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Dedicated to the ideals and Comradeship
We knew in Wars and Peace and in
Our services both Home and Abroad.



THE GROUNDSHEET

The Official Publication of

The Royal Westminster Regiment Association
P.O. Box 854, New Westminster, BC V3L 4Z8

February 2002

Our Anniversary

1947- 2002

55 Years & Growing

Executive

President Len Wohlgemuth 534 Ailsa Avenue, Port Moody, BC V3H 1A6 415-6000
Past President Fred West #16 - 3397 Hastings Street, Port Coquitlam, BC V3B 4M8 942-6275
Treasurer Lee Cooke #102 - 525 Austin Avenue, Coquitlam, BC V4P 1J1 535-9093
Secretary Herb Hamm Suite 903 - 612 6th Street New Westminster BC V3L 5V2 515-7933
Editor Emeritus Ron Hurley 2999 Bonnyvale Avenue, Vancouver BC V5P 2G4 321-8464
Editor Jerry Gangur 2015 Hyannis Drive, North Vancouver, BC V7H 2E5 929-5785

Editor's Corner Jerry Gangur email: jgan@telus.net

Can you remember how you saw things when you were in your twenties. Things seemed pretty simple and life's problems could always be confronted tomorrow. In your thirties, you were probably concentrating your efforts on raising a family. The next decade you were slightly more mature and you realized that your opinion was just that and there were so many different ways to look at things and very often the other fellows ideas were just a little better. You were prepared to take leadership roles and you had the energy to back up your enthusiasm. In your fifties, you knew you were a leader, but now you were prepared to let others monopolize the limelight. You knew that things around you that needed fixing, but you had the wisdom to know that change often takes decades and your participation in future decades is far from certain. This is decade the author is currently negotiating. This is the decade where you see so many of your friends and acquaintances struggling with circumstances in life over which control is not possible. Sickness, accidents, latent illness and debilitating conditions affecting the human body in the most unkind ways is a large part of living through the fifties. Ahead are the sixties, seventies, eighties and even the nineties. Many of the veterans I've known over the years, now chronologically decades ahead of me, have become good friends and have passed on many lessons. Some say the golden years are ahead. Well, it appears that if you have your health, than the years can indeed be golden. So to all those now in their golden years, good health and long life. We need you to stick around! To those in not so good health, we truly wish you well.

Observation: Most of you are forgiving. To those who sent me letters and found that I was slow in responding or perhaps a contribution to the Groundsheet did not printed in timely fashion, please believe that in time you will receive a reply or that your contribution will appear in future issues of the Groundsheet. Sometimes life stuff interferes.

President's Report

Len Wohlgermuth

Happy New Year to all Westies. I am going to present just a short note for this Groundsheet issue.

As I review some of our accomplishments over the last year I believe we have served our Regiment and Association well. The ability to produce the **Jack Mahony** booklet and make presentations to those who served in Bosnia has required help from all members in your executive. The executive is composed of several members that have volunteered their time and services for the Association. I would like to thank the executive for their continued service. I believe that this year will prove to be one of the best for the Regiment and Association.

Our Melfa Weekend will be May 24th for the golf tournament, May 26th for the dinner, May 26th for the brunch and AGM. In the fall we will be participating in the New Westminster Candle Light Service and we hope to have a smoker in October. Additionally, we still have the V.C. Memorial Lighting to complete. We have yet to receive our funds from the gaming commission but I expect to receive word shortly. These

funds will provide for other activities. As you can see we have a fairly active year ahead of us.

As I have mentioned earlier we have received significant contributions of time and service from our executive members. To maintain this level of activity we require more members on our executive. At present we have 9 members with positions available for up to 16. Of our executive only one member is from the Regiment. The Regiment has up to 4 positions that it can fill inside the executive. I call upon the Commanding Officer to fill these positions. I also call upon other members of the association to come forward and serve. We need help and we need new and fresh ideas. With the changes happening in the world and the continued growing commitment of our Armed Forces, the Association will be required more than ever.

Pro Regie et Patria

Note. President's request on the road to being met. At February Ex meeting, Jr. Ranks was represented by Pte. **Dave Friesen.**

Members are reminded that our Executive meeting are held on the first Monday of the month. You are welcome to attend.

The Regiment..

Commanding Officer's Report LCol.. GWJ Richond,CD

Greetings

Since the events of September 11th, the world would seem to have changed... or has it? Is there, in fact, more danger in the world or have we merely been reminded that it was there all the time? Clearly, security both at home and abroad is now being addressed and we must be diligent in our efforts to protect the peace, which has been so dearly purchased by those who have served.

Now the good news! The Regiment continues to grow and is the largest reserve unit on the British Columbia mainland. We parade approximately one hundred and ten soldiers on Thursday nights and deploy around seventy soldiers on a weekend exercises. We are concurrently training in patrolling, running a machine gun course, and teaching newly sworn in Abbotsford students Basic Recruit Training.

Last year, while most Brigade units saw growth in their units of about 7%, the

Westies grew an impressive 17.5%! With our recruiting section "firing on all cylinders", we expect similar growth this year. Special thanks to Capt Chuck MacKinnon for another successful year in recruiting!

The Courtyard is on the launch pad! We have had discussions with Chilliwack Area Support Unit (ASU) and a "defense contractor" has been assigned to draft construction drawings. Once this is complete, we will break ground ASAP. It should be noted that we will require additional funding to complete the Second Phase of the Project. Contributions to this most worthwhile project can be made to the Royal Westminster Fund - care of the Armoury (530 Queens Ave, V3L 1K3).

The Annual Officers' Mess Dinner is coming! Just a reminder to those who have received an invitation, the Annual Dinner is on the 16th of February. The Guest Speaker will be the newly promoted **Major-General Fitch**. He is the Project Officer for the Land Force Reserve Restructure (LFRR) based at National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ). MGen Fitch will undoubtedly have some important remarks to make, so please RSVP ASAP to the Regimental Secretary.

In closing, I would like to mention the tireless dedication of the Museum staff. LCol (ret'd) **Basil Morgan's** service to the

Regiment has been exemplary. CO's come and CO's go, but Basil remains keeping the heart of the Regimental pride alive and well. My deepest respect and thanks for all that you've done and continue to do.

Rifle Company

Submitted by Capt. Chuck MacKinnon

The former A, B (Rifle) and Administration Companies, have been amalgamated in to a single Rifle Company. This year the Company training will be focused on Patrolling. The emphasis, this year, will be Reconnaissance Patrols. Hopefully, culminating in a Patrol Competition. The graduates of the basic Infantryman's Course this past summer, are attending the "SQ" course. This is a secondary qualification course for all Basic Infantrymen. The course covers all the Support Weapons, such as the C6 Medium Machine Gun, 60mm Light Mortar & the SRAAW (M) – Carl Gustav 84mm Anti – Armour weapon. Also in January, some of the Company will be attending the Basic Machine Gunner's Course. This course concentrates on the LMG & MMG (C-9 Light Machine Gun – 5.56mm & the C-6 Fabrique Nationale General Purpose Machine Gun –7.62mm). The HMG .50 Calibre is not taught because all of these resources are tasked overseas. A portion of the Company is also undergoing training and selection for the CRIC – Composite Reserve

Infantry Company. This Company is preparing to be a Reserve company of the Reg Force Bn that is to be deployed on Roto-12 SFOR.

Note: Maj. Louis Beglaw commands "A" Company. Major Beglaw is also the Deputy Commanding Officer. The 2IC of the Rifle Company is Capt. Ben Pong.

2 Platoon – New Westminster

Submitted by 2Lt. Shelrud, 2Pl Comd

The growth of the unit at its New Westminster location has allowed for the addition of a second rifle platoon to "A" Company. Although many of A Company's members are all new they performed well at "EX Westie Stalker". MCpl Goldsby, a section commander in 1 platoon, was the top candidate at JLC/JNCO this summer. Unfortunately Pte Carlson could not attend Exercise Westie Stalker as he was completing his support weapons component of his QL2/3 course. He was the top candidate on the QL2/3 Course. The determination and enthusiasm displayed on "Westie Stalker" is an indication of the future. The rest of the year should be exciting at The Royal Westminster Regiment.

3&4 Pl. – Aldergrove

Westminster Note: Lt. Ryan Reed and Lt. Todd Phillips command 3 & 4 Pl. Both Officers recently completed peacekeeping tours with SFOR (NATO Stabilization Force) in Bosnia.

From the AGM

The Annual General Meeting past a resolution approving an *Associate Member* category of membership. This would enable our association to invite deserving members of the public who had not served with the regiment to belong to the association. The terms of reference for this associate membership category is outlined below.

Associate Members

1. Associate members are non-voting members.
2. Associate members may be invited to join the Regimental Association by regular members of the Association following a favorable vote by the Executive.
3. Associate membership will be reviewed and approved annually by the Executive.
4. Associate members should have an interest in Military History, Regalia, Weapons and Canadian Military accomplishments, especially those of The Royal Westminster Regiment and its predecessors.
5. Associate members should also have an interest in our various areas of interest, such as Cadets, the Regimental Museum, Historical Records, Publishing and various way of organizing Projects etc.
6. Associate members may be individuals that have served in other units, or relatives of members of our Regiment and/or other

military units, and have ongoing interests of a favorable nature.

7. Associate members should be individuals that are able and willing to assist in various ways by providing expertise, knowledge, financial assistance and /or work in kind, etc.

Christmas Light Tour

As the President mentioned in his report, our application for Gaming funds has not been approved. One of the activities the executive initiated, dependent on receipt of Gaming funds was a Tour of the Xmas light in Vancouver/New Westminster area. As funds were unavailable for this activity, the executive made the decision to cancel the event. We do anticipate receiving funds in short order and will notify all well in advance of our plans for Xmas 2002

Treasurer Retires

For or so many years, **Vernon Ardagh**, was the association's treasurer. Few will ever know the many times he helped out financially and in so many other ways, without letting anyone know. Ten years ago, Vernon, asked us to find a replacement while assuring us that he would remain until this was done. We work slowly sometimes, but now Vernon can really retire. Vernon, you will be missed. Thank you for so much!!

Sick & Visiting

Jerry Gangur

A short report on the status of some of our comrades. Good friend **Jack Hogarth**, during his early days, worked with asbestos and today he suffers from asbestosis. His in Langley Memorial Hospital and he is in pretty rough shape. Jack, a special prayer is offered for you.

..... **Vernon Ardagh's** spirits are high, but he spends more time in the wheel chair than he would like and is experiencing constant back pain. We have had some enlightening conversations about some military history books he is reading. Vernon, you are a gem....**David Gowler**, we say hello to you and hope your recovery from your stroke continues..... **Nelson Scott** tells me that his daily walks get shorter and take a lot out of him. We offer both him and his wife **Nora** a warm hello. Warrant Officer **Gary Sunquist**, member of regular force attached to the unit, suffered some injuries in an automobile accident. After a short time off work, he has returned to his duties. We wish him continued and speedy recovery.... **Walter Jackson**, now in Kelowna, near his family and to you, we say hello and wish you well...

Ron Hurley, notes that he now finds it most difficult to get around, he says walking from the living room to the bathroom can prove to be a major effort. To Ron & Ruth we pass on our best...

sometimes reports he is fine other times he reports difficulties.... **Doug Morgan & Bill McIntyre** report that things are slowing down and night time driving I one of the activities that have to be avoided. To both comrades we extend our greetings: ... **Chuck Smithers**, a real fine guy, was in Royal Columbian, when I visited him, but is now in Queen's Park Center (315 McBride, New Westminster, room 331 East). To my knowledge, Chuck is the only member of our regiment to have the distinction of serving with the unit and to have been part of the Normandy D-Day landing. (Chuck was wounded while serving with the Westminster Regt. (M) and after recovering from his wounds was sent to the Cameron Highlanders as part of the reinforcements)... A serving member of the regiment, **Alan Kerekanich** was injured in an accident and is now recovering. Alan, from all of us, best wishes for a speedy return to normalcy....Someone we missed, but who was hit by the flu and missed six weeks of work, was **Mike Kelly**, a director and Sgt. with the serving bn. Nice to see you back, Mike.... Transferring from HMCS Discovery in the mid-90's, **Ian Beckett**, join the regiment. Today Ian is in St. Paul's Hospital (Van) battling cancer.... War hero (he would blush at the reference) **Ross Douglas**, is in Morgan Place, Care Home. His wife, Margaret, reveals that he is not mobile and has difficulty speaking, but his attitude and spirit remain high.... To all God bless. We are thinking of you!!!

From the Post.....

Dear Editor,

Just a word of thanks for the Mahony booklet. It brought back many memories. As an "A" Coy signaller, I did not cross the river that day, but kept company with Capt. **Jakey Hughes**. I well remember the following morning seeing Major **Mahony** resting on the ground and thinking he was dead. I also well remember the spit and polish and the heat on the day the King presented him with his VC. Major Mahony was, as were most of our officers, an officer and a gentleman., who always had the welfare of his men foremost in his mind. I consider it an honor to have served with the Westies. My wife and I were recently on a bus tour, as was **W.A. Tyo** and we did a little reminiscing.

Happy New Year to all. With luck, I might make the Melfa dinner in 2002

W. Douglas McNaughton
820 Alice Street, Cornwall, On K6H 4S6

Westminsters' War Diary. We do receive requests for this book and we regret to say, copies of the book are no longer available. We do have plans to have a history of the regiment but this will take some years to complete.

Dear Sirs,

Re: Publication of: Mahony A Canadian Hero

My father, Raymond Frank (Bob) Bethell (age 79) has lent me his copy of the above publication so I may learn more of this great man and I might add, my father served in the Westminster Regiment as well.

The publication moved me to tears, and made me that much prouder, not only of this great man, but also of my father.

My father served in "C" Company of the Westminster Regiment, and Hoskins was his platoon commander. He is a retired fisherman and resides with my mother Pat, in Port Alberni, B.C., where they have lived for over 56 years.

I would be extremely interested in knowing how I could purchase this publication, as well as the book "The Westminsters' War Diary," by Major J.E. Oldfield, M.C. The copies my father has will probably be passed down to his great grandchildren (4 at this count) and I would like to be able to have copies for myself and my family.

Thank you for your assistance in this regard.

Sincerely, Mrs. Sheila Legg (nee Bethell)
#141 -2500 Grant Rd, Prince George, BC V2K 4X9

Editor: Booklet on its way along with this issue of Groundsheet.

From the Post (cont)

The Way I Remember It..

K47614 Bill Armour

Best wishes to all our Amicos. .. With a special hi to **Fred West**.

This is an account of the activities that took place April/44 on the West Cassino front..... I believe it was also around **Valvori**, Italy, the name of which I learned from your article "A trip up the mountain" (ED. Feb., 1999 Groundsheet) The monastery could be seen across a space @ the same altitude as Valvori. I appreciated what a hot spot it was having experienced short times there. What a tough climb to get there. Sid Burton and I had the job of laying cable from an old stone mill on the river between "A" Coy and International Post up over the mountain to wherever Patrol Master Ketcheson was operating. We worked as linemen, no wireless Truck or motorcycles, only mules and Shanks pony. We left Battalion Tactical HQ @ last light one night , joined up with Mule and Reinforcement supply train led by **Ross Douglas**, headed up the rough mountain trail, arriving @ "A" Coy Signals Exchange late evening. Visited with **Jack Pitcairn**, **Bill Thorenson** and others, some sleep and off @ first light, loaded down with Signals equipment, travelled up the river to Old Stone mill. Started and spent all day laying cable, and no surprise, ran out of cable. Had to cannibalize on existing old wire. Mistakenly cut off a machine gun nest on the

mountain, restored same quickly. The Italian Marines were always helpful and good natured as I seen them. Sid and I were relieved that night on the mountain by a fellow signaller, Stienbact, when spent a cool night on the mountain, being in a dangerous spot in darkness. We spent an anxious night @ the mill awaiting a signal of completion of our cable laying,...The remainder of time in that position was to maintain the signals line between "A" Coy, the Old Mill and over the mountain we had just laid cable. We also took on the job of escort guard & guide bringing in our mule supplies and reinforcements each night from the junction of "A" Coy trail and our trail along the river. Each night @ last light a party of three of us, that is **Sid Burton**, and Italian marine named Joesph and myself would mose over to the junction and wait there for the sound of the mule train headed for "A" Coy. We'd peel off our supply mule and reinforcements and get them back to the mill, then return the mule party back to the junction. The wait could be a couple of hours and with Joesph having his ration of Grappa with him and being a sharing fellow, made these waits less painful.... One night we missed the river crossing trail, had to stop on the trail, the reinforcements being dead tired went to sleep immediately. Sid retraced and found the crossing, while the rest of us waited. Sid then returned with several Italian marines, whom practically carried the lot across the river. Those fellows were always cheery & obliging or so I found them. ... Another incident. We spent one morning and afternoon in the "A" Coy position. Our sigs line had a fault in it between the Old mild and "A" Coy

In Memoriam.....

John W. Culling (Calgary) Westminster Regiment (M) WW2
 Jack Hogarth (Surrey) Westminster Regiment (M) WW2
 Chuck Milroy (Vancouver) The Royal Westminster Regiment (Band)

I almost forgot

Sometimes things don't go according to plan and items get left out or sometimes the mind tends to get lazy. Adding to our memory of those on sick parade, we would like to say hello to **Ian Beckett**, now in St. Paul's Hospital, Rm 1042 10D (Vancouver). Ian came to us after service with HMCS Discovery. He grew fond of the regiment and the regiment benefited from his service. Ian our thoughts and prayers are with you....

MEMORIES

To those who served in WW2. While you are able to recall, share a event or happening during your war service. Your comrades will appreciate your memories and may even encourage someone else to pick up the pen and tell his story..... this invitation is also extended to Westie peacekeepers. The story can be as brief or long as you wish. We will publish. Don't worry about spelling, gremlins in the computer work hard to correct such errors.

Events not to Miss

Melfa 2002 - Annual General Meeting - Remembrance Day
 Plan to attend