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November 2009



## The GROUND SHEET

The Official Publication of  
The Royal Westminster Regiment Association

*'Dedicated to the ideals and comradeship  
we knew in wars and peace in our  
services both home and abroad.'*

**'Pro Rege et Patria'**

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**Lest We Forget**

**November 11, 2009**

**Service at the Armoury at 10:00 AM**

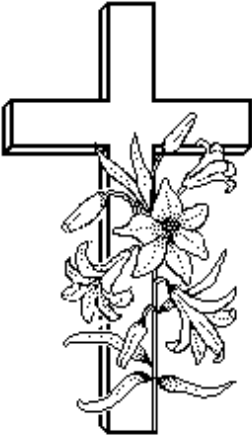
"They shall not grow old, as we who are left grow old.

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning.

....We will remember them."

**- Laurence Binyon - Act of Remembrance**



## *In Memoriam*

**Raymond Frank Bethell August 2009 Port Alberni, BC Westminster Regiment WWII**

**Ron Hurley July 2009 Vancouver Westminster Regiment WWII**

**Rigby Jones Vancouver Royal Westminster Regiment**

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### Health an Welfare

I believe that it is the resonsibility of all members of the regimental family to report both positive and negative apsects on our membership and their families. I am sure with such a young Regiment there will be births to report. So please drop me a line if you know anything.

Cpl Maitland of the Regiment was involved in a motorcycle accident and suffered injuries to his foot. We hope he is doing well.

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**Editor's Report**

The more I look at things the more I realize that change is inevitable. This is so true in any endeavour. For our Regimental family there has been several changes. This brings renewal and a fresh sense of challenge.

As editor of the Groundsheet I cannot forget our origins. This summer we lost our Editor Emeritus Ron Hurley. It was Ron who began this news letter. Jerry Gangur who took over the Groundsheet from Ron has bit more remarks about Ron.

As part of the change theme here we have our change of executive. We say goodbye to Al Morton and welcome Terry Leith as our new President. Al's tenure has been significant to our Association. Since he will be staying on as a director we will have his continue input. Terry comes from a long background in the Regiment and working in the Legion. For his Presidency I would recommend all of our support. Additionally, we have new members to the executive of Yvan Theriault, Greg Drazenovic, Terry Killam, and Rob McTavish. All former members of the Regiment from my time with the Regiment. I welcome them all from driving the necessary change.

Continuing the change theme the Regiment had a Change of Command Parade last September. The parade was well attended. A slide show, of the Change of Command, is available from our website. LCol. Haussemann tenure was quite evident in the solid and well turned out Westies on the parade. I wish LCol. Haussemann well in his future endeavours. Taking over the Regiment is LCol Poitras. I am sure all of us will joining in support him.

Len Wohlgemuth

## A Poet Uncovered

For many years Peter Kosh was someone who I met at our Melfa Weekends. Peter served with the Westminster Regiment (M) during world war two. He impresses one a quiet and withdrawn individual, but when you talk to him, you know there is something special about this man. Some years after the war and having made a tidy sum, Peter decided to visit an island in the South Pacific that so many were describing as a paradise. He had some savings, so off to Tonga our former soldier decides journey.

Peter resided in Tonga from 1975 to 1980 where he spent most of his time fishing and where he met his wife. Through an earlier encounter on Tonga, Peter became good friends with King Tupou and was on the first name basis with him and other members of the Royal Family.

### NOW WHY IS THIS ARTICLE BEING WRITTEN

One day, Peter met with me (Jerry Gangur) and handed me a folder with a raft of loose paper sheets. What I discovered, was that here was a man with a hidden talent for poetry. After three years of persistence urging, Peter finally agreed to have some of his poems published in our Groundsheet. The first of two is appearing in this issue.

During his first year on the paradise island, Christmas proved to be a lonely experience and this is the poem he penned.

## Christmas Love for the Lonely

As I look out the frosty window  
From this cold dismal room of mine,  
I can hear the church bells ringing  
To let me know it's Christmas time.

I am all alone here at Christmas,  
In this dark cold room of mine,  
I can hear the songs and laughter  
The songs and laughter of Christmas time.

My room is dark cold and lonely,  
No Christmas lights are hanging up,  
No Christmas tree to fill the corner,  
No Christmas nuts or holly hocks.

So there was a stranger with me,  
I could not believe it true  
As I heard these words from somewhere,  
God is here at Christmas too.

SO I was not alone at Christmas,  
I still could not believe it true.  
Then I heard some wings a flutter,  
You see, the angels were there too.

I will not feel lonely ever,  
I will laugh and sing with glee,  
To Know that I have God at Christmas  
And all the angles to love me.

**Written by:**

**Peter Kosh, Tonga Island  
Nov 14, 1975**

## **The Royal Westminster Regiment Association Presidents Report**

I would like to start out by thanking the Past president Alan Morton for the great job that he has done in leading the Association for the past three years. Also thanks to his directors. I look forward to keeping up the standards of the Association, and working with a hard working executive

Melfa was a busy weekend this year with the Rededication of the replacement Plaques for the Victoria Cross winners Konowal and Mahoney. The attendance at the dinner was down slightly but went well. Golf was down from the previous year, although the golfers had a good time, with good weather.

The association went on Parade on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September with the Regiment at the Change of Command from LCOL Haussmann to LCOL Poitras. It was an impressive parade and the Regiment is to be congratulated on their performance.

We are preparing for the Remembrance Day parade at the Armoury, and I would urge all association members to attend and swell the ranks of the Association on parade. We have been locating a few of our long lost members and they are spreading the word about joining your Association. To them I say, keep up the good work.

I would like to mention that a big event will be coming up in the next few years and that is the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Regiment. There will be more about this in future editions of the Groundsheet.

Respectfully

Terry Leith

Pro Rege Et Patria

# The Regiment

## CO's Report to the Groundsheet

I am honoured to write to you for the first time in my capacity as the commanding officer. It should come as no surprise that the unit continues to operate at an unprecedented tempo. There is not enough room here for me to mention everything so I will try to hit on some highlights.

In May, the Westies provided the key command positions (CO, DCO, Ops O, one rifle company commander and the CSM of Administration Company) for a composite reserve battlegroup on Exercise Western Defender in Suffield, Alberta. This was a significant experience as it was the first time in decades where a large reserve battlegroup was given the support to do the job including the latest computer and technical aids in the operations centre and armoured vehicle support in the form of a Light Armoured Vehicle 3 (LAV 3) company from the PPCLI. It was a steep learning curve for all, but we must have done OK because so good were we the enemy never made a stand against us. All were praised by the Commander of 1 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group, Colonel Andre Corbould who just happens to be the grandson of the wartime Westie CO, Gordon Corbould.

There was not much rest for the Westies over the summer with large amounts of the unit tasked to teach or attending courses. As well, the unit continued to conduct "Connect with Canadians" activities such as the Hyack Festival, Cloverdale Rodeo, Salmonbellies Salute to Soldiers, and the Abbotsford Airshow. Fast-paced preparations for the Change of Command Parade and clearances for the Westies tasked to support the Olympics were the focus of those not otherwise tasked.

The soldiers' efforts paid off on courses this summer. At a graduation ceremony at the Western Area Training Centre in Wainwright attended by LCol Haussmann, Westie students won 7 out of the available 12 awards for all of Western Area...Regular and Reserve Forces! This caused the CO of the Calgary Highlanders (the Adjutant's brother) to quip to LCol Haussmann during the parade, "What are you feeding these guys? Maybe there should be drug testing."

In September, we hit the ground running. With minimum drill and practice, the Regiment conducted an excellent Change of Command Parade. All ranks including the Old Guard were sad to say farewell to LCol Haussmann. In him you could find that perfect balance of youthful vigour, intelligence and genuine love of the troops. I want to thank him once again for presenting me with such a fine unit of motivated soldiers.

As I write this, a composite team of reservists captained by Westie WO Mike Bergan just won as top overall team at the Canadian Forces Small Arms Competition beating all of the regular and reserve force teams entered. Also, we have 50 Westies involved in operations both foreign and domestic with 23 in the process of deploying to Afghanistan and 27 as part of the Olympic Security Force. This leaves us with a considerably diminished unit on the ground. The challenge now is to train with what we've got, keeping the soldiers interested and maintaining our high standards in the face of some limited budget reductions. These are all things that Westies can easily overcome and still shine brilliantly.

The training focus for the next few months will be on individual battle task standards. My longer term future plans include pushing the expansion into Aldergrove until we have a functioning rifle company there, and helping to improve the Melfa Celebrations. I am also very keen on the formation of a "Regimental Society" which should greatly assist us in strengthening and growing of all elements of the entire Regimental Family. I look forward to hearing your ideas and working with all members in making that so.

Pro Rege et Patria

Doug Poitras  
Lieutenant Colonel  
Commanding Officer

## Our Cadets

**1789 Agassiz** - No Report.

**2316 New Westminster** - No Report

**1838 Maple Ridge** - No Report.

**2822 Surrey** - No Report

**1922 Aldergrove** - No Report.

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### Are Your Dues Up To Date?

The Royal Westminster Regiment Association depends on your dues and donations. Yearly dues are \$15 and a Life Membership is \$100. How about a tax deductible donation? You can identify where you want the donation to go. The Future Fund, Cadets, Health & Welfare, or whatever you feel is worthwhile. Whatever you support, it is appreciated. Send in your dues today. Thanks.

### MIA/AWOL

Jules Beresh  
Fred Duthie  
Maurice Fox  
Kirsten Luomala

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### **MELFA GOLF 2009**

The golf was attended by 9 Golfers. The weather was good and we enjoyed a beer and sandwich and good fellowship. The results are as follows:

Low Gross Member: Dan Bourke 85 gross

Low Net Member: Terry Leith 74 net

Low Gross Serving Member: Jon Kim 88 gross

Long Drive: Doug Poitras

Closest to the Pin: Des Carr

A special thanks to Stan Conway for coming out and doing the scoring.

Next year Alan Morton has agreed to take over the running of the Golf Tournament. Thanks Alan

Terry Leith

## FINACIAL STATEMENT 2008

### Balance Sheet

#### **Assets**

Bank Statement	\$ 95.22
A/R Van Foundation	<u>\$ 6,642.21</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$6,4737.43</b>

#### **Liabilities**

Forward 1 Jan 08	\$ 7,453.73
<u>Loss 2008</u>	<u>\$ &lt;716.30&gt;</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 6,737.43</b>

### Statement of Income

Vancouver Foundation	\$ 6,642.21
Accoutrements	\$ 425.00
Dues	\$ 510.00
Melfa Weekend	\$ 4,339.91
Afghanistan Boxes	\$ 1,100.00
Donations	\$ 250.00
Bank Interest	<u>\$ 2.09</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$13,269.21</b>

### Statement of Expenditures

Accoutrements	\$ 3,292.08
Groundsheet	\$ 2,813.96
Health and Welfare	\$ 188.83
Melfa Weekend	\$ 5,325.82
Afghanistan Boxes	\$ 1,100.00
Remembrance Day	\$ 328.50
Sundry: Website/PO Box	\$ 379.74
Afghanistan Certificates	<u>\$ 556.58</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,985.51</b>



### Budget 2009 Income

	Donations	\$ 600.00
	Dues	\$ 2,000.00
I	Interest	\$ 5.00
	Vancouver Foundation	\$ 2,500.00
	Melfa Weekend	\$ 3,000.00
	Life Memberships	\$ 200.00
	Accoutrements –Sales	\$ 1,000.00
	John Ford Bursary	<u>\$ 250.00</u>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,555.00</b>

### Budget 2009 Expenditures

	Regimental Grant	\$ 500.00
	Afghanistan Packages	\$ 500.00
	Health and Welfare	\$ 200.00
	Cadet Corps	\$ 1,000.00
	Certificates	\$ 200.00
	Accoutrements – Purchase	\$ 1,000.00
	Memorial Preservation	\$ 300.00
	Change Over	\$ 400.00
	Poppy Fund	\$ 100.00
	Future Fund	\$ 600.00
	Groundsheet	\$ 3,400.00
	Melfa Weekend	\$ 3,000.00
	Sundry	\$ 225.00
	<u>John Ford Bursary</u>	<u>\$ 250.00</u>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,675.00</b>

## **Tribute to Ron Hurley 1921-2009**

Most of us would like to somehow leave this world a little bit better on our departure than when we entered it. Ron Hurley, soldier, athlete, husband, father and grandfather, in his final days, must have looked back on his life with a sense of pride, knowing that he did make a difference. Raised in Penticton at age 18, Ron joined the Westminster Regiment in 1939. During the regiments' stay in Canada, Ron excelled in track & field and was destined to accumulate numerous athletic awards. This outstanding performance continued in military sports meets throughout wartime Europe. Sgt Hurley served with the regiment throughout the Italian campaign and continued doing so until receiving a serious chest wound on December 14, 1944 in Northeast Italy.

After wars end, Ron devoted much of his time in service and support of the regimental association. Like anything he seemed to participate in, Ron gave it his all. During the years of voluntary service with the association he served as vice-president, president and for many years edited and published the Groundsheet, our regimental association newsletter.

A Celebration of Life was organized by Ron's family on July 25. His wife, Ruth, was able to sit back and witness a magnificent production of Ron's life as remembered by his five sons.

This is one Westie that will be missed by all of us.

Jerry Gangur

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### **Task 309**

Salem Alkem (fellow Westies), finally our deployment training has completed. For those who do not know 30 Westies have been in Edmonton, AB & Shilo, MN attending the work up training for TF 3-09 since the beginning of February. We have participated in the review and firing of all the basic platoon weapons and personal weapons. Some of the soldiers have attended vehicle training on the RG-31, T-LAV, LAV III as well as the AVHS and Air brakes courses. The Westies also conducted Trauma Casualty Care Course, Convoy Training, C-IED training, application and the directing of artillery fire, attack helicopters, Ground support aircraft etc.

During Sept and Oct 09 we deployed into Theatre. There are almost 5000 Canadian soldiers, sailors and airmen to supplement the ISAF Task Force in Kandahar. The Westies are employed in various jobs. They are employed in the following elements: Battle Group (Fighting element using LAV III's); Force Protection working with the National Support Element providing the needed security and protection of our ground convoys; CIMIC – Civilian and Military Cooperation; and the OMLT – Observer Mentor Liaison Team, assisting and working alongside the Afghan National Army..

Our deployment into theatre took an average of 30 hrs traveling from North America to Europe to the Middle east and finally into Afghanistan. After reading the Regiments War Diary, I'm not sure which

would be worse the flight or the sea voyage in the Mediterranean. Most of us arrived while Afghanistan was experiencing a cooling trend. It was 40-45C during the day versus 50-60C. The travel is a major shock to your body plus the long travel, jet lag etc. Upon our arrival we went through an Arrival Assistance Group reviewing our administration, issuing of kit for the theatre, and attending lectures on Operational Security, Counter Narcotics, and reviewing basic Tactics and Techniques in dealing with Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) etc.

The movement to our Forward Operating Bases took place with support by our Canadian Air Force. Our Chinook pilots providing the airlift and protection by our Griffons, we departed KAF and headed across the rural country side of Afghanistan. The countryside spotted with grape drying huts on the horizon as you rush across the fields of grapes and Marijuana. Seeing Afghans herding their sheep an occasional camel train followed by mud straw walls and many various compounds which spot the countryside. Before you know it the Chinook helicopter is flaring and touching down and it is time to disembark. Besides the blazing heat the dusty conditions are what strike you about this place. The sand so fine its like talcum powder.

I was met by my predecessors, members of the Rotation 7 OMLT. They are happy to see us for they know that it signals the last few days of their tour. The next few days the hand over transpires between Rotation 7 and our Rotation 8 members. There is still quite a bit of acclimatization going on between getting use to the heat, the languages (Dari, Pashtun and French Canadian), the locals and the different amenities available. What is interesting is to overhear the Canadian Veterans talking about how much has changed since i.e. 2006. That road wasn't there before, people have moved back to this area etc. All these comments very positive about Canadian Soldiers impact and advancements that have occurred in Afghanistan, it seems we are making a difference.

However, my camp is surrounded by walls and barbed wire. Intermediate machine guns, tanks and LAV's provide the local perimeter security. The security also supplemented with dog handlers and the private security firm "Blue Hackle". Retired Gurkha soldiers acting as security guards. The soldiers here walking around with helmets, body armour and carrying weapons. You are reminded that the camp has been shot at, rocket attacked over the last few months. Your bunk space is surrounded by reinforced concrete. Then there is the constant roar of jets that you can hear but not see because navigation lights would make them a target. The periodic small arms fire or the occasionally loud bang of an explosion or artillery pieces firing in the distance.

My job is to support and mentor the local ANA. I'm employed as the S2/S3 or Intelligence and Operations Officer. I work in the Command Post providing information for our Officer Commanding our OMLT team. The war is clearly going on as you hear about the IED's that are blown in place, injuries and Troops in contact with the enemy. Your ear pricked to the radio transmissions to ensure it is not a member of your team or the OMLT. You hear about the wanton regard for life and property by the Taliban who are threatening the innocent people who are just trying to make money to raise and feed a family.

You learn to communicate and try to get the Afghan's to help themselves. Reminding them and yourself that eventually ISAF might leave Afghanistan. Keeping the Taliban busy here eliminating their leadership and their networks helping ensure and making it difficult for this conflict to leave this part of the world.

You also know that the RCMP has traced Opium from Afghanistan to Toronto. The silk trade route geographical still survives but the goods have changed from silk to drugs. It is early on for my time here. There will be many challenges ahead. I hope that it will continue to be a positive experience but with some in trepidation knowing that it is all very real and that the days that there is a mistake in judgment can lead to the loss of a soldier's life. I hope to hear from some of you and my thoughts will be with you this Remembrance Day.

