

COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON

HONG KONG VETERANS' ASSOCIATION OF CANADA DECEMBER, 1994

BANJO GOSSIP NEWSLETTER 2.2 BAMBOO TELEGRAPH

Once again t'is the season to be jolly. I hope you can manage to do so. As for me, I find that this is a difficult time of year. I know most of us feel the same in spite of all the festivities that take place. It is difficult not to think of events that happened fifty-three years ago, but let's try to be jolly anyway. We are still here!

This issue of the Newsletter will include a short report of the recent pilgrimage to Hong Kong as guests (once again) of the Canadian Government. It will also include the address made by National President Roger Cyr at the Cenotaph in Sai Wan Bay Cemetery on November 11. Otherwise, I'll try to include as many of the regular features as possible. This short explanation will take care of what I have been calling the "Editorial".

REUNION, 1995

The following is a copy of a letter from Roger, dated November 18. I include it here in toto so that you can begin making plans for next summer.

"August 1995 will mark the 50th anniversary of the war with Japan. This will be a time when each of us will remember those who never came home, and, the joys of liberation.

To mark this important event in our lives, our Association has begun planning for the holding of our 1995 biennial convention in Ottawa, August 10th - 14th, 1995.

The Government of Canada has some time ago decided to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. To do this it has struck a Committee entitled CANADA REMEMBERS with a mandate to organize commemorative ceremonies centered in the Nation's Capital and more particularly at the National War Memorial. The organizational plans call for the presence of Canadian Veterans of the war in the Pacific.

The National Council of the Hong Kong Veterans' Association of Canada felt it appropriate to schedule our convention so as to capitalize on the above mentioned activities. This, of course, will be one of the last few remaining opportunities to rekindle friendships and comradeships of long ago.

This is but an advance information bulletin. Some time soon you will receive information pertaining to time, date, place, accommodations, and costs involved. In return, we will ask you to let us know if you plan to attend." Signed, J.N. Roger Cyr.

May I add the sincere wish that all who are able will plan to be there.

LAST POST

Since the last newsletter, I have to report, sadly, the following names of departed Hong Kong Veterans and affiliates: Quebec-Maritimes Branch: Comrades Ian Breakey (Lt), Weston Mann, Murray Carr, Emile Blanchette, Lawrence Henderson, Mrs. Margaret Scott (Lt. Scott) Ontario Branch; Comrade Wallace Green. Manitoba Branch; Nelson Galbraith, Arthur Munn, Elmer A. Graham (RCAF)

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.

BIOKI

President Denzil has been sick at home with a bout of pneumonia. He is on the road to recovery under the care of resident nurse Betty, and except for Charlie Campbell, who was in hospital fighting off some high blood pressure, I have not heard recently of other comrades who are sick or in hospital. I know that many of us are often under the weather, but unless and until I hear from you, the reader, of HK Vets in hospital, I can't report it here.

DONATIONS

We gratefully acknowledge gifts of money from members who contribute to the fund which keeps us solvent. This time the list of contributors is long. Many, many thanks to all of you for your support. Ladies first: Mrs. Jean Rose, Mrs. Inez Kelso, Mrs. Sylvia Lockwood, Mrs. Mildred MacPherson, Mrs. Joan Anctil, Mrs. Irene Firlotte, Mrs. Aini Dissing, Mrs. Stella Parks, Mrs. Irene Clark, Mrs. Evelyn Hachey, Mrs. Agatha St. Onge, Mrs. Angele Jessop, Mrs. Catherine Irving, Mrs. Freda Malboeuf, Mrs. Marie-Ange Pitre, Mrs. Clare Marshall, Mrs. Dorothy Lockhart, Mrs. Florence Hawke, Mrs. Rosemary Cannon, Mrs. Eva Lebreton, Mrs. May PrYce, Mrs. Florence Drover, Mrs. Isobel Mann, Mrs. Everest (?), Mrs. Dorothy Davidson, Mrs. Hilda Grimshaw, Mrs. Claris Phillips, Mrs. Gisele Bourget, Mrs. Celia Smith, Mrs. Jean Boissonneau.

From the men: Jean Lalime, John Killoran, Lloyd Cole, Thomas Jones, Lloyd Doull, John McGreavy, Murray Carr, Alfred Mills, Bryce Craig, Samuel Disensi, Morgan Davies, Clarence Hunt, Algee Pelletier, Leonard Doiron, Leandre Leblanc, Raymond Smith, Martin S. Banfill, Douglas Martin, John Lebel, Clifford MacDavid, Kenneth Ewing, Frederick Day, Everest Lawrence, John Levitt, Gerard Bisson, Lucien Brunet, Marcel Ouellette, Bernard Castonguay, Clement Blacquiére, Eli Finn, Robert Jessop, Richard Mann, Jack Delaney, Harold Heath, Fred Chapman, Raymond Quirion, Robert MacNaughton, Francis Corbett, Robert Dunlop, Charlie Thompson, Philip Doddridge.

In addition, we have the following donations in memorium:

Mrs. Grace Cyr in memory of husband Wilmer
Mrs. Velma Nicholson in memory of husband Murray
Mrs. Irene Galbraith in memory of Lawrence Henderson
Lawrence Ross in memory of brothers Raymond and Leo
Mrs. Hazel Breakey in memory of husband Ian
Eric Henderson in Memory of Lawrence Henderson
Mrs. Evelyn Atkinson in memory of Mrs. Marjorie Scott.

PERSONALITY

Captain E.L. Hurd was quartermaster of the Royal Rifles. Since the beginning of the Hong Kong Veterans' Association he has been active and has served in many offices, including President of the Quebec-Maritimes Branch and also National President of our association. Lionel has always been present when his advice and guidance were needed. Even yet, he takes in as many functions as he can. His recent marriage to Kay has seemed to put new life into him. Despite his advancing years and his recent accident that left him walking with a cane, he still has the old joie de vivre ! Best wishes, Lionel.

CORRESPONDENCE

reports of other HK Vets they come into contact with. Lionel Speller also sends me scads of stuff. It is too bad that the limitations of this letter prevents me from sending it all along to you. Francis Corbett, who financed and supervised the refurbishing of the memorial plaque of the Royal Rifles, which hangs in the Drill Hall of the Armouries in Quebec City sends good wishes to all, Flash and Jessie Clayton, a long and interesting letter from their winter retreat in Florida, Charlie and Cecile Thompson, Senator Jack Marshall announcing his retirement from the Senate, also cards from Pat and Pierrette Poirier, Denzil and Betty, Lionel and Ida Speller, Bob and Jessie Clayton.

DUES

Lawrence informs me that we have 199 members paid up until now. Please pay up if you haven't already done so. Several people have sent their dues to me. That's O K by me, but then I have to send them on to Lawrence. No big deal. We'd rather have it that way than not at all. However, Lawrence Rattie's address is, 508 Thorncrest, Dorval, QC, H9P 2M6. The policy remains - if you are over two years in arrears, you don't get a newsletter.

HONG KONG REMEMBRANCE DAY PILGRIMAGE, 1994

You will no doubt have heard that nineteen of us Hong Kong Vets were selected to be present in Hong Kong on November 11 with Prime Minister Chrétien and the provincial premiers. It was an experience to remember, an emotion-filled journey into the past, and for me, at least, an opportunity to lay to rest some of the ghosts that have been living with me for the past fifty years.

National President Roger did us proud. He withstood the rigors of the long flights and the social events which must be part of such an expedition. During the whole trip there was not the slightest mishap, nor anything that would reflect on the deportment of any of the participants.

Roger's address at the cenotaph was very moving. I reproduce it here in full. In the interest of saving space, I'll put it down as compactly as possible. Reprinted by permission

Standing here today, just days short of the 53rd anniversary of the beginning of those tragic events which ended in the loss of so many comrades and nearly four years of unimaginable hardships as prisoners of war for the rest of us, surely brings that page of history back into sharp focus.

Remembrance! is thinking about all of you, eager, fully alive young men, who, within a few days under the harshest of conditions made the leap from boyhood to manhood. For many of you this new state lasted but moments, others hours, and days at most. While climbing these hills, crawling on your bellies so as to make a target of yourself as small as possible, enduring a constant hail of bullets, fragments of detonating hand grenades, hand-to-hand bayonet fighting, being tortured while lying wounded in a hospital bed, few of you had other thoughts but get the job done so I can go back home to my loved ones. Alas! This was not to be.

Remembrance! is also the thought of all of those who returned with broken bodies and spirit, too ill to resume and enjoy the bounties of life in Canada, never having recovered from their years of captivity.

Remembrance! is casting our thoughts back to widows who were never to see their husbands again. Children who had to make their way in life without fatherly love, affection, advice and support. Finally, remembering is why we are here today. Yes, comrades, our

memories are very much tuned-in and I'm sure you approve of our Country's dedication to PEACE rather than war. COMRADES, we will keep faith, and, we who survived are committed to the proposition that your sacrifice will not have been in vain nor your place in Canada's military history forgotten.

Camarades! Notre mémoire fait marche arriere et s'arrete a cette page d,histoire de novembre 1941, ou nous débarquions a Hong Kong. jeunes, plien de vie, anxieux de servir notre Pays au meilleur de nos capacités, et ce, dans l'espoir d'accomplir la tache le plus tot possible anfin de reintégrer nos patelins dans un espace de temps raisonable. Hélas! Pour vous, camarades, le sort en avait décidé autrement.

Camarades! Nous sommes ici aujourd'hui parceque nous nous souvenons de vous tous, compagnons d'armes, dont les effets terribles de la bataille vous ont fait passer du stade d'adolescence a pliene maturité dans un espace de moments, d'heures, et au plus quelque jours.

Nous nous souvenons de vos peines at miserés, de la hantise de recevoir une balle dans le corps en grimpant les collines qui nous entourent, de souffrir les effets déclats d'obus, et, la craint de recevoir un coup de baionnette en etant couché, blessé sur un lit d'hopital. Oui, chers compagnons, vos sacrifices sont toujours frais dans notre memoire. Nous nous souvenons aussi de vous, compagnons revenus au pays avoir passés pres de quatre années comme prisonier de guerre, physiquement incapable de réintégrer une vie normale. Pour plusieurs d'entre-vous la vie apres le retour fut de tres courte durée.Nous nous souvenons également des veuves qui n'ont jamais revu leurs maris. Des enfants n'ayant jamais connu leur pere et les ravages de la discontinuité familiale.

Le Souvenir! C'est la raison pourquoi nous sommes ici aujourd'hui. Chers disparus, cette page d'histoire est toujours tres vive dans notre memoire. Je suis certain que vous partagez avec plusieurs le fait que le Canada soit rangé nettement du coté de la PAIX, plutot que de la guerre, et que les générations qui nous suivent n'aurent pas a subir le sort qui fut le votre. Pour nous qui vous avons survécu, nous ne cesserons jamais de nous souvenir de vos sacrifices et de nous assurer que vous ne soyez jamais oubliés dans les pages de nos annales militaires.

VARIA

I have a letter from Dr. Jonathan F. Vance, who has written a book entitled "Objects of Concern", Canadian Prisoners of War Through the Twentieth Century. Space in this newsletter does not permit the reproduction of the promotional material. Suffice to say that the book may be purchased for \$47.03 (tax and shipping included) by writing to UBC Press, 6344 Memorial Road, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z2. More in next letter if you are interested.

Barely room to close off ! Best wishes to everyone, and may God bless.

Philip