

HONG KONG VETERANS' LUNCHEON

by Linda Stewart

I want to tell you a story about two wonderful ladies who work here at the BC Pension Corporation. In order to tell you this story, I need first to briefly explain who the Hong Kong Veterans of Canada are.

My late father was a Hong Kong Veteran. They were a group of Canadian soldiers who went to aid in the defence of Hong Kong during the Second World War. The fighting lasted for only 18 days and then they were held captive for 44 months under horrible conditions. Of course, because of this shared experience, these men are extremely close to one another. They have been meeting regularly for the past 58 years since the end of the war. Because of their advancing age, the sons and daughters of these men, with their blessing and direction, formed a Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association in 1996. I became involved with the association a few years ago as Regional Director for BC and two years ago the decision was made to hold the biennial Convention here in Victoria from August 13 to 17, 2003. On August 15 we planned a memorial service at the Cenotaph to be followed by a luncheon in the ballroom at Crystal Garden.



In January I bumped into Wendy Ackinclose in the hall. I knew she was very involved with singing and giving singing lessons. I told her about my idea to have a sing-along of WW II songs at the luncheon and asked her if maybe she could think about what songs we might do and if maybe she had the lyrics for them. All I was looking for was some help in picking out the songs – nothing else. Without one moment of hesitation,

Wendy said, "Let me do it, Linda. I'll take care of it. I would love to do something for these men who laid their lives on the line for me." It was a very touching moment for me.

And she took the idea and ran with it. She recruited Elise Kennedy. Elise is an absolutely amazing pianist. I think she's been playing since she was a baby. These two ladies met several times to rehearse. I was at one of the rehearsals where Wendy was singing a line or two and then Elise played a chord on the piano and asked, "Is this the key you want?" And on they went through the whole song, all the while Elise jotting down the key above the words that we had typed out with the utmost ease and skill. I was most thoroughly impressed.

On the day of the Luncheon, Wendy sang so beautifully and Elise was so accomplished accompanying her on the keyboards. Everyone enjoyed the sing-along portion of the luncheon so much. I am still getting e-mails and thank you notes saying how much they loved it. There were over 200 people in attendance including our guest speaker, the Honourable David Anderson (MP for Victoria) whose father was a doctor in Hong Kong during the occupation.

Thank you Elise and thank you Wendy for volunteering your time to entertain our veterans and making the luncheon such a memorable experience for everyone who was there. You are two very special ladies.



Published on behalf of employees
of the BC Pension Corporation