



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. 26, No. 1

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

JAN. - FEB. 1977

Annual General Meeting

OF THE ROYAL WESTMINSTER REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

**THURSDAY
MARCH 17, 1977
8:00 P.M.**



**Come and express an opinion
on the running and future of
YOUR Association!**

**★ ELECTION OF OFFICERS
FOR THE YEAR OF 1977**

OFFICERS & SERGEANTS MESS, ARMOURY, NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C.

THE GROUNDSHEET

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MAIL BAG

Thanks to all of your letters, cards and memos we start off 1977 with an overflowing Mail Bag. Joe Tattersall wins the honours of being our most distant correspondent. Joe writes from Yorkshire to confirm his kind offer to produce a drawing for our Melfa Dinner. Many thanks, Joe, and we all hope that you are feeling better.

Dozens of letters have come in praise of the *Ritorno in Italia* booklet sent to all of you by your Association. Don't forget to send in your two dollars to help us pay for the printing and mailing.

It was encouraging to hear from so many of you who had not written for a long time . . . great to hear from you! Godfrey Catherwood, Doug Taylor, H. L. Jones, Tony Ricone, C. G. Acaster, Joe Strawson, A. Guétre, Sandy Rollo, Ken Godwin, Ken Clarkson, C. Appleton, George Annis, H. M. Anderson, and dozens of others. Nice notes from Padre Owen and Dr. Wilder. Jack Mahony writes from London, Ontario, to commend Ron and Ian on their effort and makes the comment that "one returned from the pilgrimage to Italy with the definite feeling that our soldiers rest in dignity."

One thing which struck me was the large number of ex-47th Bn. veterans who took the time and effort to write expressing their appreciation in being sent the book. What a grand group of supporters we have in the 47th. . . . One of our regular correspondents, Mrs. Caroline Harrington, writes from San Diego to report that her husband John had his 90th birthday last year. John is a 47th veteran and enjoyed the book *Ritorno in Italia*. If any of you 47th would like to write John, his address is 4530 Edgeware Road, San Diego, California 92116. Jim Mackie of Coquitlam, another 47th, writes to say that he was wounded on April 24, 1915, more than 61 years ago. He is now 88 and is pretty well confined to his home. Jim writes with the finest handwriting that I have seen in years. Geo. A. Dyson, ex-47th from Victoria, also writes to say how he enjoyed the booklet and *The Groundsheet*. William Woods from Kelowna 47th also drops a note to say he thinks the book great. Carl Prosser, an ex-47th from Collingwood, Ontario, says, "I found it very interesting reading, quite a change from the war we fought sixty years ago."

Fred Evans writes from Kelowna to report that all the ex-Westies up there are fine and threatens to be at the Melfa this year for sure. Fred tells us that another Fred, Fred Day, is catching all the fish locally and that Mike Strangher has moved to Sicamous. Claude Nicol, another Okanaganite, tells us that he would like to go back and see Italy for himself, and pro-

poses another charter. Perhaps Walter Lyle would like to look into the possibility of organizing another one if there is any interest. I believe it is over ten years since we last had our Charter.

Glen Gates has a good thought. He suggests that perhaps the local newspaper, *The Columbian*, might well consider printing Ron and Ian's story, we will have to sound them out, Glen. Doug Allen writes from his new address in Surrey, after leaving Mayne Island. We hope to see you more often now that you are back on the mainland, Doug. Thanks to Lloyd Stuart of Hardisty, Alberta, who sends in an extra donation to help cover the costs of the booklet. Lloyd mentions that he was originally with D Coy but went with H.Q. Coy where he was a driver for the Tech Adj. until the end of the war.

Lloyd mentions that over the years his original cap badge has gone A.W.O.L. and where can he get another. Cec Grinstead and a couple of others have also asked about cap badges. The original Westminster Regiment cap badges are now collector items and no longer available. We are making inquiries about the cost of obtaining the current badge which is much the same as our WW2 badge, except, of course, it is the Royal Westminster Regiment. Any of you who may have an extra WW2 badge may consider the following request passed on to me from Ian Douglas. A collector in Guernsey has written asking if we can provide him with a Westminster Regiment cap badge as used in WW2 and a cap badge of the 131st Bn. If anyone can help, please contact Ian Douglas, Royal Westminster Regiment Association, Box 854, New Westminster, B.C.

W. A. Reynor of Leduc, Alberta, inquires if anyone has been in touch with Walter J. Ryan of C Coy, please forward his address to Box 562, Leduc.

Roger Hassard, our faithful correspondent from Regina, sends his usually interesting and informative letter. Roger remarks that the book brought back many memories of such things as canals, and wine and mud and fleas and the time an 88 shell clipped a row of grape vines above his and Lon Days' heads, showering them with unripe grapes. Thanks for your letters, Roger, keep them coming.

Nice to hear from Al Little, who worked so hard for so many years on Association business. Al is now living in Nanaimo; G. Harkness of Trail; Ted Burnby, Vernon; Wick Stewart at Kitimat; Ernie Dayton, Winnipeg; Vic Wilson, Naramata. Vic plans on making a slide series of routes we took. Gordon Radmore, Mission, writes a much appreciated letter for which we thank you, Gordon, and good luck in 1977.

Jim Delaney writes from Verdun, Quebec, and a nice donation from Gord Corman of Millgrave, Ontario. Nelson Scott who has only recently retired sends in an extra donation for the book. G. B. Eaton writes that the book arrived at his home on Armistice Day. "It seemed a fitting day to read about our fallen comrades and the memory it brought back of many forgotten events. He also comments that he met Pee Wee Graham on a barge in the Arctic Ocean last summer. It's a small world!

There are many more letters, but no more space!

Thanks again to all of you for your most welcome letters, keep them coming.

ALLAN COE, Editor

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In just a few weeks it will be time for our Annual General Meeting, March 17th to be exact. This is our one opportunity of the year to have you express your opinions and give guidance to the Executive of your Association. Over the past several years the attendance has been between 30 to 40, hardly an overwhelming indication of support. Why don't each and every one of you make a determined effort to be present this year to speak your piece to indicate to your elected representatives just where your Association should be directing its efforts. I have been most gratified at the support given me as President in 1976 by the hard-working Executive and Committee Members. I know of no other like organization which can boast of a more dedicated group of men who give unselfishly of their time and efforts as do your current slate of Executive Members. I will be giving a full report of activities at the Annual Meeting, why not donate a couple of hours and join us?

You will read in another part of *The Groundsheet* the details of a presentation I accepted on behalf of our Association. This presentation was made by the Charles A. Dunn Post #7 of the American Legion for support we had given them in establishing their Post Colour Party.

Plans are already well in hand for an extra effort for this year's Melfa Dinner. Chairman Bas. Morgan has been busy selecting his committees for this year's event and from the reports I have received it could well be one of the "Best Yet." May I request that if Bas. calls on you for assistance please give him your support.

I have been pleased this year to note an upswing in the interest of many members who have been absent from Association activities for the past few years . . . welcome back, after all we are a rather exclusive group who are unfortunately getting fewer each passing year, the veterans of W.W. 1 and W.W. 2.

One final reminder, your Association's finances are very limited, so won't you please send us your Dues for 1977 because without your assistance we cannot continue to do such things as publish *The Groundsheet*. —STAN MOORHOUSE

EUROPEAN JUNKET

It has been said that anyone making an overnight stop in a foreign country immediately qualifies as expert; a week usually results in a book and month sets up that individual as an undisputed authority on the country in question.

Having spent nearly six weeks in Germany, Holland and England last fall I promise not to bore you with my memoirs, but I did think that a few random observations might prove of interest.

Most of the time was spent in Germany on business, the first thing which impressed me was the obvious wealth of the country. I don't think I saw more than half a dozen Volkswagens, everyone seems to be driving Mercedes or B.W.W.s. The Autobahns are everywhere and nobody drives less than 90 m.p.h. Prices are much higher than here with a cup of coffee \$1.60, beer is cheaper at about 90 cents a stein. Wine is the cheapest drink and this being the best wine year ever it was very reasonable. Their finest Mosel or Rhine wine is about \$1.20 a bottle. My business contact was a very successful German who was quite proud of his service with the Hitler Youth. I thought you would like to know that Adolf was a great man and it was only unfortunate that he got mixed up with some bad eggs



GUMBO . . . A fine silty soil which becomes sticky and non-porous when wet. Italian and French variety, Italian has the capacity of increasing height of foot soldiers by at least six inches when right consistency. Sets like cement when dry. Great for holding creases in trousers. Am told French variety was much the same but slightly more odoriferous especially in well-used trenches. This picture brings back memories of our first winter in sunny Italy, remember, even the carriers were bogged down, and when you had walked 100 yards you felt like you had on 50 pound stilts.

and went a little peculiar at the end of the war. . . . The Germans are very proud of their recovery and look at themselves as the Americans of Europe. Many refuse to speak English and it is not uncommon to get a curt answer to your "Sprechen sie English?" "Nein. Spreichen sie Deutch!"

Some war damage is still visible. Young people seem to favour wearing old army jackets, saw some Wehrmacht belts holding up U.S. jeans, war decorations with the swastika selling for \$4.00, S.S. badges a little more. Uniforms seem to be a national hobby. Military establishments are very visible and one day we passed an army convoy over 10 miles long, N.A.T.O. were holding a major exercise. It brought back memories of our experiences with exercises in England, remember Spartan?

Dining out was an experience, especially when neither the waiter or I spoke a common language, meals were usually a surprise, my first and greatest surprise was when I thought I had ordered pork chops and was served pigs' feet and sauerkraut.

Drove down the Mosel Valley through Luxembourg and Belgium on our way to Holland. Luxembourg was beautiful, reminded me of the Fraser Valley, passed through Bastogne and noted a Sherman tank with all the bullet holes beautifully painted. Just out of town was a Tiger tank sitting as it was stopped some 30 years ago. A picturesque parade was in progress with a drum and bugle band mounted on shining black horses and all the riders in medieval costumes, quite a contrast to the remnants of the great battle that took place there in 1944. Deventer in Holland is the scene of a movie making an epic based on "A Bridge Too Far." It is eerie to drive past the area and hear the sound of German machine pistols (you never forget the sound) coupled with the familiar chugging of Bren guns. This movie about Arnhem should be released late this year.

'DON'T SHOOT THE PIANO PLAYER'

By FRED BASS

The reproduction of the 47th Bn. 1918 Christmas Dinner in the November-December issue of *The Groundsheet* revives some interesting memories, especially in the Entertainment Program, which might be of interest.

Back in the Spring of 1917 we were given a rest at Houdain, which boasted a theatre named after an English Concert Party called *The Splinters*, and the H.Q. staff decided the 47th needed some entertainment. So a competition was ordered, to be participated in by H.Q. and the four companies — A, B, C, and D.

A set of rules was drawn up, one of which stated that nobody could appear in more than one show. The prizes for the winning show would be a 24-hour pass, plus 5 francs per man, and the shows were to be at the theatre. The search for talent was on with a vengeance!

Then they made a discovery — there were only two piano players in the battalion — Frank Major and myself, and so Frank and I were exempted from the rule of one show.

Finally the week was set, and Headquarters kicked off with a skit called "A Day in the Orderly Room." I had a small part in that, but owing to the shortage of piano players, I was also delegated to D Coy for their show.

When I reported to the Lieutenant of D Coy's show, he informed me that he "didn't know a damned thing about show business," and asked me to take over. He hadn't even looked for talent, so how do you put on a show without talent?

Everyone wanted to get into the act. They wanted that pass and the 5 francs, so after a lot of hassle I finally found a Welshman named Jones, who had done a little singing, a Sgt. Hamilton who could sing a song, a comic-song singer named Johnny Bourke, "Shorty" Hunt who had come from the Bantam Bn., and had a deep bass voice, a shoe salesman from San Francisco, a Scottish singer (Davies), and a couple of others — Banks, and Smith, if I recall correctly. Anyway, we had a basis for a show, with one exception — the female sex. There were no women in the army at that time, so men played the parts, appropriately dressed. The shoe salesman had a very high tenor, so he was to be a "girl." In checking around, I had found one who would make a really terrific "girl," only to learn he was the son of a minister of the church, and not only couldn't sing, but didn't know how to whistle. Anyway, he, (Fred Meyers), became our sex appeal.

I had very little chance to see the A and B shows owing to all the rehearsing, but I did manage to catch a bit of the C Coy, which was a riot. Their show was presented as a cabaret scene, with the cast at tables, supposedly eating and drinking. Their show started at around 8 p.m. and when I got there around 10 p.m. they were only about half way through their program. What had gone wrong? Nothing much, but they had had a bright idea — make the bottles on the tables *real* — not cold tea. They were really putting it away. About 10:30 the company cook appeared to do his number. He managed to get to the centre of the stage, stood there with his eyes shut, and sang a song with a chorus that started, "The sea was awfully wet, and the crew was awfully dry." After about five or six verses, the front curtain came down. I never did find out what the song was about or how many more verses there were to come — the audience was in stitches.

But back to D Company. We managed to get some fair

harmony, did some short skits and a little easy dance or two, and they did a fairly good job.

Then the judges (whoever they were) made the announcement, D Company was the winner. There was only one sour note to me — I never got the pass nor the 5 francs!

About a couple of weeks later one of the boys came to me all excited. He asked, "Have you seen Daily Orders, Part 2?" I went to see what was what. It was an order for me and ten others to report to the Y.M.C.A. Rehearsal School at Gouy Servins the next morning for training for a Concert Party!

We arrived the next morning at the school, and to our delight the Corps show, the "Dumbbells" were rehearsing their new show, so all of the facilities were shared by us.

Lt. Armitage, who was in charge had us to his quarters in the evening to discuss what we were going to do, and Johnny Bourke saw a ventriloquist's dummy hanging on the wall. He took it down and started fooling with it, until Lt. Armitage said he would make a good ventriloquist. In later years Johnny entertained at Legions and concerts in Victoria.

Anyway, the Dumbbells eventually "went on the road" and ten days later we were ready. We had been given the name of "Quarante Septs" (47's) and Lt. Armitage said we were going to do our first performance as a birthday present for Captain Plunkett, head of the Dumbbells. We did, accompanied by an air raid!

We played all over the place, especially in the forward areas, places like Maroc, where we had to practically creep on our stomachs to put on our show in the cellar of a coal mine, Souchez Corner, Villers-a-Bois, etc., and we played our own Battalion at Noux Les Mines.

Many humorous and unexpected things happened, such as Fed Meyers' visit to a modiste's shop in Bruay to get his feminine attire — the whole lot from head to foot. I'll skip the details of that! Use your imagination. The night we played our own boys, the shoe salesman, (I'm sorry I can't recall his name — I called him "Lizzie"), had a beautiful love ballad about a rose, and the highlight was the high note "Lizzie" took near the end of the song. This song was a hoo-doo to him. He did such a good job there was silence from the audience.

We were showing in a Y.M.C.A. hut built in a populated area, and as the kids were always trying to get into the hut, Military Police were assigned. Picture if you can, a packed house, deadly silence as "Lizzie" reached the high note, which he held, then a very heavy voice broke in: "Allez you little b——ds. Allez." The Military Police outside! And it was always on that high note something went haywire. Another night it was an air raid. Up at Souchez Corner we were doing a show at 2 a.m. for troops going up the line. I was in the back changing, the 102nd Bn. band was playing, "Lizzie" was doing the Rose song, when one of the boys came in to me and said, "See what's happening to Lizzie." I took a peek through the curtains to discover something had slipped and his feminine panties were slowly coming down. Every time he moved they came a little lower until the high note. You've guessed it. They fell around his ankles. But he was a showman, and paying no attention, sang his last line, reached down, picked up the panties and made his exit. The audience thought it was part of his act!

To bring this to a conclusion, the "Big Act" of our show was a semi-Shakespeare melodrama called "Clothilde" or "The Bruised Heart" and that is what they performed to close the 1918 Christmas Dinner. I wasn't there — someone had "Shot

the Piano Player" on October 18th, and I was in hospital in Manchester just about three weeks before Armistice.

If any of the old "Quarante Septs" are around I'd like to hear from them. My address is #2-6609 Fraser, Vancouver, B.C. V5X 3T6. Just a final note — our Concert Party was sent back up the line in March 1918. We certainly had a lively time while we were at it.

REGIMENTAL UPDATE

The New Year has started with a rush. We have planned a training program for the Winter and Spring period which is very busy but which should also result in our personnel being better capable of fulfilling their tasks.

In mid-February the battalion will be going to the Chilcotins to train in Arctic Survival. With the mild winter we have been having we hope that we will still be able to find snow there. In March we are planning an infiltration and patrol exercise to be held in the mountains south of CFB Chilliwack. We are hopeful that the 81st Inf. Bde. Air Support Section from the Washington State National Guard will be able to assist us in this exercise by the use of their helicopters. In April the battalion will be spending the Easter weekend at Ft. Lewis where we hope to train in the tactical use of helicopters and M113 APCs. We have also requested the use of the Combat Village which is a live fire range on which we can practice house clearing. The 3rd Bn. 47 Inf. at Ft. Lewis with whom we have been developing an affiliation have proven to be grand hosts in the past and are most willing to support our training at Ft. Lewis. Just prior to Christmas A Coy conducted an exercise there and were able to qualify the sniper and machine gun courses on the ranges. Ft. Lewis has the closest range on which the .50 cal MG can be fired.

At this time I wish to announce that my four years tenure as the Commanding Officer of the Battalion will come to an end on 1st March, 1977 with the Change of Command Parade to be held on 19th March, 1977. My DCO, Major Jerry Gangur, will be succeeding me. I know you will find him helpful and cooperative. I have enjoyed the opportunity and privilege of commanding your Regiment and have considered it a great honour. I have made many friends among the members of the Association and am most grateful for the support and assistance that you have given me. I wish you all good fortune in the future and wish the Association continued success.

M. H. H. STEEDE
Lieutenant Colonel
Commanding Officer

Have you received your 1977 Membership Card yet? Cards to Paid-Up Members are in the mail. If you haven't got yours yet, perhaps you have not paid your 1977 Dues. Send in your \$5.00 today and become a Card Carrying Member.

AMERICAN LEGION POST HONOURS ASSOCIATION

On January 19th at a meeting held in the Canadian Legion Hall, Post #179 in Vancouver, members of the American Legion, Charles A. Dunn, Post #7, presented a special award to Presi-

dent Stan Moorhouse. The plaque was given in appreciation for the support our Association had given to the American Legion Post by making available to their newly formed Colour Party a supply of our red berets.

In making the presentation, the Post Commander made the following statement: "On behalf of Post #7, Vancouver, Department of Canada, we would like to give this token of appreciation to the Royal Westminster Regiment Association for helping us take a giant step forward. Without their help we couldn't have accomplished what we did. From this day forth I hope that we can associate with each other with all the confidence in the world to achieve better and greater things in life."

The plaques are handsomely framed and bear the following inscription:

"The American Legion, Citation of Appreciation. This Citation of Appreciation is gratefully presented to the Royal Westminster Regiment Association in recognition and sincere appreciation of outstanding service and assistance which contributed to the advancement of the American Legion programs and activities dedicated to God and Country by Post #7, Vancouver, B.C., Department of Canada."

It was signed by Commander Richard L. Crawford and Adjutant Edward L. Grube.

Our Secretary Ron Mannering was also presented with a similar plaque at the same ceremony in appreciation of his personal efforts in the assistance to the Legion Post.

Several members of our Association Executive were present at the event: Stan Moorhouse, Ron Mannering, Norm McAskill, Allan Coe, Walter Lyle, John Rosso, John Ford, Mike Steed, Ed. Shannon, Red Williams, and Bill Robson.

'77 MELFA PLANS UNDERWAY

This year's Melfa celebration is to take the form of a Melfa Weekend. In response to many requests we are planning to change the date from the traditional May 24th weekend to the weekend following, that is May 28th and 29th. So many of you have said: "We would have come, but its the long weekend and we have to be with our family." O.K., we have changed the dates to accommodate you, so no doubt we will see you at the Melfa this year!

By this time you should have received Bas. Morgan's first letter outlining the plans for this our 33rd anniversary of the crossing of the Melfa. As the letter tells we have planned a full program and this year we hope that if your wives join with you on this memorable occasion that they will take part in the Ladies' portion of the program.

Bas. Morgan has enclosed a reply card for you to return which will assist us in our planning for space, meals, etc., so don't wait, send it in today, to give the Melfa Committee a chance to do a bang-up job for you this year of 1977.

To briefly paraphrase Bas.'s letter here are the pertinent points once more:

Registration — Armouries, 14.30, May 28 — Museum open.

Fall in for Cenotaph Service — 17.20.

Cocktails, 18.30 — Dinner, 19.15.

Ladies — Dutch Treat Dinner, Towers Hotel, 18.30.

Sunday, May 29th — Reception and Tea, Members and Ladies in Officers' Mess, Armouries.

Deadline for return of card, May 15th.

All we need to make this year's Melfa a success is YOUR attendance. This is your family and *we need you* . . .



ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

As reported in the last issue of The Groundsheet, the Canadian Paraplegic Association was honoured when Lyle Meredith received the Achievement Award from the Royal Westminster Regiment Association in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Community.

The award was presented to Lyle by Basil Morgan and Jack Ford of the Association.

In addition to the beautiful plaque commemorating the award, Lyle received a cheque for \$100.

OPERATION SERVICE

This item is to draw your attention to a service available to all veterans through your local Canadian Legion Branch. It is called "Operation Service." This program's prime aim is to contact veterans and their dependents who may be eligible for veterans benefits, namely, Disability Pensions, War Veterans Allowances, etc., but are unaware of their rights and privileges.

Those already receiving these benefits, should not, other than in special circumstances, find it necessary to apply. If you have a question along these lines, please contact your local Canadian Legion for further assistance.

From the information we have, it appears that the Legion is hoping to phase out this service this year, so don't delay if you need help on any of these veterans' benefit programs.

ROYAL OVERSEAS LEAGUE CLUB

Any of our members who are interested in joining the Royal Overseas League Club may obtain application forms by writing to The Royal Overseas League, 1635 W. 66th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6P 2S1. Local Membership is \$9.00 per year and for those of you who plan on visiting England soon, the Full Membership is \$19.00 per year. The club offers, locally, regular meetings with guest speakers, special programs, etc. The London and Edinburgh clubs offer residential accomodation, restaurants and tour assistance for visitors. For more information, call on Miss F. H. Rollit at the above address.

PRIZE LIST-ANNUAL XMAS DRAW

FIRST PRIZE	Barbara Edwards		
Ticket #28168	#6—671 Lougheed Hwy.	\$250.00	
	Coquitlam, B.C.		
Seller:	Chris Reiter	\$20.00	
SECOND PRIZE	Ethel Davidson		
Ticket #5286	4656 Brentlawn Dr.	Case of Cognac	
	Burnaby 2, B.C.	(\$165.60)	
Seller:	R. H. Davidson	\$20.00	
THIRD PRIZE	Ernie Tamboline		
Ticket #20983	4806 Martin Rd.	Case of Scotch	
	Delta, B.C.	(\$136.08)	
Seller:	Max Mathew	\$20.00	
FOURTH PRIZE	Jim Wilson		
Ticket #19242	11265 79A Ave.	Case of Rye	
	No. Delta, B.C.		
Seller:	Jim Wilson	\$20.00	
FIFTH PRIZE	L. R. McLeod		
Ticket #24473	#115—1209 Jervis St.	Case of Tequila	
	Vancouver, B.C.	(\$100.80)	
Seller:	J. Baricer	\$20.00	
SIXTH PRIZE	Darlene Simonetto		
Ticket #27824	13716 Bentley Rd.	Case of Rum	
	Surrey, B.C.	(\$93.24)	
Seller:	Jackie Moriarty	\$20.00	
SEVENTH PRIZE	E. Endersby		
Ticket #18306	893 Scotchbrooke	Case of Vodka	
	Richmond, B.C.	(\$81.90)	
Seller:	J. Townrow	\$20.00	
EIGHTH PRIZE	Debbie Morgan		
Ticket #17788	1547 54th St.	Case of Gin	
	Delta, B.C.	(\$74.97)	
Seller:	Pat Morgan	\$20.00	
NINTH PRIZE	Roy Mackie		
Ticket #4290	5969 Kerr St.	Case of Spanish	
	Vancouver, B.C.	Champagne	
		(\$57.33)	
Seller:	J. H. Clash	\$20.00	
TENTH PRIZE	J. Hargreaves		
Ticket #8784	3521 Walker St.	10 Doz Beer	
	Vancouver, B.C.	(\$40.02)	
Seller:	J. Hargreaves	\$20.00	
Ten Consolation Prizes each of \$20.00:			
Ticket Number:			
1302	A. Federics	11689	Art Miller
4282	J. H. Clash	19526	J. MacGregor
5677	Bill Reynolds	25536	Garth Watson
5997	F. Dragan	26375	R. Hurley
7746	Sven Jensen	28966	P. M. Moore

A PERSONAL HISTORY OF THE WAR

The following consists of excerpts from a personal diary written by one of our members during his war service 1939-1945.

We won't identify him at this point, but as the series continues you may be able to identify the author.

Summary

Army life began for me on Sept. 4, 1939, due chiefly to economic conscription, and not to any mistaken ideas of fancy buttons, flag-waving or band playing. Velma was much against it, and now it is easy to see her viewpoint. But at that time we enlisted for Home Defense only, so the possibility of leaving Canada looked very remote. Ten days or so later we had the choice of signing for overseas duty or taking a discharge. We all signed. To us then, anything else would have been an expression of cowardice, but logically for me it would have been better. I didn't realize what I was letting Velma in for. I have since, many times. However, life as a detached Coy, in Chilliwack was very pleasant, with soldiering no more than a very soft job. Sixty-odd men we were, and all very enthusiastic and eager to learn. Dec. 27th we moved to the new barracks at New Westminster, and became part of the battalion. Passes, guards, and fatigues began at once, which was new to us. There we stayed until the end of May when we moved to Dundurn, Sask., after a full-dress send-off from the city. No doubt those we left behind thought they had seen the last of us for the duration. Being a Vickers battalion, and Corp troops for the 1st and 2nd Divs., who were already overseas, we fully expected to proceed to England. But at Dundurn we stayed, and furthered our already extensive knowledge of sloping arms, ceremonial drill, and web-blancoring. Oct. 2nd we left for Vancouver, where we were garrison troops in the old Van Hotel until the end of May. Once again we left the Coast and headed east this time to Camp Borden, Ont. By this time we had changed over from Vickers to a motor battalion in the 1st Cdn. Armoured Div., or actually the 5th Cdn. Div.

Here we got a few vehicles and more drivers were trained. I first became acquainted with carriers there and liked them from the start. We became a fairly efficient unit there, and in mid-October, 1941, we entrained for Sussex, New Brunswick. Three weeks there, and then we said good-bye to Canada via Halifax and the H.M.S. Andes bore us to England. Here we were fully equipped and life became a succession of schemes, parades, new camps, parades, more schemes, and more parade, not to mention efficiency tests, T.O.E.T., T.E.W.T., "M" tests, quizzes as to what we'd like after the war and eternal and everlasting blanco. It seems that regardless of what a man knows, if he can turn out on parade in spotless web and gleaming shoes, with his cap at the proper angle and all his buttons done up, then he is a good soldier. Knowledge of firearms and explosives, ability to use them, also the proper driving and maintenance of a vehicle apparently is only incidental and of secondary importance.

However, life in England was fairly enjoyable, with a nine-day leave every three months and the very sensible "pub" system

that is used there. Our rotation of camps ran thus: Aldershot, Farnham, Brighton, Pppingford Park, Brighton, Little Warren (Crowborough), six weeks in East Anglia, Div. camp at Barton Stacey, then to Brighton again, and thence overseas. The ship we sailed on was an American boat, very crowded, as is usual with troop transports, but the grub was good, a thing which the average "other rank" is not slow to appreciate. The voyage was uneventful until we were off Bizerta, a few days from Italy. Then, about 1830 hrs., we were attacked by torpedo-carrying planes, and though the order was to go below, we couldn't resist the opportunity to see the show. Every ship seemed heavily armed, and each one proceeded to lay a smoke screen. Green, red, and yellow tracers drew Fourth of July patterns across the sky in all directions, and the destroyers which accompanied us seemed to literally erupt "flak" in all directions. "Wee Angus" and I stood among many others on "C" deck, aft, enthralled with the spectacle, for we'd never really seen a good show in England. We saw one plane at about 10 ft. altitude, flitting through the convoy, and one couldn't help but admire the guts of a man who could fly like that when visibility was practically nil. Another plane we saw come down in flames, one moment a streaking comet and then a tremendous explosion as it struck the water, with a glow of flames from burning fuel remaining to mark the spot. Then another plane picked on us. Up to now the show had been swell, for we were spectators. But it suddenly became very personal, and one feels very vulnerable on board a ship. All the guns on our ship let go with everything they had, and the din was terrific. About a hundred yards or so off our port stern he dropped his torpedo, at the same time the 6 inchers on our stern let go, and we thought we were hit. The roar seemed to us, to shake the whole universe. But the plane was hit and crashed astern, while the torpedo must have missed, as we suffered no damage. The ship on our starboard beam was also throwing her fireworks at the same plane, and from where we were it looked as though she was shooting at us. Angus and I looked nonchalantly at one another and said perhaps we should obey orders and go below, which we accordingly did, with celerity, and I'm quite sure it was from no desire to obey orders. Finally the raid petered out, after about half-an-hour, and quiet reigned again. Score, according to the most authentic report we could get, was five planes down and two ships hit. One sank about an hour or so later and the other sank just as she was towed into harbor the next day. One of our Div. hospital units, the 14th Field Ambulance, was on the one that sank first, but no casualties were incurred, as far as we could find out. We sailed on, and docked at Naples on Nov. 8th, 1943, at noon.

We moved, that night, out to Afrigola, about eight miles out. Here we prepared a camp for the arrival of the unit. "We" being an advance party of about fifty, all ranks. The unit arrived on Dec. 1st on one of the rare fine days we enjoy in this country. Rain seems to be the normal weather here at this time of year and we've had plenty of it since we arrived. We have learned the money, become innoculated against the weird and wonderful effects "vino" has on the average soldier, and also learned to say "no" firmly to the natives, who pester us continually for gum, candy, cigarettes, biscuits, and who try to sell us fruit, wine, and nuts, also gew-gaws, at outrageous prices.

(To be Continued)



Lest We Forget

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Royal Westminster Regiment

C. F. HORNSBY
Victoria, B.C.
47th Bn., W.W. 1

EDWARD KRALL
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Royal Westminster Regiment, W.W. 2

HON. T. G. NORRIS
Pitt Meadows, B.C.
47th Bn., W.W. 1

JOHN SHEPPARD
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