

HONG KONG VETERANS'

ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

QUEBEC-MARITIMES BRANCH

MARCH, 1997

BANJO GOSSIP NEWSLETTER 4.3 BAMBOO TELEGRAPH

NATIONAL REUNION

At this time I have heard nothing new about the 1997 reunion to be held in Toronto. However, hope that you have let Fred know of your intentions, because, as I stated in the December letter he needs a bit of lead time to arrange for services at the convention. Please do it if you haven't already. If I get more information before finalizing this letter, I'll squeeze it in.

CORRESPONDENCE

One of the perks of this task of writing the newsletter is the amount of mail I get from the readers. I wish I could reproduce it here for the enjoyment of everyone, but without going to a full size magazine, that would be impossible. I'll do the next best thing, that is, list the names of the letter writers, and try to report some of their contents. For example, and in no particular order: Ed Rodrigues, with some photos of himself and his house in Beaconsfield, along with newspaper clippings; Robert Champagne District Director, VAC, announcing his retirement; Robert Ferguson, Neepawa, Manitoba, with news of his Hong Kong Display in his Legion Branch; Clair Adams of Ottawa with a poem written by a friend in his local Legion; a letter to Hon. Doug Young, Minister of Defence and VAC from Mme. Bertine Comeau, regarding our claim to the Japanese; Harold Englehart concerning routine business; Leonard and Alma Wood with greetings and enquiries about the health of wife Edwina; Lionel Speller, scads of stuff almost on a weekly basis, lots of news clippings and comments; Lawrence Rattie, with lists of paid up members and donations to the cause; Flash Clayton, greetings and comments from Florida; Bernard Castonguay, with kind words and report of his medical problems. Like a few you, he is also wired to a pacemaker; and finally, (as of now) from Bob Baker, our good friend VAC with the schedule of pension benefits for 1997, showing increments of 1.5%, based on the Consumer Price Index.

TRIVIA AND OTHER NONSENSE

From the "Rotarian" - A rich family commissioned a well-known author to write its history, but pointed out that he should soft-pedal the fact that one uncle's life of crime had ended with a death sentence in the electric chair. "Don't say it straight out", they told the writer, "skirt around it a bit." The author wrote, "Uncle William occupied a chair of applied electronics in one of the leading government institutions. He was held to the post by the closest of ties, and his death came as a real shock."

From Ann Landers via the Vancouver Sun - more schoolboy howlers.

1. Noah's wife was Joan of Ark.
2. Lot's wife was a pillar of salt by day and a ball of fire by night.
3. The seventh commandment is "Thou shalt not admit adultery".
4. Paul preached acrimony, which is another name for marriage.
5. The Jews had trouble throughout their history with unsympathetic Genitals.
6. A Christian should have only one wife. This is called monotomy.

Pop: I don't know. Nobody has ever lived that long.

Clair Adams of Ottawa sent me this poem, written by a friend in his Legion. It is called "A Christmas Tragedy"

Hong Kong was the destination
For our soldiers brave
Special men were chosen
Our Canadian flag to wave

The Grenadiers and Royal Rifles
Would pay a heavy price
Young Canadian boys
Made the ultimate sacrifice.

Hundreds died on the battlefield
Prisoners were confined
Then stripped of their dignity
And caged in body and mind.

Cloaked in days of uncertainty
Families were left to mourn
Soon the village bells would toll
On a sad Christmas morn.

Let us never forget this tragedy
Some fifty-six years ago
What should have been a joyous
time
Was filled with grief and woe.

Survivors are few in number
Many in constant pain
Will they ever be compensated
Or did they fight in vain.

Lois Daley Laycock, 1997

PERSONALITY

How many of you noticed that I neglected to mention that Harry Atkinson served as National President just before Roger Cyr? I apologize to Harry and to the readers for that error, and take this occasion to say something about Harry. As National President Harry continued the efforts obtain pensions and benefits for fellow Hong Kong Veterans. I can say from personal experience that he used his time and money to represent the Association at pension hearings. He travelled the length and breadth of Canada whenever he was needed to council and to argue the case of any veteran in need. Now, as pension and claims officer for the Association, he makes at least one trip a year to Veterans' Affairs Canada headquarters in Charlottetown, where he is well acquainted with everyone from deputy minister to the lowest civil servant on the totem pole. Apart from that, he is frequently in Ottawa, where he keeps up the pressure at meetings with senior civil servants. Bravo, Harry!

DONATIONS

Lawrence came through with a list of donations which arrived too late for the December letter, so I list them here as follows:

Mrs. Cecile Pelletier, Mrs. Agatha St. Onge, Mrs. Joyce Caldwell-Finn, Mrs. Eva LeBreton, Mrs. May Pryce, Mrs. Olive Josey, Mrs. Doris Davidson, Mrs. Ruth Kellas, Mrs. Joan Gillis, Mrs. Marjorie Kennedy, Mrs. Nancy Welch, Mrs. Stella Parkes, Mrs. Louise Coleman, Mrs. Dorothy Davidson, Mrs. Gertrude Dow, Mrs. Dorothy Ross, Mrs. Irene Clark, Mrs. Marie Pitre.
Also: Mrs. Beatrice Butler, Mrs. Eva Robertson, Mrs. Florence Drover, Mrs. Thelma Misson, Mrs. Inez Kelso, Mrs. Jean Boissonneau, Mrs. Leila Heath, Mrs. Joyce Clarkson

And from the men:

Renaud Coté, Albert Russell, Douglas Ried, Douglas Martin, Jean Lalime, Gerard Bisson, Oswald Clark, Leonard Doiron, Fred Chapman, Edward Bujold, Harold Heath, Fraser Firth, Lloyd Doull, Robert Barter, Thomas Jones, Hormidas Fredette, Harold Englehart, Edward Campbellton, Dr. Martin Banfill, Samuel Desensi, Alfred Mills, John Duguay, Clarence Hunt, Bernard Thompson, Jack Delaney, Bernard Castonguay, Charles Thompson.
Also: Donald Geraghty, James Darrah, Francis Corbett, Arthur Roberts, Bryce Craig, Marcel Ouellet, Glenford Gregoire, Lloyd Seaward.

In Memorium

Mrs. Joyce Caldwell-Finn in memory of her husband Eli
Mrs. Elsie Stoddard in memory of her husband Grant
Clifford Beaudreau in memory of Grant Stoddard
Trudy and David Stoddard in memory of Grandfather Grant Stoddard
Mrs. Emily O'Hara in memory of her husband Walter
Mrs. Angele Jessop in memory of her husband Al
Mrs. Hazel Breakey in memory of Angus MacMillan
Mr. Robert Jessop in memory of Angus MacMillan
Jean and Walter Gray in memory of Arnold Graves
Jack Delaney in memory of brother Morris.

Also:

Lawrence Ross in memory of brothers Raymond and Leo.
Mrs. Nellie Laing in memory of husband John
Mrs. Dorothy Davidson in memory of René Bédard
Robert Dunlop in memory of deceased HK boys

Lawrence also says, "I wish to thank all the Hong Kong Veterans and wives and widows who sent all those lively get well cards while I was in hospital, and my recuperation period at home. They were greatly appreciated."

DUES

If you don't have a card which reads Sept. 96 to Aug. 97 your dues are in arrears. Lawrence would love to hear from you. To save you the trouble of looking up his address, here it is: Lawrence Rattie, 508 Thorncrest, Dorval, QC, H9P 2M6. He reports 203 members paid up so far. \$15.00.

BIOKI

This item gets harder and harder to write because so many of us are sick in hospital or have recently been there. However, I can report on recent cases that I am aware of: Charlie Campbell is in hospital again, for surgery this time, (Charlie is reported to have had his operation yesterday March 13, and came through OK) Len Wood is not well, Lawrence Rattie is receiving treatment at home, his son-in-law and member of our Branch, Norman Sheridan is not well, and there may be others. Please let me know. I get word that Marcel Cullet is not feeling well. Marcel is the only HK Vet living in Rimouski. If you happen to be passing through Rimouski, perhaps you could give him a call. He is in the phone book. Arnold Ross is sick at home with a severe case of the flu. Glen Mann tells me that Nap Leblanc is at home and doing fine.

LAST POST

The only death of HK Vets I have to report as of this time is that of Comrade Joe Landry, of Charlo, New Brunswick. According to Freddy Kelly, who I saw recently, Joe had an accident at his home, and died as a result. Also reported "Deceased" by the Post Office, are Mrs. Georgina Pollock, Mrs. Irene Firlotte, Mrs. Faye Coleman, Mrs. Nina Everett. WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.

LOST TRAILS

Letters for Matt Sanford, Irene Grimshaw, and Wayne Birmingham have been returned. Can anyone help me find the right addresses?

GREAT JOY IN THAT CITY

Remember North Point Camp. When we were taken there in late December 1941, the huts we were placed in were anything but comfortable. Four of us, Bob Barter, Lance Ross, Byron Willett and I were in a cubicle measuring about 7 feet by 6 feet, at the end of the hut. One morning Bob told us of a dream he had had the night before. He dreamed that he was in the kitchen of the old farm house at home. The Bible on the kitchen table was open at the Book of The Acts. A finger pointed to Chapter 8, verse 8. We found a New Testament and looked it up. The text read: "And there was great joy in that city." We counted the words- eight of them. What did it mean? Would we have to have to stay in prison camp for eight years? eight months? to find out what caused the great joy? You figure it out. I haven't.

AWARD

Maclean's Magazine of February 17, 1997, reports the award of "the fifth class of the Canadian Forces Decoration" to retired Air Commodore Leonard Birchall. This is the first time the award has been won since it was created in 1972, according to the item in Maclean's. The award is for meritorious service and devotion to duty. Those of you who shared Comrade Birchall's hardships in various camps in Japan can attest to the fact that the award is well deserved. On behalf of the Quebec-Maritimes Branch, I offer congratulations and best wishes to Comrade Birchall.

VARIA

Have you read your latest LEGION Magazine? In the NEWS section you will see the smiling faces of President Roger, Brian Forbes, Cliff Chadderton, and Len Birchall, over a report on the presentation to the Commons Committee, of the claim for compensation for slave labour. I am slightly perturbed with Douglas Fisher (again) over his article in the same issue of the Magazine in which he mentions Cliff Chadderton and Len Birchall as participants in the presentation, (if not enough), but does not name President Roger, a major contributor.

Douglas Fisher aroused my ire once before when he wrote in the LEGION Magazine that his mother had objected to his attempt to volunteer for service with "C" Force Brigade, going to Hong Kong. I wanted to know how his mother knew that we were being sent to Hong Kong when our commanding officer didn't know at that time. His reply was to the effect that, Oh well, you were issued with summer uniforms, and where else in the Far East was there to go, except perhaps, Singapore. You can't argue with the editorial page.

That's all for this time, comrades. Be good to each other and may God bless.

Philip