



The GROUND SHEET

THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF
THE ROYAL WESTMINSTER REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

104th — 47th — 131st — The Royal Westminster Regt.

Dedicated to the Ideals and Comradeship We knew in Two World Wars

Vol. 25, No. 3

BOX 854, NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C. V3L 4Z8

JULY - AUGUST

ANOTHER MAN'S VIEWPOINT

In the July 2nd issue of the Vancouver Sun, McKenzie Porter, a Toronto columnist, wrote a most provocative article which happened to strike my fancy. He starts out by saying "In one of his recent book reviews, a leader of our lispng literati describes routine army training as a madness of the military mind." Porter goes on "ever since I was demobilized from the British Army in 1945, wearing among my gongs the Long Service Medal, I have winced at the number of writers who look upon sailors, soldiers, and airmen as lunatics or clowns. Universities and publishing houses teem with so-called intellectuals who scoff at our martial traditions even though that very freedom of speech is fertilized by the blood of men who died for democracy on the field of battle.

"Colonel Blimp, a pudding headed, dumpling bellied, sabre rattling butcher, is the stereotype of the officer corps as seen through the foggy spectacles of lecturers in English and essayists for arty magazines. The Good Soldier Schweik, another fictitious character, a Czech malingerer, scrounger, draggletail and funk, personifies the army private who arouses admiration, affection and amusement in the breasts of pedants and belletrists.

"Even those few savants who do deign to don khaki in a national emergency rarely see anything manly in their comrades. Alfred Earle Birney, a Canadian professor and poet, whose Second World War novel *Turvey*, has just been revived, wrote in a spirit of merrymnt about the sort of soldier who in real life would never be allowed forward of latrine fatigues in the pay corps. Like most novelists who write condescending studies of soldiers, Birney sat out his war in non-combat duties. Widespread disdain of military ideals by tax supported men of letters has influenced liberal politicians in Canada to a point at which they are shamefaced about the armed forces."

Porter continues in his article to say, "Even Conservative politicians try to pretend that national defence is a thing of the past. Out of 12 candidates at the last Progressive Conservative leadership convention only one, Flora McDonald, dared to speak of our neglected fighting men. The others observed the unwritten taboo against reference to the services, a taboo arising from a fear of losing the votes of the dotng mummies and mawkish daddies of boys of military age.

"According to popular sentiments puffed up by pacifist ink swingers and tub thumpers, one must not speak of men at arms lest the memories or prospects of war spoil Joe Doakes' dinner and keep him awake at night wondering whether its

better to be Red or dead.

"The present government of Canada squeamishly hides the Armed Services so that citizens will not be reminded of their fearsome purpose and staggering cost.

"More than twenty years have elapsed since I last saw a column of infantry marching through the streets in full battle order. If we do happen to see a soldier nowadays he is almost invariably a militiaman parading in honour of some petty anniversary and blushing in an old-fashioned musical comedy uniform. This is a spectacle that always starts the intelligentsia whinnying and sniggering and exclaiming 'how quaint.'

"So the Russians creep up on us through Italy, Portugal, Ulster, Arabia and Africa. The Chinese inch toward us through Albania and Southeast Asia. Our two enemies, in the most audacious act of strategic deception since D-Day, pretend to quarrel and through their seeming division they lull us to a false sense of security.

"While the pinkish pedagogues and pundits giggle at the brass hats over their sherry, we become even more tightly surrounded by an ever encroaching horde of barbarians.

"Our armed contribution to NATO on democracy's front line is the smallest of all countries save Iceland and Luxembourg. Our single brigade in NATO of 3200 men has been relegated to a second-line role. Our peace-keeping missions of 2000 men in Cyprus, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights are largely supply and communications troops.

"But we refuse to re-deploy our services in the formation best suited to their size and unified character, combined operations or commando units. We refuse to introduce two years compulsory military service for able-bodied youth aged 18.

"Instead, we go listening to academic shirkers and literary charlatans. And we go on raising pale, skinny youths, mop-headed fops in high-heeled shoes, bangles, necklaces, embroidered shifts and cod-piece panties; gilded ragamuffins forever rocking and rolling and ceaselessly strumming their tawdry guitars; toe-tapping, thumb-snapping, lock-tossing popinjays, who would run away screaming and wringing their lily-white hands if ever they were charged by a resolute troop of disgusted Girl Guides."

Undoubtedly Mr. Porter was hot under the collar about his subject, what do you think? As Earl Cameron used to say on the C.B.C. Viewpoint: "I appreciate receiving your comments. What is your opinion?"

THE GROUNDSHEET

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MAIL BAG

Pat McCarthy writes from Toronto with news of that citie's Melfa reunion. I'll quote from his letter to let you all know how the Toronto chapter celebrated the Melfa. "On May 8th we held our Melfa Reunion Dinner and Dance at Branch 344 of the Royal Canadian Legion here in Toronto. Our turn-out was approximately 40 people, of which 15 were Westminster Regiment comrades with their wives. We are really a very small group but what we lack in size, we make up for in spirit, we are real Westies!

We had one new member out this year with his wife from Peterborough, he was an "A" company man and had not heard anything of the Regiment or Association since his discharge in 1946. His name is Len Welch of 53 Maryvale Road, Peterborough, Ontario. Pat goes on to ask if I was his platoon officer at the Melfa. Yes, that was me Pat, and I am sorry I don't know what happened to Sgt. Brian Peel who was wounded at the same time. Perhaps one of our readers with a good memory will remember. As you say Pat, the war diary does not cover the detail too well because there was a lot went on that day and the diary could only hit the high spots. Pat comments that "For instance when we cleared the house at the top of the steep bank, a shell blew us to the ground, and one of the lads in our section lost his leg. We believe the shell came from a self-propelled gun, or Jerry tank just ahead of us (so it did not just yield a few young and aged Italians as stated in the war diary)." Pat goes on to wish the Association the best for 1976 and assures us of continued support from the Toronto Chapter. Thanks, Pat and the rest of your Torontonians, you are real people and with the kind of enthusiasm you have we can't help but keep trying to have the Association grow.

W. Haines writes from Vernon enclosing his dues and says he enjoys reading *The Groundsheet*. He mentions that R. Dobbie was up to visit him from Penticton and that they drove up to Grinrod to visit G. Siedler as they were both together at the Melfa where Gus was badly wounded in the arm. Apparently somebody found a bottle of Vino and the three of them re-fought the war all over again even though some of the names had suffered the passing of time. Enclosed were a couple of pictures with the comment "I wish we looked like that now." Don't we all!!!

Ron Mannering passes on an interesting letter from his friends in Holland. You may remember Ron wrote a very interesting story of his visit to the Dutch location of the Regiment's last action at the end of the war.

His friends write that they enjoy receiving *The Groundsheet* and that they are preparing a set of vehicle signs as used by the Canadians while in Holland, these will become part of our Museum display and will be unique as I am sure that no

other Museum can boast such a display. Thank you, Klaas Gè' and Elli van der Laan.

We do get results! R. Hassard of 3434 College Ave., Regina, Sask., writes to keep us up to date on his address. He had been reported "lost" in a recent issue. Glad to hear from you. He is in the Corps of Commissionaires in Regina and is working for the Police Dept. on parking meters, so watch out those of you who plan on visiting Regina. He says that in no way has he ever forgotten the best outfit in the Canadian Army, but points out that it took the help of a lot of prairie boys . . . agreed.

Last fall Norm Brault visited and they gathered a bunch of the South Saskatchewan Regiment boys, who had transferred to the Westies, together for a party. Present were R. Hassard, George Carlson, Norm Brault, Jim Kyle and Bill Kullman who by the way was with Headquarters Coy. Others who live in Regina but were not at this party are Henry Klus, ex B Coy, Armand Fisher, A Coy, and W. Ridell. Apparently Jim Kyle tried to get together a bunch to drive out for the Melfa but time did not permit plans to be made. Try again in 1977 fellows, for we are planning a huge reunion, but you will read more of that in later issues. R. Hassard encloses some good photos which were given to him by Tommy Hayes the summer before he died. We hope to use some of these in an issue soon.

Walter Lyle just returned from a holiday in Scotland . . . where else for Walter? He reports that he was visiting Edinburgh Castles and noted with some pride, that engraved on the fine monument to all those of Scottish ancestry who died in the war, were the names of four Westminsters: Gamer, Alfred, K45881, Northwest Europe; Bayne, David T., K47385, Italy; McKenzie, Angus M., K47659, Italy; and Thompson, David, K73951, Italy. Thank you, Walter, for taking the time to note the facts for our readers.

A copy of the Seaforth Highlanders News Letter came in the mail and it contains an item which is well worth repeating here, for although it was from a speech made by Prince Philip, the Colonel in Chief of the Seaforths on the occasion of the presentation of the colours in 1962, the sentiments expressed are applicable to any Regiment and any Association. "A Regiment is part family, part fighting machine, part club and part brotherhood. . . . The spirit of a Regiment, built up over the years . . . inspires acts of courage and endurance far beyond the capabilities of any ordinary group of people." I am sure that all of us can attest to those opinions and recognise that OUR Regiment and OUR Association is an exclusive club to which very few can claim membership, don't underestimate the value of keeping our Association alive, we are unique, we are the Westies.

Allan Coe, *Editor*

MELFA GOLF TOURNAMENT

More than 40 ardent golfers participated in the annual Melfa Day Golf Tournament. It must be said that the 40 started out with greater enthusiasm and vigor than was exhibited when they finished. One gasping stalwart was heard to exclaim that either the hills were getting steeper or his legs were getting shorter. Another christened the course Cardiac Meadows. It was a good day however and we were blessed with great weather for golf, a light breeze, slightly cloudy but dry and cool. Those who completed the 18 holes swore that by next year they would be in better shape. The Calloway Handicap showed the following winners:

The Melfa Trophy — Low Net — Bert Stevens — 73
 Second — Low Net — Barney Jones — 73
 Third — Low Net — Harold Leskon — 74
 Fourth — Low Net — Joe Bush — 74
 Fifth — Low Net — Ross Douglas — 74

The Chuck Marshall Trophy — Low Gross —
 George McGregor — 84
 Second — Low Gross — Scotty Low — 88
 Third — Low Gross — Stan Moorehouse — 93
 Fourth — Low Gross — John Reeves — 94
 Longest Drive — 239 Yards — Terry Leith
 Closest to Pin — 18 Inches — Robbie Robinson
 Visitors Low Net — Hank Priestler — 75
 Visitors Low Gross — Eric Helmer — 88
 Consolation — Bill Robson

The prizes were presented in the Clubhouse after the match, while the trophies were presented with great ceremony at the Melfa Dinner in the Legion Hall, New Westminster. A special vote of thanks goes to the hard working committee who put in many hours arranging all of the many details which go into making an event like this run smoothly. Thanks, Barney Jones, Scotty Low and Ron Mannering.

D COMPANY REUNION SUNDAY, AUGUST 1st CIRCLE 6 RANCH

D'Arcy Baldwin and his wife Elsie kindly extend a cordial invitation to all members of the Association and their wives to attend the annual reunion of D Coy. Once again this affair is to be held at the Baldwin's home at Lindell Beach (Curtis Lake). The date is Sunday, August 1st from 1:30 p.m. until you go home. D'Arcy mentions that sleeping accomodation is available in a good warm barn with friendly cows.

Participants usually bring their own rations and rum issues and the invitation is extended to any old Westminster Regiment members who wish to attend, along with wives and offsprings.

A brief Memorial Service is usually held at 5 p.m.

Ice will be available and I understand that barbecueing facilities are there for those of you who fancy yourselves as chefs.

MELFA DINNER ANOTHER WINNER

This year's Melfa Dinner was not perhaps the largest in attendance that we have ever had but if enthusiasm was any indicator, it was certainly one to be remembered by the 100 who showed up to meet with old cronies, swap a few tall tales of their prowess in various fields of endeavour, there were even some war stories if you can believe that.

The Canadian Legion were excellent hosts and provided a fine meal well served by pleasant waitresses.

At our table we got to discussing other meals we have had and a typical army menu was described as follows:

Breakfast: Eggs a la Powdered Scrambelled

Bacon Limp avec Grease

Toast cold Margarine

Tea

Lunch: M and V (Lots of V, not so much M)

Potatoes Mashed with Skin

Bread Demoulded

Tea

Dinner: Soup Consomme of Socks

Bully Beef or Dehydrated Mutton

Brussel Sprouts or Turnip (Dehydrated)

Pudding, Rice, Raisinless

Biscuits, Hard Tack

Two V Cigarettes

Tea

The problem was always how to get three courses and tea into two mess tins, it usually made an interesting gourmet combination.

The Melfa Dinner is one of those gatherings which are very difficult to write about, for it means so many different things to each individual person. One thing it is, though, it is one of the few evenings in a year when you can meet with old friends and for a few short hours recreate and in some small way recapture the magic that was ours for those eventful years. Those years when we were so dependent on each other, when a man was measured not by how much money he made or what his title was but by a much more significant measure, that he was there and that he was your buddy and that you lived, suffered and perhaps even died together. That's what the Melfa Dinner means.

494 STILL OWE DUES

There was a popular song with the title "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered" which we in the army paraphrased into something less polite. I promised the Executive that I would remain polite in this request. We have bitched at you, we have bothered you and I must admit we are bewildered . . . Honestly, we do not know how to get across the message that we need your dues in order to survive! To date we have 256 paid up members of the Association — 256 out of 750! In other words 494 of you haven't paid your 1976 dues yet! As we have said so many times, *The Groundsheet* costs money to have printed and if we didn't have the help of Ruth Meek, whose husband was an old Westie, to print the issues at a very minimal cost, there is no way we could keep sending it to you. Hospital visits are getting more and more expensive as more of our buddies are in hospital. However enough of this. Please do it now! Send in your 1976 dues. Its only \$5 for the full year.

SOME IDEAS FOR SUMMER READING**BODYGUARD OF LIES — Anthony Cave Brown**

It is too bad that this book is only 800 pages in length. I am sure that you will find it as fascinating a story as I did and wish there was as much again. It is an extraordinary, true story of Intelligence activities and the clandestine war of intricate deception that hid the secrets of D Day from Hitler and the German High Command, consequently sealing the Allied victory in Europe. In 1945 a 30 year moratorium was placed on the release of the majority of information which is revealed in this account. It clearly shows, those of us who were over there, how little we really knew of the vast scope of activity that went on in so many other areas —Vernon Ardagh

THE ULTRA SECRET — F. W. Winterbotham

The fascinating story of how the British Secret Service broke the unbreakable German machine cyphers and as a consequence had a complete knowledge of even the most secret German orders. "How it made some Allied generals look like super geniuses, and others like bloody fools." A Dell pocket book.

THE DOUBLE CROSS SYSTEM — J. C. Masterman

A top secret intelligence report revealing the full inside story of how the British controlled the German espionage network in Britain during World War II. A plan that enables the British to establish a double agent system through which they actively ran the German espionage system in their country . . . unique in the annals of intelligence. An Avon Pocket Book.

WESTMINSTER'S WAR DIARY

There are still a few copies of the Regimental War Diary left for those of you who haven't got a copy. This excellent history of our Regiment from mobilization in 1939 through the years of preparation to the war in Italy and Northwest Europe is a "must" for every ex-Westie's library. It is available while supplies last at \$5.50 from Ron Mannerling, our secretary.

RETORNO IN ITALIA

"Return to Italy 1943-1945, 30 Years After," is the title of a souvenir booklet now in the process of being printed exclusively for members of our Association. The work is a culmination of the efforts of Ron Hurley and Ian Douglas who were the Regimental Association delegates with a Canadian contingent who under the auspices of the Department of Veterans Affairs made a pilgrimage to the battlefields and cemeteries of Italy in April of 1975. Both Ron and Ian have painstakingly collected photographs and memoirs of the tour for inclusion in this worthwhile keepsake. The booklet contains their comments and memories of seeing the old battlefields revisited after 30 years. The books will be mailed to each of you with the request that you remit \$2.00 to cover the cost of printing and mailing. Ron's story of the big bottle of VINO is alone worth the price. Mailing should take place late this summer . . . watch for your copy. A few extras will be available for those of you who wish to send it as a gift. We would strongly advise ordering extra copies early as the book will not be reprinted and when the first offering is gone, that will be it.

WHAT BECAME OF KELLY?

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