

VOLUME 96 / ISSUE 3

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, B.C. V3L 4Z8

OCTOBER 96



NOT FORGOTTEN

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Editor's Corner

Boyle's Law, A.K.A. The plight of the Generals. The sacrifice of a fine Airborne Unit is a Panic Decision. We should all be grateful that we were fortunate that 5th Armoured in W.W. 2 had the benefit of the finest G.O.C. in the person of "Hoffy" i.e. **Maj. Gen B.M. Hoffmeister**. The army today could use a cadre of leaders like him.

Now that you are aware of the above facts - let us now discuss the association. Initially welcome back from a fairly decent summer & fall. Under the capable hands of **President Fred West** (likely to be the last of the thirty niners to hold that office), he and his directors did not enjoy a lengthy hiatus; as they were required to deal with a rather sticky situation. It would seem that **President Fred & his directors** have the problem well in hand. Personally I have been apprised of the matter in a peripheral sense only. Ergo I will leave more details to those actively involved. Suffice to say it deals with the "Proposed Memorial Plaques" to our two V.C. winners, **Filip Konowal** W.W. 1 and **Jack Mahony** W.W. 2. More cogent plans are underway for the 50th Anniversary of the Association in 1997. PLEASE DON'T FORGET REMEMBRANCE DAY NOV. 11 AT 9:30 AM at the armouries - Berets, Blazer & Medals. Sincere thanks to those (sadly few in numbers) who sent in letters, dues and donations. Good health to all & more information to come later.....Ron Hurly.

President's Report

Looking back over the years since I first became acquainted with **The Royal Westminster Regiment**, I recall many experiences and while there are many I cherish, there are also some I would rather not have had. I joined "D" Coy. in Chilliwack in 1936, sixty years ago. Seems a long time but many memories are quite vivid and do not seem that long ago. I remember learning to slope arms and form fours, rather antiquated now. I also remember going to Blair Range in North Vancouver and firing the old Vickers machine guns. We went to the Drill Hall on Monday evenings and learned to strip and clean our weapons and learn the names of various parts such as "the elongation of the prolongation of the left side plate". I am sure some of the oldies remember that one. There wasn't a whole lot of excitement in those days, I didn't get to summer camp because that was a busy time of the year and it was necessary to take advantage of any work that was available. Then it was 1939 and the King and Queen came to visit, we bussed to Vancouver and stood Guard of Honour for them and the same in New Westminster, we got paid on both occasions, a dollar and ten cents a day, no overtime though. I went to Vernon Camp that year, it must have been the hottest year on record and there was a few flies and other creatures around too, a few fellows were hospitalized with sun stroke. I managed to survive in good shape, the Bell Tents were something else, there was no air conditioning! Then old Adolph marched into Poland and all of a sudden there was excitement. Many of us reported in to the Drill Hall and polished up our rifles and machine guns and stood guard duty etc., etc. We had an exciting three months with living out allowance and lots of parties and fun for all. In December we moved into barracks in New Westminster, the day of reckoning had arrived. **Sergeant Major Carr** of the PPCLI Cadre told us we would have a rude awakening and he was right, I guess we got used to it though. I hadn't planned on the War lasting six years, but we persevered under Little Joe's gentle persuasion and we turned out to be a reasonably good outfit. I am not going to go into a long historical spiel, I just wanted you to know how I got my start.

I am honoured and thrilled to become the Association President, I still feel like a green recruit. I have always been a supporter of the Association over the years, but due to my various commitments, I was wasn't able to become directly involved until several years ago. I have always enjoyed being able to attend many of the functions and to see and visit with my old wartime buddies and friends. There is nothing to compare with a visit with old friends that one has been there with, it's an experience all of its' own, and of course brings back memories of those friends we left behind.

This is a changing era, I guess all era's are. We have left our W.W. I comrades behind and the W.W. 2 comrades are fading away gradually. The ranks are thinning somewhat at

President's Report Continued

least. I think we missed an era of post war members, a lot to them got away, but some are returning to the fold, and I am pleased about that. There is a new group now that have been peace keeping in various places and more recently in the Bosnian area. They all have their experiences and pretty soon memories too. I am pleased that some of the above are taking an interest in the Association and I hope more of them will get involved. The Regimental Association is a wonderful organization and will bring great pleasure to those that become part of it. It is a place of fond memories and lasting friendships.

I am becoming acquainted with the younger members, I have even been invited to visit the Junior Ranks Mess. I consider that an honour too and from what I have seen, we haven't any worries as to the future of our organization as it will be in good hands. Thanks to **Jerry Gangur** we have the Future Fund well under way and that will also help to perpetuate our Association down the Road.

I am looking forward to a most enjoyable year as the President of this highly esteemed Association in the year 1996. Thank you for this high Honour. I look forward to a progressive and eventful year for the Association. I will need lots of help from all the membership.

Fraternally,

Fred T. West (K47163)

Sick & Visiting - Chairman Doug Glenn

I do my usual visits to **GEORGE DERBY** every Thursday. Some members of the Westminster Regiment are still in residence. They are **Walter Lyle, Walter Jackson, Bill Thorarinson, Maurre Spaner** and **Allison Russel**. In hospital elsewhere are:

Hugh Wray - St Mary's Hospital - New Westminster

Gordie Edwards - Queen's Park Hospital

Eb Sweet had the misfortune of having a stroke, but he informed me he can still move around a little bit on his own.

If anyone out there knows the above, I am sure they would be glad of your company. Also, if you hear of any member ill at home or in hospital, please let me know. I have an answering machine. **Phone me 522-0890.**

Valour



Fiftieth anniversaries provide occasions for great things to be accomplished. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of The Royal Canadian Legion (Konowal Branch), Branch 360, in cooperation with the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association, an ambitious plan was formulated to honor Cpl (Sgt) Filip Konowal. Arrangements were made to erect an appropriate headstone on his grave and to unveil a trilingual plaque in two locations in Canada. The first plaque would be installed in Ottawa, in the armoury of the regiment which recruited him, the 77th battalion (now the Governor General's Foot Guards) and the second, in Toronto, would be placed on the street wall of Branch 360. When the president of our association heard of these unveilings, he asked Branch 360 if a similar plaque could be installed in the armoury of the regiment which perpetuates the 47th Battalion, today, The Royal Westminster Regiment. A third plaque will be unveiled in New Westminster in 1997.

SGT FILIP KONOWAL, V.C. REMEMBERED

Presented by: CWO C. MacKinnon, The Royal Westminster Regiment

"I was fed up with standing in the trench with water to my waist that I said the hell with it and started after the German Army. My Captain tried to shoot me because he figured I was deserting."

This unofficial account was spoken by Sgt Filip Konowal, V.C., a Ukrainian Canadian who had enlisted in the 77th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary (CEF). While he was serving as a Corporal, with the 47th Battalion C.E. F., he fought with exceptional valour in August 1917 near Lens France. For this His Majesty King George V personally conferred the Victoria Cross on him.

On July 15th and the 21st of August of 1996, in Ottawa, at Cartier Drill Hall (Cartier Drill Hall accommodates the Governor General's Foot Guards) and in Toronto, at The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 360 (Konowal Branch), trilingual plaques were erected to honour & remember Sgt Filip Konowal's heroic contribution to our Nation.

The Trilingual Plaques remembering Konowal were presented and co-sponsored by the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association, The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 360 (Konowal Branch). Sponsorship of the plaque in Ottawa was joined by the Ukrainian Canadian Professional & Business Association of Ottawa. A new upright marker at Konowal's grave, in cooperation with the Department of Veteran's Affairs, was erected on Ukrainian Armed Forces Day on the 6th of December 1995. The headstone and plaque were unveiled by His Excellency, Volodymyr Furkalo, the Ukrainian Ambassador to Canada and the Minister of National Defence, The Honourable David Collenette. Representing the Governor General was Major-General J.P. Robert La Rose. Major General B.E. Stephenson, Commander Land Forces Central Area represented the Canadian Army.

Ukrainian historians indicate that Konowal was born in Kedkiv, Province of Podolia, Ukraine on the 15 September 1888.*

* Konowal's Army records indicate that Konowal was born in Pedeski, Russia. The territory referred to changed hands when invaded by the Russian Empire and again when "returned" to Ukraine proper. Konowal, on 20 Dec 1945 when enrolling in the Matsapa Legion recorded Ukraine as his country of birth. Asst Editor.

Konowal served with the Russian Imperial Guards, as a bayonet instructor, until he emigrated to Canada via Vancouver in April of 1913.

Prior to the out break of World War I, Ukraine was invaded from the West by the Austro-Hungarian Empire and from the East by the Russian Empire. Ukrainians in Canada who emigrated from the Austro-Hungarian section of conquered Ukraine were being identified as "enemy aliens." These "enemy aliens" were then interned into 24 Canadian internment camps from 1914 - 1920. Ukrainians immigrants from the Russian section of Ukraine were allowed to serve in the armed forces. Konowal was born on the Russian side of a river separating the divided Ukraine.

Since Konowal was residing in the Ottawa area he signed on with the C.E.F., 77th Infantry Battalion. The Governor General's Foot Guards (GGFG's) had been appointed, under Lt. Col. Street to mobilize the 77th Bn. 1,407 members of the Bn departed Canada for England. Upon arrival in Bramshot, England, the 77th Bn was broken up to provide reinforcements to the Canadian Corps. Lance Corporal Filip Konowal then became a member of the C.E. F., 4th Canadian Division, 47th Battalion of British Columbia (New Westminster). The Royal Westminster Regiment perpetuates the 47th Battalion C.E.F.

By the 18th of August, 1917, the Germans had experienced 20,000 casualties compared to 6,000 Canadian casualties; therefore the Germans gave up their attempts to retake Hill 70. The capture of Hill 70 then allowed the Canadian Corps to continue to advance and capture the town of Lens. It was decided to make one last push to strengthen the defence around the outskirts of Lens. This area was called the Green Crassier.

The Green Crassier area itself consisted of a large expanse of coal-slugs thrown up into hillocks by bursting land mines. It was honeycombed with machine gun emplacements within craters, tunnels, dugouts, cellars and remnants of houses. House to house fighting continued, until the 25th of August, until all but the centre of the town of Lens had been captured. During this time, two more Victoria Crosses were awarded. Of these last two, one was awarded to A/Corporal Filip Konowal.

In the Green Cassier area the following action is described, in the London Gazette #30400, dated 23 November 1917:

over

Incident: 22 - 24 August 1917 Hill 70 (near Lens) France

For most conspicuous bravery and leadership when in charge of a section in attack. His section had the difficult task of mopping-up cellars, craters and machine-gun emplacements. Under his able direction, all resistance was overcome successfully, and heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy. In one cellar, he himself bayoneted three enemy and attacked single-handed seven others in a crater, killing them all. On reaching the objective, a machine-gun was holding up the right flank, causing many casualties. Cpl Konowal rushed forward and entered the emplacement, killed the crew, and brought the gun back to our lines.

The next day, he again attacked single-handed another machine-gun emplacement, killed three of the crew, and destroyed the gun emplacement with explosives.

This non-commissioned officer alone killed sixteen of the enemy, and during two days of actual fighting, carried on continuously his good work until severely wounded.

Cpl Konowal fought with exceptional valour and therefore was awarded the highest decoration in the British Empire. While Konowal was at Buckingham place, during his investiture, His Majesty King George V remarked to him: "Your exploit is one of the most daring and heroic in the history of my army. For this accept my thanks."

Sgt Konowal continued to serve and in September of 1918 joined a 5,000 man Brigade called the Siberian Expeditionary Force. (Editor: Major Ardagh, father of our own Vernon Ardagh served with Konowal during this operation).

Tragedy struck in 1923 when Konowal intervened in a fight to assist his friend and in the struggle, killed a man. As a result of this incident, he spent the a number of years in a mental hospital.

Nevertheless, by 1928, he had begun to rebuild his life. He enlisted in the Ottawa-based Governor's General's Foot Guards. He re-married in 1934, taking for his second wife, a widow, Juliette Leduc-Auger. (His first wife, Anna and their daughter, Maria, were lost in Ukraine during the Stalinist terror.) Thanks to the intervention of another Victoria Cross Winner, and also a member of the GGFG's, Major Milton Fowler Gregg, Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Commons (1934-44), Konowal found employment as a junior caretaker in the House of Commons.....eventually, with the help of the Prime Minister William Lyon MacKenzie King, Konowal was reassigned as the special custodian of Room No. 16, the Prime Minister's office, a post he held until his death. #

#Konowal Filip, 1888-1959, Victoria Cross, L Luciuk/Ron Sorobey, 1996, page 5.

Note: There is more to this hero's life story, but space is short. Asst Ed. End

**Filip Konowal, V.C.
Hill 70 - The Great War**

Report on the Filip Konowal Plaque Unveiling in Toronto at the Royal Canadian Legion,
(Konowal Branch), Branch 360, on August 21, 1996.

Presented by Jerry N. Gangur

An invitation to attend the second Trilingual Plaque unveiling in Toronto, on 21 August, 1996 was received and accepted by the author. The Konowal Plaque, a magnificent work of art, was installed on the street-wall of Branch 360 and was unveiled by the **Hon David Collenette**, Min of National Defence. In addition to the MND, some in attendance included: The Ukrainian ambassador to Canada, from the Ukrainian army (one General and one Colonel). Representing the Canadian Army was **MGen Bryan Stephenson**, Commander Land Forces Central Area and **MGen J.P. La Rose**, Hon LCol, GGFG, representatives of the Mazeppa Branch 183 (Montreal) of the Royal Canadian Legion (a branch Konowal belonged to) and the president of the Prov Comd of the RCL. In all over 250 attended the unveiling. The unveiling was followed by an impressive luncheon.

During the Luncheon, the president of Br 360, **John Gregorovich**, introduced the Hon. David Collenette. At the conclusion of his remarks, the minister announced the Konowal Prize. This will be an annual scholarship enabling officer cadets from Ukraine to attend and study at one of the military colleges in Canada. The minister stated that the program will commence in 1997.

A highlight of the unveiling was the surprise attendance of Konowal's granddaughter, **Claudette Wright** and her children (**Lynne and Brian**). It was not known if Konowal had any surviving relatives, but when the Ottawa unveiling was televised, a neighbour told Claudette that her Grandfather was being honoured in Ottawa. She phoned Ottawa and the RCL, Branch 360 underwrote the costs to bring her and her family to the Toronto unveiling. Listening to her talk about her grandfather was a memorable experience. She remembers him as a quiet, gentle person would loved to chase the grandchildren around the yard. She was nineteen when Konowal died and she says she knows her grandfather had some medals, but apparently he never talked to her about the war or his Victoria Cross.

Attending the unveiling at Branch 360 was a great experience and one I shall never forget. The good will that emanated from that gathering of Canadians was beyond description. I had the opportunity to speak with **Maj Gen J.P. Robert La Rose**, the Hon. Lt. Colonel

of the GGFGs and hear him refer to the Westies as a sister regiment. How very fortunate we are to have such friends in the Military.



Right to left: Filip Konowal's granddaughter, Claudette Wright, great grandchildren Lynne & Brian Wright and immediate-past president, Jerry Gangur, in front of the Konowal Plaque

In my closing remarks, I would encourage any Westie visiting Toronto or Ottawa to say hello to members of Branch 360 (Toronto) or the Governor General's Foot Guards in Ottawa. You will be welcomed, I'm sure.

You may have heard

Motion: The association recommends acceptance of a trilingual plaque, honoring Filip Konowal, V.C., offered by the Royal Canadian Legion, 360 (Konowal Branch) and the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association and that a plaque to Jack Mahony be installed within one year following. Carried unanimously by members present.

The above decision by the association resulted in a counter proposal by other elements of the regimental family, namely, that one plaque, in English only, be erected honoring both V.C.s at the same ceremony. For a host of reasons the association saw things differently and held to the view expressed in the motion.

W.W. II Westie's Correspondent

Thanks to long time association member and prolific writer **Jack Flewwelling** of Victoria. Appreciation for your compliments re my efforts as Editor. Perhaps I do not deserve the kudos you and all the old time Westies who continue to write us - Realize that **MANY OF YOU ARE ILL & suffering the ravages of time**, but keep in touch if you can..... A sad letter from **Gwen Robinson** of Fruitvale, BC, notifying us of her husband's death in July, 1996. The Association sends its' sincere condolences to you and your family. ...A nice letter, but a bit of sad new from old Westie "**Tiny**" **Robertson**. He has been in hospital since March 1996 & had his leg amputated. True to his spirit, however, he closes with his usual wit. "Damned hard to learn walking on a wooden leg 82." If anyone can it's you, so we wish you all the best.....A request from **Cheryl Heppner** of Coquitlam, seeking help in locating he father, one **JOHN (JACK) CLAYTON**, born 20th Jan 1925. Our secretary, **Nelson Scott** & myself have spent hours searching our History book & numerous documents - to no avail. I suggest you send a letter, stating day of birth, regimental number, rank etc. to **DIRECTOR OF MILITARY RECORDS, TUNNEYS PASTURE, OTTAWA, ONTARIO K1A 0N0**.

Ron Hurley

Hey! We made it! 60 years on November 24, 1996 Nora and Nelson "Scotty" Scott

We first met in the early "thirties." I worked at Fraser Mills and was an N.P.A.M. soldier - 50 cents a day pay which was forfeited to buy coal for The Armouries. She said "yes" to me, but "no" to the army. An official discharge certificate was obtained in August of 1936 - married 3 months later - Look what happened! Back in the Army in June 1940 and discharged December, 1947. The last fifty years has been associated with the army types. What a wonderful experience - The association has been a major part of our lives.....Nelson.

Editor: Congratulations to the Scott team. Its been wonderful having you around.
(Scotty was the Association's first secretary)

IN MEMORIAM

Jack Biggs	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. II
Gordon Higginson	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. II
Gerry Potter	The Royal Westminster Regiment
E.J. (Barrie) Robinson	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. II
John Somners	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. II
Eric Robert Walmesley	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. II

Remembrance Day Ceremonies

Ceremonies marking Remembrance Day will follow the procedure of previous years. All messes will open immediately following the completion of the Cenotaph Service.

Timings: 0945 Hrs - Indoor Service
 1030 Hrs - Form up in front of Armoury and march to Cenotaph
 1045 Hrs - Cenotaph Ceremony

Dress: Blazers, Berets and Medals

Arrive early.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Invitation

to

**The Royal Westminster Association, members and wives
from**

**The Royal Westminster Regiment Historical Society
to attend a**

**Picture Presentation to The Regimental Museum
from**

Perfection Lodge (Masonic Lodge #75)

November 2, 1996, from 10:00 am to Noon

Location: The Armoury Tea will be served

Let us know if you plan to attend (catering reasons) Phone Nelson Scott

Snafu's Happen
Change in Date and Time for Picture Presentation

Invitation
to
The Royal Westminster Regiment Association, members and wives
from
The Royal Westminster Regiment Historical Society
to attend a
Picture Presentation to The Regimental Museum
from
Perfection Lodge (Masonic Lodge #75)

Location: The Armoury * Tea will be served

November 3, 1996, from 2 pm to 4 pm

Let us know if you plan to attend (catering reasons). Phone Nelson Scott 521-3294