault risked cruel punishment and perhaps even death if ever his diary was discovered by his Japanese captors.

While it is reported that some portions of this book may be politically incorrect, it must be remembered that Verreault wrote as was the common

fashion in those war years.

**Things changing pretty fast? Remember, a bend in the road is not the end of the road. Unless you fail to make the turn. So, just lean into it.**

As historian Serge Bernier says in the foreword, Blacky's diary is in itself a unique document of the military historiography of WWII. Blacky's writings could well have been those of any one of his comrades in arms since they pretty well reflect the feeling of those "heroes".

An official presentation of the English edition will be made in Ottawa at the Canadian War Museum on December 11, 1997. This book, in English or French, is now available for \$25.00 + \$4.00 shipping and handling by contacting

Michel Verreault  
400, ave. St-Eugène, App.# 5  
Rimouski (Québec)  
G5L 8S3

Tel.: 418-723-1423

## First Convention

I know I speak for Lora Wachtendorf as well, in stating that the presence of so many at our first convention in Toronto this past September made all the hours of work spent in getting our association off the ground well worth the effort. It provided the vehicle for us to demonstrate, both to ourselves and to Hong Kong veterans, that we exist; a real, tangible body prepared to fulfill our mandate. It provided means of listening to suggestions on how we might better undertake our activities and the opportunity to enter discussion on these proposals.

I feel that the community of the extended Hong Kong family is firmly established and will live long into the future. I was encouraged to hear the wealth of talent we have among our members, and also to hear that most everyone is prepared to assist within the limits their present commitment permit.

I ask you to read the synopsis of the Minutes of our General meeting that your Newsletter editor will provide somewhere in this edition.

- Derrill Henderson

## President's

## Report

It is an appropriate time to welcome and thank Len Cotton for taking on the function of newsletter editor. The more the task of operating our association is spread, both at the national and local levels, the easier it becomes from a commitment aspect, and the stronger our association becomes as an entity.

I would also like to welcome April Cole as our official membership chairperson. April has been functioning in this task, and handling many other administrative duties as well. She will continue to receive membership dues and keep the roll until all provincial/regional councils are up and running. Thereafter, she will co-ordinate the membership function at the National level and keep the associated records necessary to fulfill the requirements of our Association as dictated by our Charter.

Another task I hold is serving as apprentice and back-up to Mr. Harry Atkinson, Pensions & Welfare Officer for the Hong Kong Veterans Association of Canada. Should you hear about any veteran or widow having health or financial problems going unattended, please let me know, either directly or through your provincial/regional council. I will ensure that it gets passed on through the proper channels.

As your President, I am pleased to report that I will be speaking on the Hong Kong event to the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa. This is an independent society with other similar federations and national societies in Canada, the British Isles, and the United States.

- Derrill Henderson

*"What we must decide is perhaps how we are valuable, rather than how valuable we are."*

- Edgar Z. Friedenber

(Ed.)

## History of the H.K.V.A. The Founders Series

From the west: Gerry Mabley

A Brief History

Hong Kong Veterans Association

Manitoba Chapter

In discussion with Gerry Mabley

Winnipeg, May, 1997

Gerry Mabley was born in Kelwood, Manitoba, 81 years ago. He spent his youth in that small town and fondly remembers growing up in a quiet rural setting.

With the outbreak of hostilities in 1939, he joined the Winnipeg Grenadiers and shortly thereafter the entire regiment was sent to Jamaica for Garrison duty. This posting lasted for 16 months and, in 1941, they returned to Canada for preparation for their assignment to Hong Kong.

Following the war, there was a period of settling back into civilian life, but also a deep desire to keep in touch with the comrades from the Regiment. Thus, in late 1947 or early 1948, the first meeting of the Winnipeg Hong Kong Veterans was

held in the War Amps Hall at Langside and Portage. The main floor of the building was occupied by the Manitoba Liquor Commission with the meeting rooms upstairs, later to become the Club Morocco.

The first executive was formed that night with Jack Norris (Capt.) as president. Unfortunately, Jack would pass away during his first term in office. Other members of this initial executive included Freddy Adams, Paddy Keenan, Alec MacFayden, Charlie Watson, Bob Boyd and Gerry Mabley as secretary.

The group was to be kept on the move as far as meeting locations were concerned and the following year they assembled at the Guards Club just off Portage Avenue, followed by quarters at the Free Press Building.

It was at the Free Press location that the first Hong Kong Veterans Association newsletter was published, but it was done by Charlie Watson, a hard line Communist, and without the permission of the rest of the members. The newsletter was filled with Communist propaganda and the group was severely taken to task by all who read it. Charlie, of course, was asked to take his campaigning elsewhere and he did. Today, he and Gerry are the only living members of the original executive.

Remaining on the move, the HKVA then met at the Duke of Kent Legion, followed by the ANAF on Young Street and finally the ANAF on Ellice Avenue.

The main instigator for forming a national association, however, was Charlie Clark of Toronto. The Hong Kong Vets from Eastern Canada belonged to the Royal Rifles of Canada and Brigade, while those from the West were with the Winnipeg Grenadiers and Brigade. It wasn't until 1956 that a truly national organization took shape when Gerry Mabley, Bert Delbridge and Swede Olcen representing the West, went to Toronto and met at the Royal York Hotel with Charlie Clark, Johnnie Stroud, Wally Gray and Cohn Standish of the Royal Rifles. Here the first close ties between the East and West were established and, with the leadership of Charlie Clark, a truly national organization was born. The two groups got along famously and lifetime friendships were formed. The real fun began when a national reunion was held in Edmonton in the 1960's and that comradeship continues to this day.

Past Presidents of the Manitoba Chapter who have been very active in Association affairs include Bert Delbridge, Robby Ashton, Harry Atkinson and Art Lussier. All held office for many years and have devoted much of their life to the

affairs of the Hong Kong Veterans Association.

While the Association was originally formed for the purpose of keeping in touch, many causes came up over the years, at first overall in nature, but later individual challenges that needed to be dealt with. As Gerry states, the group was made up of many characters which he fondly refers to as "lovable scallywags". It sounds like there are many stories that can be told but won't!

Gerry Mabley joined the Manitoba Government after the war and worked in the Land Titles Office until his retirement in 1974. He then moved to British Columbia but returned to Winnipeg in 1990. As much as he likes his home province, he is realistic about the weather and returns to B.C. every winter. Gerry keeps in touch with Bob Ferguson, a school teacher in Neepawa, Manitoba, who collects memorabilia from the Grenadiers' action in Hong Kong and has it on display in the Neepawa Legion. Speaking of Neepawa, Len Seaborn, who lives there and is known for his fabulous working skills, is 87 years young and is likely now the oldest Grenadier in Manitoba. The oldest Hong Kong veteran in Canada, however, is "The Old Warrior" Lionel Hird of the Royal Rifles in Québec who turned 91 this year.

Gerry has given most of his mementos to the school in his hometown of Kelwood but stays active and in touch by retaining membership in B.C., Québec and Maritime branches, as well as the Manitoba Branch of the Hong Kong Veterans Association. He attended the 50th Reunion in Ottawa in 1991 and enjoys as many social events as time and health permit. He tells us that almost all the vets believe the association is great!! And it has battled through many issues on their behalf. Recommended reading on Hong Kong includes *No Reason Why* and *To Hell and Back*.

- Written by Barry Mitchell following a meeting with Gerry Mabley, May 26, 1997.

## Our "father's" blessing

*The following is the text of a letter received by our association. In the final*

*counting, this is what we are all about - recognition of our efforts by those for whom we strive to honour. - Derrill Henderson*

"Our last biennial convention in Toronto which, among other activities, saw the legal launching of the HONG KONG VETERANS COMMEMORATIVE ASSOCIATION was the defining moment of the convention.

I was tremendously impressed by the members of your Board in addition to being totally overwhelmed by the scope of the material your organization has put together. Bravo for an organizational job extremely well and successfully accomplished.

When the opportunity arises, please convey my gratitude to all of those within the H.K.V.C.A. who participated in so propitiously bringing things together.

Best wishes for continued success in this undertaking.

J.N. Roger Cyr  
Public Relations Officer  
H.K.V.A."

## News from the West

**The special observance** was conducted by the HKVCA at the Annual HKVA Reunion Dinner held on October 25, 1997 at the Holiday Inn Airport South. There was also information available about HKVCA membership.

### Remembrance Day

November 11th is the day that we remember and thank all veterans for the gift of a democratic country. However their grief and memories have stayed with them over many decades. The following poem expresses the thoughts of one of our HKVA members and we sincerely appreciate his sharing it with us.....

### 1941-The Wounds That Will Not Heal

When London requested assistance,  
Many questioned the lack of appraisal,  
Committing troops to a theatre of action  
With little thought of refusal.

It seems there was no disagreement  
About the need for a hasty decision,  
Though strategic details appeared lacking,  
And, just perhaps, some facts hidden.

Some believe our thoughts are quite faded  
The experience is beyond our recall,  
But memories of those days are as vivid  
Had they happened earlier this fall.

All told there were nearly two thousand  
And there's many a story to tell,  
Of the horror of being a prisoner  
In a war which proved to be hell.

We'd arrived on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November  
Amidst bands and applause from a crowd,  
Not knowing our lives were in danger  
But we certainly wondered aloud....

When the planes overhead appeared ancient  
The pilots' scarves flying behind,  
Waved welcome this latest addition  
Of troops not yet fully trained.

We didn't know all the details  
Rumors flew in no special order,  
There were few heavy weapons, ..no transport  
And a total lack of air cover.

Many said Hong Kong was a fortress  
And the chance of attack was so small,  
We needn't look for a weakness  
In soldiers who weren't very tall.

Word had it their abilities were lacking  
They couldn't operate well in the dark,  
But we found this information  
Did more than just miss the mark.

They moved about with precision  
Were adequately trained and commanded,  
They soon overran our positions  
On an island which could not be defended.

Nothing can change what did happen  
Nor alter the truth now recited,  
It's for those who experienced such misery  
To say how they were affected.

The wounded were dreadfully beaten  
Many people were randomly killed,  
They raped nurses all day and evening,  
We grieved at the blood that was spilled.

Next came the foulest conditions  
Starvation and slavery abounded,  
Scores died before it was over  
Never more to be beaten and tortured.

As well as those killed in action  
Many suffered premature death,  
Loss rates of survivors keeps mounting  
Because of continued poor health.

For the years we spent at forced labour  
Our group asked for full compensation,  
But so far we've met with defiance  
By some countries bent on rejection.

These thoughts continue to haunt us  
As we bow our heads to remember  
Our friends, our comrades, our loved ones  
At Memorials each year in November.

**Written by:**

Fred Chapman,  
Royal Rifles of Canada,  
October 13, 1995

**Acknowledgments**

I gratefully acknowledge the recollections,  
discussions and support of those who were  
there.

*Ed. - I regret that Mr. Chapman's poem  
cannot be reproduced in French. But I  
invite all members and veterans to please  
feel free to submit such items as this in  
their choice of language so that we may  
all benefit.*

## General Meeting September 5, 1997 Toronto, Ontario

The inaugural general meeting of our  
association was well attended and very  
successful. The special opening  
ceremony conducted by Lora Wactendorf,  
assisted by Vicky Hedelius, Michel  
Verreault, Philip Dodderidge and Carol  
Hyatt, served to focus our attention on the  
purpose of our association and the  
missing veterans whom we honoured  
along with our attending veterans.

Upon establishing quorum,  
several items of business were presented  
to the membership for discussion and  
vote. The process of obtaining Charitable  
Donation Status was presented and this  
activity is continuing.

The Manitoba and Atlantic  
councils have been established and are  
completing their organization. British  
Columbia is making progress on the  
establishment of its council and will soon  
be in place. Ontario has its third organizer  
and is still struggling. Québec, with pools  
of dedicated people, has no administration  
yet to coordinate things, but someone is in  
line to handle these matters.

The association's audited  
financial statement for the year was  
presented by Carol Hadley. It reflects our  
limited resources at startup and confirms  
our finances are under good control.

April Cole's membership report  
identified a count of 568 members in total,  
including 298 widows who are  
automatically lifetime members. With 180  
memberships still outstanding, and the  
costs of sending out reminders, she  
presented a proposal for Lifetime  
Memberships at a cost of \$250.00. A vote  
on this proposal will be forthcoming  
following discussion with  
provincial/regional councils and when  
Québec and Ontario have their councils in  
place.

Membership fees pay for  
membership cards, stamps,  
correspondence, newsletters, and so on.  
They will be collected at the national level  
until the provincial/regional councils are  
established. It is estimated that \$6 out of  
every \$10 membership will stay in the  
province/region.

A By-Law was approved  
granting full status on the Commemorative  
Committee's Board of Directors for Roger  
Cyr, Publicity Officer for the HKVA, to be  
the HKVA's representative on the board  
and to speak on behalf of that senior  
organization as required. The President  
of the Committee had an equal status on  
the National Executive Council of the  
HKVA when that management structure  
was in place.

The question of voting rights for  
all members, regardless of whether they  
were issuance of HK veterans or not, was  
raised. It was confirmed by reference to  
the By-Laws that all members have voting  
rights. Although not in the original by-  
laws, this had to be changed in order to  
meet the requirements of a Charitable  
Organization.

A proposal was passed that  
approved the association paying all direct  
out-of-pocket expenses to individuals on  
the Board of Directors as administrative  
costs for such items as telephone,  
postage, photocopying, and so on.

Lora Wactendorf reported that  
Phase 1 of the Video Project has been  
completed with interviews of Veterans  
across Canada having been completed.  
With additional funds, the film crew hope

to continue the interviews of those Vets who have mobility problems, or were missed the first time, to ensure that everything is documented. The edited tapes will be for distribution to the Councils to show at schools, accompanied by a HKVA member to answer questions. Two other projects currently in hand include the sale of Grave Monument Badges and HKVCA member Blazer Crests @ \$18.00.

An Internet Web Page for information and communication is now in the works and will be mentioned when it is completed.

After a report by Roger Cyr on some information on the Internet regarding the HKVA Veterans' compensation claim in Geneva, Derrill Henderson reported on the status of the John Osborn Memorial in Hong Kong. Since the wording on the monument may be a concern to the Chinese government because it alludes to the glory of British colonialism, Derrill stated that we would be prepared to have the wording changed if the monument could be left in place. But, if the Chinese government were insistent on its removal, we wish it to be returned to Canada, whereupon it may be given to Manitoba or become the centerpiece of the National Memorial our association wishes to erect.

It was confirmed that an important role for our association in future HKVA conventions would be to put on conventions for the HKVA upon request. In some areas, this is already in place.

A motion was moved and approved to extend the term for the Board of Directors by one year in order to coincide with the biennial conventions occurring every two years. This allows for the smoothest transition between executive terms and saves the cost of an off-year election. For the next convention, the procedure will be in place and proxies will be available for all our members to have their vote.

Our Secretary, Ross Speller, has had to resign due to work pressures. Since no volunteers from the floor were forthcoming, it falls to the Board of Directors to fill this position. Volunteers were given 10 days to advise the Board of their interest and, if no volunteer is found for the office of National Secretary, the Board will appoint someone to fulfill duties of the office until the next election.

As an order of new business, Roger Cyr, Publicity Officer for the HKVA, spoke of a gathering of Vets about 25 years ago, that were contemplating where the HKVA was headed, and it was decided then that the future had to be with their children. He congratulated all those responsible for the formation of this new HKVCA association.

## Origins of Remembrance Day and the National War Memorial

*As this issue was going to press, I came across an interesting booklet published by the Royal Canadian Legion. One of the articles in this booklet described the origins of Remembrance Day and, in another article, the origins of the National War Memorial. Given the time of year, I have reproduced these articles below.*  
Ed.

### REMEMBRANCE DAY

In 1931, after insistent representation from The Canadian Legion, Parliament amended the Armistice Day Act to ensure that November 11<sup>th</sup> would be set aside as a day distinct and apart from any other observance upon which the nation could pay special tribute to those "who gave their lives that freedom might prevail".

In 1970, an act known as the Holidays Act was passed which included, among other holidays, Remembrance Day. An extract reads as follows: *"Throughout Canada, each and every year, the 11<sup>th</sup> day of November, being the day in the year 1918 on which the Great War was triumphantly concluded by an armistice, is a holiday and shall be kept and observed as such under the name of Remembrance Day."*

### THE NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL

In 1925, Vernon Marsh of Yorkshire, England, won the Canadian government competition to design a national war memorial. His design was one of 122 entrants considered in the international competition. After first submitting a model, he was authorized to commence work on the project.

The actual components of the memorial were conceived and executed in a garden in Kent, England. Marsh, and his six brothers and one sister, produced the work over a period of 10 years. They were from a farming family and none had any formal training in art or sculpture.

Although Vernon Marsh died in 1930, his sister Elsie and the remaining brothers continued the project. It was completed in 1932.

The work was first shown in Hyde Park, London, and slight modifications were made before the Canadian government finally took delivery in June 1937. For the sea voyage to Canada, the massive sculpture was broken down into component parts and shipped in 35 containers.

The memorial is in the form of a granite arch, atop which stand huge bronze figures of the Victory and Liberty. Marching through the arch are 22 figures representing all branches of the service during World War I. Upon the faces of these figures is the look of hope. They leave behind a symbolic unlimbered cannon.

The National War Memorial was unveiled by His Majesty George VI in May 1939 before a crowd of over 100,000 people. Remembrance services have been held at the sight of the National War Memorial since then. Prior to 1939, Remembrance services were held on the lawn in front of the Parliament Buildings at a temporary cenotaph.

*Source: "Interesting Facts", A Brief Summary of information about Canada's Armed Forces.*

## Membership Reminder

Our work can only be accomplished if we have a sizable membership behind us. Please, if you haven't sent in your \$10.00 membership for 1997, do so immediately, and don't be bashful about recruiting new members.

## Newsletter Distribution

With a view to keeping association costs down as much as possible, I'm thinking it would be a good idea to distribute by e-mail whenever we can.

If you don't mind receiving the newsletter this way, could you please send me your e-mail address and I will amend our mailing list accordingly.

Len Cotton

## Special Request

As many of our Hong Kong veterans in the Royal Rifles came from Québec, many of our members need to receive the newsletter in French. I could certainly use the help of someone bilingual to translate the newsletter from English into French.

If you know of anyone who is bilingual and would like to help out doing this translation, albeit at a non-professional level, please have them get in touch with me at the coordinates cited on the last page.

## → \* \* To Do \* \*



**Make sure I have sent in my membership dues for 1997.**



**Send Len my e-mail address if I can receive the newsletter by e-mail.**

## Contacts

### Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association

5929 L Jeanne d'Arc Blvd.  
Suite #156  
Orleans, ON  
K1C 7K2

*(Note: Use the above address for renewing memberships and ordering blazer crests and monument badges.)*

### National Board of Directors

#### President

Mr. Derrill Henderson  
75 Priam Way  
Nepean, ON  
K2H 8S7

#### Vice President

Mrs. Lora Wachtendorf  
P.O. Box 885  
Niverville, MB  
R0A 1E0

#### 2nd Vice President

Mr. Neil Darrah  
RR # 4  
Centreville, NB  
E0J 1H0

#### Treasurer

Mrs. Sheila Rattie Sheridan  
649 Westwood  
Dorval, QC  
H2P 2M4

#### Secretary

Mrs. Janice Jennings  
1366 Indian Rd. N.  
Sarnia, ON  
N7V 4C7

#### Newsletter Editor

Len Cotton  
62 Furlong Crescent  
Kanata, ON  
K2M 2H9

Phone: 613-592-2478  
Fax.: 613-592-9845  
E-mail: cottonl@cyberus.ca

### Provincial Councils

#### Manitoba:

Juliet Lafortune, President  
P.O. Box 20, Grp. 551, R.R. #5  
Winnipeg, MB R2C 2Z2  
Phone: (204) 338-3354

Carol Hadley, Secretary

54 Barnstaple Cove,  
Winnipeg, MB R0R 2W3  
E-Mail: alhad@mb.sympatico.ca

#### Atlantic :

Neil Darrah, President  
R.R.#4  
Centreville, NB E0J 1H0

Helen Wedge, Vice President

Richard Blaquièrre, Secretary-Treasurer  
P.O. Box 1465  
Woodstock, NB E0J 2B0

Carol Albright, NS Representative  
4 Swanton Drive  
Dartmouth, NS B2W 2C4

#### Alberta/Saskatchewan:

Cal McCorrister, President  
58 Forest Grove  
St. Albert, AB T8N 2Y1

Rob Cameron, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
112 West MacDougal Rd.  
Cochrane, AB T0L 0W4

Iris Jodoin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
12755, 114<sup>th</sup> St.  
Edmonton, AB T5E 5C6

Graham Miller, Secretary-Treasurer  
6011, 103<sup>rd</sup> Ave.  
Edmonton, AB T6A 0T5