

HONG KONG VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
QUEBEC-MARITIMES BRANCH
JUNE, 1997
BANJO GOSSIP NEWSLETTER 4.4 BAMBOO TELEGRAPH

First I must apologize(again) for the poor print quality of the March letter. Suffice to say that my computer fouled up, not only in printing the letter, but again when I tried to print the address labels. To top it all off, my zerox source also had trouble in copying, with the result you all saw. I should not blame it all on the computer, because after owning one for over four years, I am still only semi-computer literate. So, blaming the computer, I abandoned the old one and bought a new one, guaranteed not to make mistakes, to tell me every step to take, to correct my spelling, and a thousand other things I haven't found out about yet. And incidently, I am now hooked up to the internet. My E-mail address is - philed @ globetrotter.qc.ca, in case you want to contact me.

NATIONAL REUNION

A further mailing from Fred Mason, Chairman of the Convention, includes a copy of the agenda. He has allotted time for our Q-M Branch annual meeting on Thursday, September 4, at six to eight PM in Board Room #1. Fred has also included a letter outlining details of the convention. Please read it carefully and do your bit to make the job of running the convention easier.

MARITIMES-GASPESIAN BRANCH REUNION

I have a letter from Neil Darrah, President of the M-G Branch, in which he extends an invitation to all members of the Q-M Branch to attend their reunion in Florenceville, NB on August 29, 30, and 31. Registration fee is \$20.00. Motels--- Florenceville Motor Inn, (506)392-6503, Beechwood Motel,(506)278-5241. If you expect to attend, please let Neil know so that he can plan accordingly. His address is: RR 4, Centreville, NB, E0J 1H0.

BOOKS

Blacky Verreault's diary was published as a book by his son, Michel, and was available at our convention in Pointe Claire in 1993. The diary was translated by Blacky's brother, and the English version is now available from Michel at 400 St-Eugene, Apt. 5, Rimouski, QC, G5L 8S3. The cost is \$25.00 plus \$4.00 for mailing charges. I have a copy of each version, and I can say that it is definitely worth the money. Blacky's close friends were Lucien Brunet and Bill Allister, and he mentions them often in his diary. In reading the book you will find that Blacky was a thinker and philosopher. His brother, in the translation has very effectively captured his thoughts, and in spite of some errors of spelling which can be easily overlooked, he has done a good job.

A phone call from Michel today (May 9) reveals that there will be an official presentation of the book at the War Museum in Ottawa on December 11. If you are near by on that date, it might be an interesting experience.

MANITOBA FLOOD RELIEF

Once again we are called upon to show solidarity as Canadians in coming to the aid of fellow Canadians in distress. The floods in Manitoba, surpassing even those of the Saguenay last summer, have left many people from the US border to Winnipeg and beyond, in dire circumstances. As our fellow HKers rallied to the cause last summer to

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help the people of the Saguenay, so did we again for Manitoba. On behalf of the Quebec-Maritime Branch, I extend sincere good wishes for a complete recovery to those in need.

SCHOOLBOY HOWLERS

Perhaps, because long ago, I was a teacher, schoolboy faux pas intrigue me. If you get the same kick out of them as I do, they are worth taking up a small space here.

Solomon had 500 wives and 500 porcupines. Socrates was a famous Greek teacher, who died from an overdose of wedlock. Benjamin Franklin invented electricity by rubbing two cats backwards. Franklin died in 1790 and is still dead. Gravity was invented by Isaac Walton. It is chiefly noticeable in autumn when the apples are falling off the trees. Bach and Handel were famous composers. Handel was half German, half Italian and half English. He was very large. Bach died from 1750 to the present.

INTERVENTION

Charlie Brady has sent me a raft of correspondence he has had with the British Government on the subject of compensation for widows of FEPOW's. Charlie was reacting to a press report that these ladies were being denied pension benefits because their husbands had died from the effects of smoking. The long and short of the story is that there apparently was no substance to the news report, and a happy ending resulted. Charlie keeps going!

CORRESPONDENCE

The following is a brief report of the mail I have received since the last letter was issued. They appear in no particular order: from Neil Darrah regarding the reunion of the M-G Branch; from Flash Clayton, a couple of letters with news of Jessie and him; from Ed Rodrigues with personal news and a report of his health; from Morgan Davies, about his health; from Glen Gregoire, re change of address. Glen and wife have moved from Pointe-a-la Croix to Campbellton, NB because of Glen's health; from Audrey Murray regarding a donation sent in memory of husband Matt; from Harold Englehart with details of his health problems; several notes from Lionel Speller with newspaper clippings, always enjoyable; from John Stroud, a note with his newsletter; (incidentally, a big thank you to all of you who took the trouble to write or phone with Matt Sanford's address); from Lionel Hurd with a request that he had received from Belgium to be placed on the mailing list for this newsletter, from Nellie Laing with a donation, from Kay Mann with comments on Glen's death, from Clifford McDavid with a donation in memory of Glen Mann, Included with Flash's letter are copies of letters he received from a high school teacher in Lillooet, BC, and from a student in the same school. They had reviewed the movie, "Savage Christmas", featuring Flash and Bob Manchester, and were so impressed that the teacher, Mr. Stacey, sent letters to a number of people, including the Prime Minister, expressing his concern and that of his students. He said, "Many of my students were so appalled that they took up this issue with politicians, friends, and the Prime minister himself." and, "I went through 12 years of school and 6 years of university, only to discover this issue by accident. I have now made this a priority in teaching." The student,

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Cameron Davies, stated, "...all of the surviving Hong Kong Veterans should be treated like kings for paying the price of the government's childish mistakes".

It's nice to know that somebody cares.

CONGRATULATIONS

The new president of the Manitoba Branch is George Peterson. According to Angus McRitchie's last newsletter, George is a past officer of the Branch. Congratulations and good luck, George. I look forward to associating with you.

LAST POST

Since the last letter, Glenford Mann has passed on. Glen was also a member of the Ontario Branch. He had been in poor health for a long time and was not able to make it to Halifax for our last convention. We also report the death of Mrs. Anne Champion Ross, widow of Lt. F. Donald Ross.

Ted Day died on May 16 in Quebec City. Ted had suffered from cancer in previous years but the last time I saw him he was in good spirits and seemed well. You will remember him as "B" company clerk in the Royal Rifles. He died in hospital in Quebec City.

From the Manitoba letter we learn of the passing of Robert Dukelow, R. Lloyd Younger, Michael Soroka, W. Clair Purse, Alexander Favel, and William Kowalchuk, members of the Manitoba Branch. At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, nous nous souviendra d'eux.

Freddy Kelly wants you to know that the report of his demise in the Ontario Newsletter is greatly exaggerated.

BIOKI

Harold Englehart is having trouble with his eyes again, and will have to have further operations. We hope that things are not too serious, because we need him to control our finances. Lawrence Rattie says that he is doing well after a bout of illness earlier on. That is also good news. Lawrence has been one of the strengths of our Branch for a long time. Charlie Campbell was back in hospital. I am told that Marcel Ouelet is not well, but I have no details;

ANNIVERSARY

Charlie Campbell and Hazel celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on May 10, with children, grandchildren, and a host of friends and well-wishers.

I have an invitation to attend the 50th anniversary of Paul Laflamme and his wife on July 12, in Bridgeville, Quebec. I hope I can make it.

Ray and Dorothy Sauson celebrated their 50th in May.

Edwina and I will be having an open house on July 7 to celebrate our 50th.

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DONATIONS

From: Mrs. Aini Dissing, Mrs. Ruby Lockhart, Mrs. Hilda Grimshaw, Mrs. Dorothy Lockhart, Paul Dancause, George Macdonnell,

In memoriam:

From: Mrs. Audrey Murray in memory of husband Matt

Mrs. Dorothee Ross in memory of husband Leo

Henry and Isabel Lyons in memory of Glen Mann

Nellie Laing in memory of husband John

Clifford McDavid in memory of Glen Mann

In memory of Glenn Mann, the following donations were forwarded by the MacCoubrey Funeral Home in Cobourg: Florence Tucker, Joyce McComb, Alan Golding, John Parry, Royal Canadian Legion Elizabeth Smellie Branch, Miriam Johnston, Marj Dwyer, Ladies Auxiliary Hong Kong Veterans Ontario Branch, Bob Watts, Bob Cowin, Edith Watson

KAI TAK

Those of us who were there will know what I am about to tell, and this tale might amuse other readers.

During the nine months I spent in North Point on Hong Kong Island, we were taken daily for a period of time, by ferry to work on Kai Tak Airport on the Kowloon side. The project was to tear down and remove a high hill which stood at the end of the only runway, so that the runway could be lengthened.

We laid rails about three feet apart and had trolley cars with flat bottoms about four feet square and removable boxes shaped like pyramids with the top cut off. These cars were pushed up the hill by hand, loaded with dirt and allowed to run by gravity down the hill with a rider aboard. They were equipped with a crude brake on the same principle as the ones on the old western stage coaches. When the car reached the bottom of the hill, two or more men lifted the bottomless box off the platform and the trolley was upset off the tracks to dump the load, then uprighted, and pushed back up the hill.

Needless to say we arranged as many "accidents" as possible; for example, we found that if we went into a curve a little too fast, the tracks would gradually shift to the outside of the curve. When everything looked just right, the "conductor" would hit the curve with a little extra speed, and the whole thing, trolley, load, tracks and all would go over the side. The "conductor", if he was agile enough, would follow the car down over the bank to make the whole thing look authentic.

There were surprisingly few beatings when such an "accident" occurred, a tribute to the acting ability of the "conductors" and the gullibility of the railway "supervisors".

IRISH BLESSING

May the roads rise up to meet you, may the wind be always at your back, may the sun shine warm upon your face, the rains fall soft upon your fields, and until we meet again, may God hold you in the hollow of his hand.

Be good to each other, and may God bless.

Philip