



WASURERU-NAI

"Never Forget"

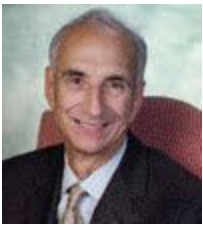


National Newsletter of the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association

Spring 2019 Edition

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President's Message

Mike Babin

Memorial Wall Accessibility



As wonderful as our Hong Kong Veterans Memorial Wall is, it lacks two important things: it's not easily accessible to those with mobility problems, and it's quite inconvenient to drop visitors off nearby. To address this, we're undertaking an *enhanced accessibility* project. Yes, I know it's not as exciting as our original project to build the Wall, but just as we did 10 years ago, we need your support to make it happen. We've already received a grant from Veterans Affairs for \$25,000, but that won't be enough. So shortly we'll be starting a fundraising

program to find the rest. You can expect to hear our pleas for donations via email and other means, so get ready! And if you know of organizations who provide funding for this kind of project, please get in touch with me by clicking on "Contact Us" in the top right corner of any of our web pages.

Ottawa is a lovely place, but wow is it cold in December! Since our Memorial Wall was dedicated 10 years ago, Mitzi Ross and her Ottawa colleagues have held a commemorative ceremony annually in early December. To make it more comfortable for those attending, and to hopefully attract additional attendees such as families, and those who may be driving, cycling or walking past the Wall when the weather is good, beginning this year we will hold the ceremony each August.

Recent Board of Directors Decisions



For the most part, our governments hold elections every 4 or 5 years. So why do we elect our Board of Directors every year? Good question! In an effort to reduce the amount of work required to run elections, and hopefully make serving on your Board of Directors more attractive, we've decided to hold elections for Directors every two years. Our next election will be scheduled close to our national convention in August 2020.

As I noted in the last newsletter, we held our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on December 8. The Board has decided that our next AGM will be held in conjunction with our national convention.

For the last year or so we've been posting a summary of each Board meeting on our web site. In the interest of increased transparency and a better-informed membership, we've decided to post the entire minutes of our meetings, rather than just a summary. Hopefully, you'll find this useful. Here's where the page is:

https://www.hkvca.ca/aboutus/genmtgs/bod_mtg_summary/index2019.php

Every year for many, many years, our faithful and capable Treasurer, Barry Mitchell, has been having our financial statements audited by a professional auditing firm. This company has been kind enough to do the audit at a very low cost to us. However, because of regulatory changes which are placing increased demands on how auditors do their work, the firm is no longer able to do our audit, and we've found that engaging another firm will be quite expensive. Our financial situation is very modest, and we've received advice that for us, having audited books is a luxury. So, the Board has decided to no longer have our books audited. Our financial statements will continue to be made available at the AGM, and Barry will be happy to answer questions from any member at any time about our financial situation.

Plaque Program

I'm very pleased to see that our program to place plaques in Legion branches and other venues is moving very well. Additional plaque unveilings are planned in every region over the next several months and into the summer. Remember, the plaques are provided to the Legion free of charge, so please talk to your local branch about installing one. Find out more by visiting this page: <https://www.hkvca.ca/plaques/index.php>

I Want to Hear from You!



I would like to hear from our members, especially on what we can be doing better to keep the story of the Battle of Hong Kong visible to Canadians. Please contact me with your ideas and suggestions on this, or any other aspect of our work by selecting the "Contact Us" link on any of our web pages.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM



In Remembrance

Last Post

[William MacWhirter](#), RRC, on Feb 28, 2019

[Fred Cooper](#), RRC, on Jan 4, 2019

In Memoriam

Marguerite Mondor, widow of [Paul-Emile Mondor](#), WG, on Dec 16, 2018



From the Editor

Jim Trick (editor@hkvca.ca)

Things have been quiet during this winter, and no wonder! A deep freeze everywhere, even here in Lotusland.

We've included two very moving poems for this edition. Well worth reading and pondering!

As you'll see from our various articles, our plaque continues to be displayed in several new venues - what an excellent way to commemorate 'C' Force!

Do you have a story or experience you think might be of interest? I'm always looking for a fresh point of view to feature

in an upcoming newsletter edition, so feel free to contact me and we'll go on from there.

When I put on my other hat as HKVCA Webmaster, I often wonder how many of you find our various web sites of value, or even more basic, how many of our members have even visited. The sheer size can be intimidating, so I've written some crib notes below to help you get around if and when you do join the 1200 visitors we welcomed last month.

Please note: underlined words in articles refer to links that are active in our online version or are active if you view our PDF copy on screen.

Navigating Our Corner of the WWW

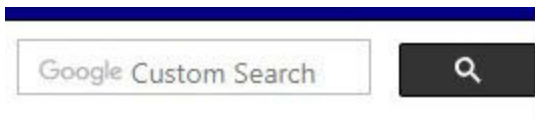
Jim Trick, Webmaster

The World Wide Web (WWW) is a fantastic invention. It has allowed us to store and share virtually all accumulated human knowledge in a library that we all can access from our computers and smart devices. Few of us have failed to be impacted by this power and freedom.

However... like most tools, resources on the WWW need to be understood to be of value. The sheer volume of information is staggering, so how do we make sure we're getting the full picture when we have a question?

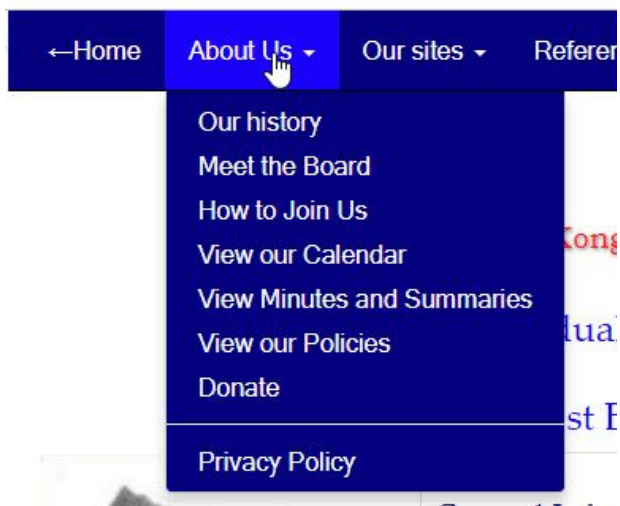
If you've visited any of our sites (yes, we have several!), you'll find that there is a lot of information that has been compiled over the years. We've put in place several methods that are designed to assist you in finding what you want.

First and foremost is our Search tool which you'll find at the top right of almost all of our pages.



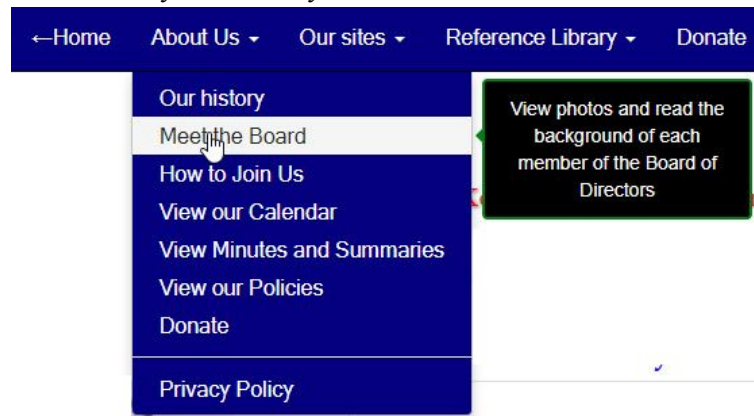
Filling in a word or phrase will produce a listing of all "hits" from our various sites. For instance, if you want to search for a veteran named "doddridge", type that name into the search box and click on the magnifying glass. You'll not only get a link to this veteran's individual report but see all of the other times he was mentioned as well.

The next tool that will go far to help you navigate is our Master Menu which is at the top of all pages, except those in our photo gallery. It stays in view even when you scroll a page, so it's always available. Hovering your pointing device over an item will display a drop-down list of sub-items that form a part of that category as you can see below.



Even better, as illustrated below, hovering your pointing device over one of the sub-items will display some text giving you an

idea of what you'll see if you click the link.



So, when you visit our HKVCA web site, feel free to take a few minutes and take a tour of our menu setup. You'll get a feel for the types of information we've accumulated over the years. I highly recommend that you take a more detailed look at the following offerings:

- "Our Sites" - this menu item lists all of the major online subject areas of HKVCA including items such as the Memorial Wall, store and Online Services
- "Reference Library" - this is a huge part of our online presence and includes many 'C' Force veterans personal accounts, along with other submissions and helpful external links. If you're a history buff, be prepared to spend a significant amount of time in this area!

If you do get confused, you can always click on the HKVCA logo (top left on most pages) to get back to our main page.

The last tool I'll mention is our "Contact Us" link which is on the right-hand side of the Master Menu. Feel free to fill in the form with any question or concern you might have. We'll get back to you within 24 hours.

Smart Devices (Smartphones and Tablets)

Accessing our sites using a Smart Device works in much the same way as I've described above but, due to space limitations, our Master Menu can be found by touching this symbol:



All other content will reformat automatically to fit the screen size of the device you're using. Neat!

Reminiscing by Gerry Part III



Gerry Gerrard

(Editor's Note: Part I of this article appeared in our [Autumn edition](#), Part II in our [Winter edition](#))

Hong Kong Battle Insights

The attack on Pearl Harbour was December 7th, which was the 8th of Dec. in Hong Kong. The day before, our two infantry units moved to battle positions on the island. We, the Signal Corps., set up a temporary wireless station in front of our barracks on the mainland.

Two hours after Pearl Harbour we were attacked. I was immediately sent to join the 1st. Royal Scots on the Gin Drinkers Line. All I had was the clothes I was wearing, my helmet, rifle, gas mask, one hand grenade and some ammunition.

On December 11th, we retreated to the island and I joined my unit at Wong Nei Chong Gap. Unfortunately, the enemy was quite familiar with all installations and their first bombing raid blew out our ack-ack guns so they could use spotter planes to not only keep track of our movements but also direct artillery fire.

The first landing was at Wong Nei Chong Gap. It was a pitch black night with on and off showers; the only light was from exploding shells, mortars, hand grenades and rifle fire. By daylight, we had retreated to the top of the gap and got reorganized. During the night we had passed Brigadier Lawson's bunker which was about 100 yards behind ours but I never knew that until a visit in 2005.

A half dozen of us, along with a British Officer, walked down to the other side of the island to the Jockey Club which was taken over by the Royal Signals. We never got inside but were assigned guard duty that night after a sleepless night before. Again, the next morning, we set out for our new headquarters but stopped at Wan Chai for a break. As soon as I got there, Sgt. Sharp took me to the wireless station where Tony Grimston was at the set and Bud Fairley was sitting there not looking too good as he was injured in the bombing raid at Sham Shui Po, I wanted to talk with him but was called away.

The guns had started up again, as I made my way back I did not notice that there were two doors about six feet apart and I took the wrong one. The room was dark except for a door to a room across from me which had a small window. The officer who was leading us was standing talking to one of his men so I went to him to see how much time we had. A shell came through the end wall. The room had all brick walls so you can imagine the shrapnel, brick and mortar dust flying around. My eyes, mouth, nose and ears were full.

The concussion blew the three of us into that back room. I got a hard thump on the back of my head but finding no blood, I replaced my lost helmet with one I found. I then discovered the dark room was a rest room so we had to get the wounded bandaged and away.

Shortly after, the artillery stopped and a Royal Signals Sgt. took over and called out that we would spend the night down below at a bunker on the beach. I was all for this and as two of us started down, the Sgt. yelled with some profanity "don't you know the army doesn't walk it marches". I could not believe this as we had to line up in front of that six-foot shell hole in the wall. A perfect target, so I jumped on the road and the rest of the men fell in. Just as we were about to march out, one of the men called out that the rations were in the building, so the Sgt. told off him and one other, then looked to the head of the line and called me to get them. I slung my rifle over my shoulder but when I got to the hole, my body stopped. I never had this before or later but I had to summon every bit of my willpower to get through that hole. I picked up two tins each holding a day's rations for ten men.

When I got to the bunker, I dropped the rations. A British machine gunner grabbed me and told me to lay on the bunk but I just sat on the edge to relax and gather my thoughts. I put my elbows on my knees and was just going to put my face in my hands when I saw my hands were coated with a mixture of blood, mortar and bits of brick. I said to myself, just be thankful it's not yours.

The next morning, we headed for our new headquarters and when, on arriving, I thought I should report to our Captain seeing that I was the only one in the group other than the officer leading us. He didn't know which of our men had been sent to the hospital, but he waved me off and said he knew all about it.

That afternoon, two of us were put on guard duty at an intersection of our road and one leading to a military warehouse and sure enough, the guns started, aimed at our headquarters. The shells were going over our heads but once in a while one fell short and with only a pill box to duck behind, we would have shrapnel bouncing on the road all around us.

The next morning, three of us were sent back to Wan Chai and resumed our duties. I got a message that our men we sent to hospital had died. Later, we received the order to surrender. No dinner! We were marched to a telephone warehouse where I slept on a large coil of cable and so ended Christmas Day 1941.

(Read more about Gerry on our website)

Memorial Poems

HE WAS ONLY 16

He was only 16
When he left his homeland
To protect Hong Kong's colony
From the threat of Japan.

They left on the Awatea
To sail across the seas,
Royal Rifles and Grenadiers
Two ill-fated companies.

He was only 16
When the Japanese attacked.
The Canadians fought bravely
Was not courage they lacked.

The fighting was fierce
And many did fall.
Though outnumbered and weary
They still answered each call.

He was only 16
When the bullet struck.
Taken to St. Stephen's
He would live...Was that luck?

The hospital overtaken,
Wounded murdered in their beds,
And those who might aid them
Raped, bloodied or dead.

He was only 16
And a prisoner of war.
There was no turning back,
He would suffer to the core.

And not long thereafter
He was a slave of Japan
Disease, beatings and starvation
Were his fate to withstand.

The years passed so slowly
Ere they were set free.
So much had been lost
Of who he used to be.

Youth's blush had been altered,
But life must go on.
Work, marry, have children
And strive to be strong.

But haunted by memories
That just couldn't be named,
He struggled, sometimes faltered,
But fought to stay sane.

Like so many before him
And there's been many more
Tormented by cruel demons,
The memories...of war.

By Karen MacKay

Dedicated to my father, [Laurie V. MacKay](#), a Hong Kong Veteran; to his comrades in the Royal Rifles and the Winnipeg Grenadiers; AND to all those who have suffered from the memories of war.

“In Vain”

When I gaze upon the surrounding hills,
Blossoming dales, mid countless rills,
I think of the men who there remain,
And wonder if they've been lost in vain.
For my heart is stung right to the core,
By the useless, unfair toll of war.

Where is the storybook's glamour and glory
Among those bodies so mangled and gory?
Where is the romance in the blowing to hell
Of countless men by a screaming shell?
Why be so primitive, savage, and wild
As to aim cruel bombs at woman and child?

It's all very well for bands to play
And cheer the departing soldier away.
It's nice for all, a flag to wave,
For the man who's leaving, his country to save.
On returning I wonder who'll up to him dart
And give him a hand, to get a fresh start.

For victory in war, the soldier pays dear,
He hands out his life to a fat profiteer,
Who, while the soldier takes all the hell,

Sits back, safely, at home in his shell.
And when it's all over and hard to find jobs
The soldiers are bums, the fat men are snobs.
Were it not for these scoundrels alone,
Wars would almost be unknown.
For, in their scheming, grasping way,
They bring war closer, each passing day.
And yet, I'm sure there's not a score
Of common men, who'd welcome war.

When the storm calms, there's no more foam,
At last we return to our native home.
I wonder if all these lessons we've learned,
Will just be discarded, laughed at and spurned.
That's why I can't help but think with disdain,
“Have all these men just died in vain?”

Written at North Point POW Camp in Hong Kong by Ken Cambon, RRC on May 16, 1942

BC Region Report

Murray Doull



Greetings from the central interior of British Columbia where winter refuses to relinquish its grip.

Gerry Tuppert, our BC Regional Director, is currently south of the border spending time in a warmer climate and has asked me to help with a submission for the March newsletter from our region. We wish Gerry and his wife safe travels.

Mona Thornton, daughter of [Rifleman Joseph Frenette RRC](#) (deceased), was interviewed in December 2018 by Melanie Excal, a reporter from the Penticton Herald in the Okanagan area of BC where Mona lives. On December 24, 2018, this interview appeared in an article on the front page of the Herald under the caption, "Heavy hearts at holiday time".

In the article, Mona reflects about the content of the journals her father had secretly written as a prisoner of war following his capture by the Japanese in Hong Kong on Christmas Day 1941 as a member of 'C' Force. Any form of such material was strictly forbidden and most likely Mr. Frenette would have paid the ultimate price if they had been found by his captors. The journals took many years to transcribe as they were often out of order on purpose, in shorthand and hurriedly written in secret. Mona had to pause many times throughout her work to cope with the emotion.

As a long time volunteer at Penticton's museum, Mona was able to connect with curator Dennis Oomen, who took great interest in her father's story and helped her with the work and the museum has some of his belongings on display with the HKVCA Commemorative Plaque.

With permission from the Penticton Herald, here is a short excerpt:

Frenette worked in a mine and later a shipyard, and was transported on a Hell ship where he spent four days in a hold with 600 other prisoners. Life in camp was no better. They had long hours, up to 12 or 14 hours a day. They had rice for every meal, sometimes a cup full, sometimes only half depending on the mood of the guards.



Mona Thornton with some of her father's personal belongings beside the HKVCA Commemorative Plaque that are on display at the Penticton Museum. Photo supplied by the Penticton Herald

If you have access to a computer the complete article can found at this [link](#).

Joseph Frenette's story was also featured on [Peach City Radio](#) in 2013 in an award-winning piece by Craig Henderson. It can be heard at:

Len Cotton, son of Rifleman Joseph Cotton (deceased) participated in a dedication ceremony on December 11, 2018 at RCL Branch #288 in West Kelowna BC where he presented the HKVCA Commemorative Plaque to Branch president, Barb Hebner (see next photo).

Len explained the purpose of the Plaque and provided a thorough history of the Hong Kong veterans to those in attendance.. The plaque is displayed in a prominent location at the entrance to

the West Kelowna Legion. (Full dedication text and photo are published in our online version of this newsletter)



Len Cotton presents the HKVCA commemorative Plaque to Barb Hebner, president of the Westbank Legion Branch #288 on December 11, 2018. Photo courtesy of The Westside Weekly

Another HKVCA Commemorative Plaque was presented on December 10, 2018, at the Vavenby and District RCL Branch #259 in Clearwater, BC.



Murray Doull presenting the HKVCA Commemorative Plaque to Calvin Lutz, president of Vavenby and District RCL Branch #259 on December 10, 2018.

Photo courtesy of Lucy Doull

I (Murray Doull), son of Rifleman LTS (Bill) Doull, am the Sgt. at Arms for this Branch and I presented the Plaque to Branch president, Calvin Lutz,

following an explanation about the Plaque and the story of our HK vets, the Battle of Hong Kong and its aftermath.

This presentation took place at the monthly meeting where the Branch executive and over 20 Legion members were in attendance.



←Plaque mounted on the Wall of Remembrance at the Clearwater Legion.

The Plaque is displayed prominently on the Wall of Remembrance at the Legion where my dad's shadow box is also displayed (photo published on our online version)

We Will Remember Them

Prairie Prose



Carol Hadley

Greetings from the Prairie Region. As we wait for warmer weather to come, we continue to hope it will be soon so we can put away the shovels and parkas. For those who were able to escape to warmer climates, I hope you enjoy yourself and

come back refreshed.



George Peterson, the last Winnipeg Grenadier, who is now living in Deer Lodge Centre, celebrated his 98th birthday on February 8, 2019. Family and friends joined him for this wonderful event. Here is the [link](#) for an article that was published about George.

We were able to arrange to have the HK flag flying at the Cenotaph on Memorial Boulevard near our Legislation Building for the month of December. Unfortunately, were unable to get a picture of it but it will be up again for the month of August and hopefully, we will get a picture then.

We are continuing to research requests for plaques from different Legions, Anavets and other areas in Winnipeg and Manitoba. So far, we have scheduled Prince Edward legion in Winnipeg on Sunday, April 28, 2019, and Sunday, June 9 for Pilot Mound in Pilot Mound, Manitoba. As soon as we have the other dates confirmed we will inform our members so that they may attend and if possible, participate in the dedication.

We are grateful for our members who have searched out the venues and initiated the arrangements for these plaques.

We will be involved in the Red River Heritage Fair 2019 taking place at the University of Winnipeg on May 2, 2019, as a sponsor for an award for students whose dioramas are war-related. We share this award with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles who also assist in the judging of the student projects. Stan Lopata and Alex Taylor will man our display and participate in the scavenger hunt that includes the students looking for clues in the displays for prizes. It's a full day of fun and education for the students, teachers and parents that attend.

Memorabilia

Many families are dealing with downsizing for parents or themselves and have items or documents that would be of interest to the HKVCA and anyone interested in the history of the Battle of Hong Kong.

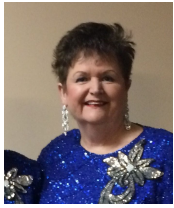
My suggestions to inquiries are to scan or take a picture of the items and send them to our webmaster with an explanation.

There are other ideas that may also work. Try contacting a local museum which might use the items as a Remembrance display in November or in August or December which are significant dates in the Battle history. Here is the link that might help people in Manitoba:

<http://www.museumsmanitoba.com/> to find a museum near them. In Winnipeg, many items are in the Manitoba Museum, St. Vital museum and the Military Museum on Marion. The Manitoba Museum has a permanent display which is changed out quarterly as there are thousands of items in their collection. Unfortunately, there is no central venue for these items to be on display as it is very costly to operate and manage.

I hope this helps anyone that is dealing with this issue of disposing of cherished items. If there are other suggestions that we should know about, we would appreciate hearing from you.

Ontario Offerings



Niagara Luncheon

Pam Newhouse

Hello everyone from snowy Niagara Falls. I hope that you have survived our unusually severe winter. I, for one, am really looking forward to the spring this year.

I just wanted to give everyone a heads up that I will be hosting my annual luncheon, not at Bettys in Niagara Falls as usual, but rather at Royal Canadian Legion branch number 60 on June 8 located at 828 Legion Rd., Burlington Ontario. Lunch will take place in the Museum Room located in the basement. This will save 3/4 hour travel time for all you out of towners. The cost will be \$20 per person and will start at 11:30. Hope to see many of you there. Watch for your official invitation in your email early in May but in the meantime, be sure to save the date!

Obituary of Frederick Cooper

Jackie LeDrew

Peacefully at his home in Keswick, on Friday, January 4, 2019 at the age of 99 years. Frederick, beloved husband of the late Delilah. Dear father of Bill and his wife Suzanne, Gord and his

wife Carol, Lois and her husband John Leppan, Ron, Darlene and her husband Phil Comartin, and Dianne and her husband Eric Day. Loving grandfather of ten and great grandfather of ten.

Gravenhurst Plaque Presentation

Lori Atkinson Smith



Fred Hurd (left) presented the HKVCA plaque to Legion Branch President Jim Davidson in January. More details including the Press Release available from our online version.

Quebec Report



Lucette Mailloux Muir

Greetings everyone,

Hopefully, this extremely cold weather and snow will soon be behind us as the March sun warms up the temperature. Our local people are already fast at work getting ready for our sugaring season, that sweet gold maple syrup!

Following the Christmas season, we are back at work. Year-end reports are all looking good. We continue to hold our executive meetings, keep our members informed on news and happenings and always looking for new ideas for the interest of our members.

We keep in contact with our veterans and widows. We thank our members that took the time to complete and return the updated membership form recently mailed to all members. Updates are always needed in order to stay in touch with everyone.

Like other regions, we also have growing pains concerning membership. We are lucky to have a good membership but would encourage all members to invite our younger

generations to join the HKVCA and help us in keeping the memory alive.

We are working and in contact with local and area Royal Canadian Legions in reference to the installation of the HKVCA Commemorative Plaque. Dates are on the table and confirmations soon to come.

That will be it for this time. We wish everyone a Happy and Healthy Spring Season.

Take care,

Lucette Mailloux Muir

Director Quebec Region