



WEBNEWS

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IN THIS ISSUE

- Branch 90 thanks Scotiabank
- Some War Stories Still Haven't Been Told
- Canadians honor soldiers killed in Afghanistan
- John Renwick Golf Tournament
- Hello? Hello? Can you hear me?
- A fishy tale
- Light show to honour WWI dead
- Canada OKs vaccine to prevent painful shingles in seniors
- Rare moments of joy
- Second World War Hero Honoured in St Catherines with Federal Support
- Traffic at military hospital tells tale of Taliban toll
- New memorial to honour Canada's Merchant Navy
- Governor General announces new Sacrifice Medal for wounded, killed in action
- Vets honoured for their sacrifices - VIDEO

Branch 90 thanks Scotiabank



Thanks ... times three!

On behalf of the executive and membership of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 90, I would like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks for fundraising efforts undertaken on our behalf over the last few months.

On Saturday, May 31, the staff of the West Brant branch of Scotiabank held a yard sale/ barbecue with all proceeds to Branch 90. These great volunteers raised \$1,500, which was then matched by Scotiabank to grow to \$3,000.

Thanks go to branch manager Elaine Bessie and her dedicated staff, who gave of their free time on a Saturday to do this for us.

Special thanks to Marianne Louch who helped spearhead the effort and to the following sponsors for their donations of supplies and services: Shopper's Drug Mart (West Brant), Forte's Market, D & J Sausage, The Expositor, The Paris Star, Brant Food centre, International Bakery, Price Chopper, Minuteman Press, Sobeys, Witteveen Meats, The Burford Times, Staples and Maurice Lesperance of Prima Clean for the use of his barbecue.

This Scotiabank truly embraced the meaning of community involvement and we thank them very much.

On July 1, the branch held its second annual parking lot event. Each year when the city holds its festivities at Cockshutt Park, parking is at a premium. Branch 90 sells parking spaces for \$5, with all proceeds to the branch and this year, added a barbecue and cold drinks event. This event was once again very successful, with over \$1,500 raised.

Special thanks go to David Petit-Pas for designing this event and giving of his holiday to oversee it. Very special thanks go also to the following branch members who volunteered to assist us: Dan Gale, Nancy Detweiler, Wendy Ayers, Bryce Anderson, Wayne King, George Armstrong and Pat and Charlie Farrow. Your efforts were very much appreciated.

Friday, July 11 featured our first summer fling event at Branch 90. Four of our favourite local bands and entertainers: Headin' Home, Mike Thorpe, Stardust and The Grumpies, gave freely of their time to entertain in the clubrooms.

A number of branch members donated prepared food in order to have a large buffet lunch. These efforts together made for a very successful event and once again, Branch 90 was the beneficiary of the proceeds.

Thanks to David Petit-Pas for organizing this event, to David Compeau, for his professional design of posters to advertise and to Irene Green and Pat Antler for overseeing the buffet table.

These events only underscore what can be accomplished with many hands working together towards a common goal. Once again ... thank you!

Chrystal Petit-Pas President R. C. Legion Branch 90

Monday, August 25, 2008
The Brantford Expositor
Section: RCL

Some War Stories Still Haven't Been Told



When a story is submitted to a newspaper, the writer has no control over when or if it will be used. Here's one that has been sitting around since 1914.

It was written by William Dodd, one of 30,000 khaki-clad Canadians who sailed into England's Plymouth

Harbour in October that year. Before leaving Toronto, he made a deal with the Toronto Star to send back stories as an unofficial correspondent. He would be paid if the story was used and, because he was unofficial, it had to first get past rigid censors.

The young man's story likely would have upset military pedants. What the writer saw as funny, the censors would have seen as mutinous. Dodd kept the original, and its aged pages are a source of pride to his son, Bruce Dodd, of Linton Road, a retired engineer.

The Dodd family has researched archives and, as far as they know, the story was never printed. It's written in the flowery language of the day. (The Canadians were there to answer "the Kaiser's insolent challenge.")

Their arrival in Plymouth was a surprise, having been diverted from Southampton by reports of submarines in that area. When 33 oceanliners steamed in, accompanied by as many military and supply ships, the old home port of Sir Francis Drake suddenly came alive.

Soldiers waved from every deck of every liner, and the harbour threw a noisy welcome. Whistles blew from ships and factories and the cacophony drowned out two brass bands that had hurriedly rushed to the docks.

In an impressive display of seamanship and harbour management, the unexpected Canadian convoy managed to find berths in the crowded harbour without bumping into anything.

And there they sat. For days, the troops, sick of sea travel, could only stand at the rails and wave to the hundreds of citizens who piled into anything that would float to tour up and down the rows of ships.

The people of Plymouth threw treats to the troops and shouted welcome, but the unexpected arrival meant there was no other place for them to stay, and too many to go ashore.

A wealthy landowner organized a party. But only 150 Canadians could attend. The invitations were to be split 50-50 between officers and enlisted men. Since the troops outnumbered officers by about 20 to one, it struck the lower ranks as unfair. It was another officers'-perks type of party.

On the liner Grampian were members of the Canadian Field Artillery, too

new "to have become properly broken to the military yoke."

The writer estimated there were almost 100 "simmering malcontents" who managed to cut loose and clamber into a huge lifeboat. As they did, the ship's whistle screeched in distress and every ship with steam up headed in that direction. Police boats also headed out. With about 700 metres between the ship and a stretch of shingle beach, the race was on.

Amateur oarsmen managed to quickly get a rhythm, with cries of "pull" from ship and shore setting the pace. The people of Plymouth waded out to drag the boat ashore, and used their bodies to clutter the way for pursuing police. The writer/witness said police weren't trying very hard, and seemed to be part of the game.

Once again, horns and whistles, cheering and whistling, made the harbour din deafening. The escaping "Canucks" melded into the crowd and were treated to two days of "feasting and fraternizing." Mr. Dodd's crowd managed to elude the roundup for four days.

Six months later, hundreds of the men from the Grampian, at the Second Battle of Ypres, would go into history as being among the first Allied troops to experience a chlorine gas attack.

There were 816 Canadians downwind when the gas was released and, when it cleared, 623 were dead. It was ugly. Heavier than air, the gas filled the trenches, forcing the troops to make a choice; stay and choke to death, or come out and face a hail of automatic weapons fire.

In desperation, men were told to urinate into their handkerchiefs and breathe through them. It worked in Hollywood versions of gas attacks, but in reality, was ineffective. The gas interacted with moisture and caused horrific burns to armpits and groins. Blindness was a usual result.

The origins of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind can be traced back to that event. Bruce Dodd says his grandfather was one of the survivors, and after the war became a staff writer for the Star. Being an artilleryman, the veteran suffered serious hearing loss and had a limited career.

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Monday, August 25, 2008
Dave Brown, The Ottawa Citizen

Section: Veterans **many soldiers are dying for a lost**

Canadians honor soldiers killed in Afghanistan



People line a bridge in Whitby, Ontario, Canada to pay respects to the passing convoy for the three deceased soldiers following their repatriation to Canada on Saturday, Aug. 23, 2008. A roadside blast Wednesday killed the three soldiers in the southern Afghanistan province of Kandahar, Canada's Department of National Defense said. Their deaths bring to 93 the number of Canadian soldiers who have died during the Afghan mission since it began in 2002.

Credit: AP Photo/The Canadian Press, Frank Gunn

WHITBY, Ontario (AP) — More than 200 people line an overpass above a stretch of Canada's busiest thoroughfare now known as the "Highway of Heroes" to pay final tribute to three soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

Veterans, families and firefighters respectfully applaud and wave maple leaf flags as the motorcade passes. The soldiers' families wave back in appreciation.

The ritual is repeated every time a fallen soldier returns to Canada.

On Saturday night, as three bodies moved down the 100-mile-long section of Highway 401 that connects the military base in Trenton, Ontario, to the morgue in Toronto, dozens of bridges along the way were packed with people.

Canada has lost 93 soldiers and one diplomat in Afghanistan — including three soldiers killed by a roadside bomb last Wednesday. The country first sent troops to Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks and increased the deployment after declining a U.S. request to dispatch troops to Iraq.

As the death toll in Afghanistan approaches 100, it threatens to rekindle a debate between those who argue a stable Afghanistan is needed to protect Canadians and global security and opponents who say too

many soldiers are dying for a lost cause. That debate had largely dissipated since parliament voted in March to extend the mission to 2011.

Retired Maj. Gen. Lewis MacKenzie, the commander of a U.N. force in the Balkans, said the milestone could revive debate about the mission but is not likely to derail it.

"There will be a lot of attention but I don't think it will cause a change in policy," he said. "It's as tragic at 99 as it is at 101."

One idea that could fuel the debate is that some Canadians lump Afghanistan with the war in Iraq.

"Here's a U.N.-sanctioned mission carried out by NATO and you still have people referring to it as Bush's war and we're the lackeys of the Americans," MacKenzie said. "That's just knee jerk anti-American, anti-Bush rhetoric."

Canada's Conservative government had banned the media from showing live images of flag-draped coffins at the Trenton base in 2006, angering political opponents and some families who accused the government of trying to play down the growing human cost of the mission in Afghanistan.

The decision mirrored the Bush administration policy blocking media coverage of the coffins of slain service members arriving in the United States.

Canada's government has since changed its stance on media coverage of coffins in Trenton and it now lets the families decide if they want it.

Tom McFarlane, who has come out to the highway at least 12 times since Canada lost its first soldiers in Afghanistan in a friendly fire incident in 2002, is touched by those who turn out.

"It's a big number and it's growing. Every time I come to the bridge I always wish it was my last. But you know in the back of your mind that it's not going to be the last," said McFarlane, whose nephew served in Afghanistan. "It's the least that I can do for these guys who are giving their lives," he said.

The mounting toll in the fight against al-Qaida and the Taliban has exacted an emotional, if not political, price in Canada — a country whose traditional role as peacekeeper has left its citizens unaccustomed to

seeing soldiers die.

Canada has not lost so many soldiers since more than 500 were killed in the Korean War.

Judith Churchill, a 36-year-old teacher, brought her two kids to an overpass in Whitby on Saturday night but she had no answer when they asked when the war would end.

"I never thought it would get that high," Churchill said of the death toll. "Canadians are traditionally peacekeepers and so for us to lose that many, it's hard."

Jim Flaherty, Canada's Finance Minister, praised his constituents who have been showing up each time a dead soldier is returned.

"It's a great outpouring of support by ordinary Canadians. None of this was orchestrated by the government or by the town or anything like that. It's just people that want to come out and pay their respects," Flaherty said.

"It's uniquely Canadian. It was spontaneous."

Canadians — the majority of whom applauded their government for declining to join the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq — are increasingly concerned about the toll in Afghanistan.

In all, there are some 53,000 NATO-led troops from 27 countries serving there. But it has been Canadian, British, Dutch and U.S. forces — with support from Denmark, Romania, Estonia and non-NATO Australia — that have borne the brunt of the Taliban's attacks.

Canada has 2,500 soldiers stationed in Kandahar province, the former Taliban stronghold that has again emerged as the epicenter of violence.

This year will likely be the deadliest for international troops since the 2001 invasion. Some 188 soldiers from international forces, including about 101 Americans, have died so far, according to an Associated Press count. At that pace, the year's total would far surpass the record 222 troop deaths in 2007.

At least 500 members of the U.S. military have died since the U.S. invaded Afghanistan in late 2001 for sheltering Osama bin Laden, according to the U.S. Department of Defense.

John Pierrepont, 55, a retired Toronto police officer, does not agree with the mission in Afghanistan but supports

the troops. He's been to the "Highway of Heroes" about 20 times.

"Some people cry. Some people clap. It's just amazing," Pierrepont said. "It's too bad we didn't have more politicians here that might be less willing to send them over there."

Steve Weiner, a 53-year-old dentist, pulled off the side of Highway 401 last week after another dead soldier was brought home.

"I don't think we're getting accustomed to seeing soldiers die. There were 100 people on the bridge," he said. "I left after a while and every bridge all the way home had a 100 people on it. It's a sign of how special each one of these people are."

Monday, August 25, 2008
 ROB GILLIES, Associated Press
 Section: Afghanistan

John Renwick Golf Tournament



Winners Peter Whitehall & Dennis McArdle are presented with trophy by Ramonde Hachey, Sports Officer.

Credit: Alf Ash

The annual John Renwick Golf Tournament was held last Saturday and a good time was had by all in the sun.

Congratulation to the winners.

Peter Whitehall and Dennis McArdle.

Monday, August 25, 2008
 Alf Ash
 Section: Branch News

Hello? Hello? Can you hear me?

Visitors to the Military Communications and Electronics Museum (MCEM) at CFB Kingston are reminded of scenes in the movie "Gallipoli" by Australian director Peter Weir. It is impossible to forget the final scenes, when Archy, a young

soldier from the Australian 8th Light Horse Regiment, tense and focussed, waits for the whistle telling the next wave to go over the top to face fire from Turkish line. In the meantime, Archy's best friend, Frank, sprints back and forth, carrying orders from the CO to the line commanders and hoping for the order for Archy's line to stand down. The order comes, but too late – the communications break down.



The 10,000 square feet Military Communications & Electronic Museum is located at CFB Kingston on 95 Craftsman Blvd., Highway #2, Kingston East, Ontario, Canada. Visiting Hours: Open from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Monday through Friday, 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. on week-ends and holidays from mid May to the end of September. Admission is by voluntary donation.

From the very first exhibit in the MCEM, visitors find themselves immersed in the history of Canadian military communications. The museum in its current incarnation, with fairly new buildings and facilities, has been welcoming visitors since May 1996. More than 930 square metres are reserved for exhibiting military communications equipment and mementos dating from 1850 to today.

When the MCEM was originally founded in 1961, it was called the Museum of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. In the wake of the unification of the CF in 1968, the Communications and Electronics Branch was created by the merger of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals, the Air Force Telecommunications Branch, one Royal Canadian Navy trade and two Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers trades.

Visitors to the museum step back into time as they view exhibits that are arranged chronologically to show how communications and electronics have changed over the years. Through various objects and reconstructions, visitors can see what radio communication stations in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories looked

like in the early 1920s, when the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals had the mandate to establish a transmission system in many northern communities.

Communication has been at the forefront throughout Canada's military history, but it was still in its infancy, and rudimentary, before Confederation. For the most part, letters, messengers and liaison officers were used, while signalling devices were used over short distances. Military communications technology evolved after Confederation, however, as the Government took over the responsibility of defending Canada. MCEM exhibits trace the history of Canadian military communications from pre-Confederation through the First World War and the time of Arctic exploration, on through the Second World War, the Korean War and the Cold War to peacekeeping operations in which the CF participated as members of NATO (such as in the Balkans).

The MCEM is lucky to have a team of devoted and knowledgeable volunteers. One of these people is Dick Archambault, who fought in the Korean War. If you should meet him while visiting the museum, ask him to tell you a few stories about the 27 Canadian Infantry Brigade Signals Squadron, in which he served in Korea, and have a look at the photo of him in his younger days, with a few of his brothers-in-arms, in one of the exhibits.

The Enigma machine

Among the MCEM's most unique objects is an Enigma machine, on loan from Communications Security Establishment Canada. This device became famous for its use by the Nazis and their allies during World War II. This German electromechanical invention used rotors mounted on cylinders to code information so that enemies could not decipher it.

As the story goes, in 1938, a Polish mechanic who was working in a German plant where the device was manufactured was fired when his nationality was discovered. Thanks to his notes and observations and a wooden model, the Allies got their first glimpse of the Enigma machine. The British first got hold of an Enigma machine in 1939 and immediately assigned a team of top mathematicians to decipher the intercepted codes.

This story of one of the items in the

MCEM collection, together with those of many other objects on display, make it possible to reconstruct the overall history of military communication.

Museum Website :<http://www.c-and-e-museum.org>

Tuesday, August 26, 2008
Steve Fortin, The Maple Leaf
Section: Veterans

A fishy tale



Far away in the tropical waters of the Caribbean, two prawns were swimming around in the sea - one called Justin and the other called Christian. The prawns were constantly being harassed and threatened by sharks that patrolled the area.

Finally one day Justin said to Christian, "I'm bored and frustrated at being a prawn, I wish I was a shark, then I wouldn't have any worries about being eaten..."

As Justin had his mind firmly on becoming a predator, a mysterious cod appears and says, "Your wish is granted", and lo and behold, Justin turned into a shark. Horrified, Christian immediately swam away, Afraid of being eaten by his old mate.

Time went on (as it invariably does...) and Justin found himself becoming bored and lonely as a shark. All his old mates simply swam away whenever he came close to them. Justin didn't realize that his new menacing appearance was the cause of his sad plight. While out swimming alone one day he sees the mysterious cod again and can't believe his luck. Justin figured that the fish could change him back into a prawn. He begs the cod to change him back so, lo and behold, he is turned back into a prawn.

With tears of joy in his tiny little eyes, Justin swam back to his friends and bought them all a cocktail. (The punch line does not involve a prawn cocktail - it's much worse). Looking around the gathering at the reef, he searched for his old pal. "Where's Christian?" he asked.

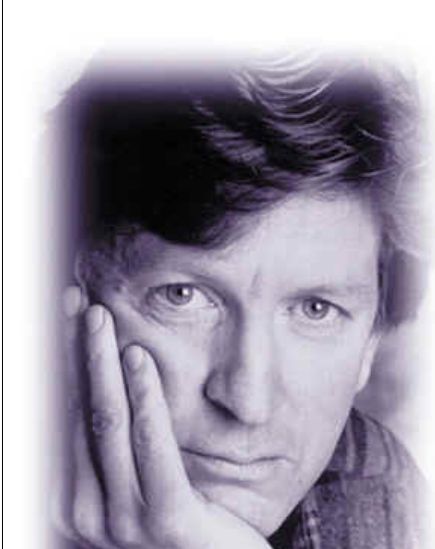
"He's at home, distraught that his best friend changed sides to the enemy and became a shark", came the reply. Eager to put things right again and end the mutual pain and torture, he set off to Christian's house. As he opened the coral gate the memories came flooding back. He banged on the door and shouted, "It's me, Justin, your old friend, come out and see me again."

"Christian replied, "No way man, you'll eat me. You're a shark; the enemy and I'll not be tricked." Justin cried back

"No, I'm not. That was the old me. I've changed."...(Wait for it) . . .
....."I've found Cod - I'm a prawn again Christian".

Tuesday, August 26, 2008
ANON
Section: Humour

Light show to honour WWI dead



R.H. Thomson

Actor plans to project 68,000 victims' names on public buildings.

Actor R.H. Thomson calls his latest endeavour "a white-knuckle project."

He and lighting designer Martin Conboy want to project the name of every Canadian who died in World War I in public spaces over eight nights in November.

They want to project the names – more than 68,000 of them – in Ottawa, London, England and every Canadian provincial capital.

Now all they need are firm locations in most of the provincial capitals; a bunch of specialized projectors that rent for up to \$3,000 a night; local organizers to help out; and some technical wizardry, including an

atomic clock, to co-ordinate the display across nine time zones and an ocean.

That, and \$100,000 or so.

Yesterday, Thomson and Conboy were at Toronto City Hall, where they've been granted permission to project the names onto the façade of the east tower.

Checking out the site involved clambering through the mechanical room at the top of the west tower, where Conboy found a spot to mount his projector.

Conboy and Thomson have lined up firm locations in Ottawa, Halifax and London; they're still working on locations in as many other provincial capitals as possible.

They've already carried out a similar project on a smaller scale: In April 2007, they projected – on the National War Memorial in Ottawa – the names of all 3,598 Canadians who died taking Vimy Ridge in 1917.

Thomson said he wants to do the larger project because the living connection with the war is fast dwindling. Only a handful of veterans remain anywhere in the world.

"The First World War, to kids in school, is like the Battle of Hastings," Thomson said.

Thomson has his own personal connection. Five great-uncles from Brantford, Ont., went off to war. Two didn't come back; two others, badly injured, died in a sanatorium in Gravenhurst, Ont., in the 1920s.

Thomson wrote a one-man play, *The Lost Boys*, based on their letters home.

Now, 90 years after the end of that terrible war, he and Conboy want to display the names of each of the dead, including members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, the merchant marine, the Newfoundland Regiments (at that time Newfoundland had not joined Canada) and the nurses who died in the conflict.

"We're personalizing it; it becomes somebody's moment," Conboy said.

It will take eight nights to project all of the names, starting Nov. 4, with the final name appearing at sunrise, local time in each location, on Nov. 11. The names will also be projected on the Internet with an atomic clock controlling the timing of each name's

projection.

The names will appear, in pairs, in prominent type for about eight seconds.

Each pair of names will then shrink in size, but remain visible for 30 seconds longer as other pairs of names appear.

Veterans Affairs Canada has provided what Thomson calls "keystone funding" for the project, but money to support the local projects is still needed. Donations can be made through the website at Canada's National Historical Society, www.historyociety.ca.

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Thursday, August 28, 2008
John Spears, The Star
Section: Veterans

Canada OKs vaccine to prevent painful shingles in seniors

Health Canada has approved a vaccine to help prevent painful shingles in people 60 or older who had chickenpox earlier in life.

Zostavax, made by Merck Frosst

Canada, should be available through doctors and pharmacies starting sometime next year, the company announced Tuesday.



Shingles occurs when the chickenpox virus reactivates after lying dormant in nerve cells, sometimes for decades, and starts reproducing again. In other cases, the virus may stay dormant indefinitely.

Shingles, also called herpes zoster, causes a painful red rash and sensations of tingling, itching and burning. The rash can lead to scarring and the pain can persist in some people for months or years. Up to 20 per cent of adults who have had chickenpox will get shingles later in life.

Older age, suppressed immune status and lack of re-exposure to the varicella virus seem to increase one's risk of developing shingles, said Dr. Allison McGeer, an infectious diseases specialist at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto.

Previously, adults may have gained a natural booster by being exposed to children infected with chickenpox. But as more young children in North America are vaccinated against chickenpox, it is theorized that fewer adults could be gaining that natural boost to their immune system that helps keep the virus dormant.

Since studies from Alberta, Manitoba and British Columbia reported increased shingles rates before chickenpox vaccine campaigns began in those provinces, there is also some evidence suggesting the incidence of shingles was on the rise before the chickenpox vaccine, said Dr. Rafael Harpaz, a herpes virus expert from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

Merck has not yet said how much the vaccine will sell for in Canada.

The vaccine was approved for use in

the U.S. in 2006.

When the U.S. approval was announced, the company said the long-term effectiveness of the vaccine wasn't clear. Merck's research shows it works for at least four years, and the company plans to follow patients for 10 years to track the vaccine's effectiveness.

It's also not yet clear whether seniors will need more than one injection, or how well the vaccine works in people with weakened immune systems and are at greater risk of developing shingles, McGeer said.

Thursday, August 28, 2008
 CBC News
 Section: Seniors

Rare moments of joy



There are so many horror stories than can be told in and of Afghanistan that the rare moments of joy springing from basic human kindness have an air of unreality.

But, on Tuesday morning at a brand new school just outside the Kandahar Air Field, a swarm of kids gathered to be told that Canadian soldiers and their families would be equipping them with school supplies.

Writing implements and paper are magical to Afghan children. On a recent walk that I took through Kandahar city, I was repeatedly pestered for my pen by tiny urchins with pleading eyes. The things that Canadian kids are now begrudgingly shoving into their parents' shopping carts at the local Office Depot are as precious as gold in Kandahar.

And, while the children of Afghan soldiers who live in bombed out apartment buildings just outside the base have the new Sayd Pacha school – a gift funded by the Japanese – they need the basic tools

of learning.

So the Canadian soldiers asked their families to send over the back packs, pencils, paper and pens.

The families responded by filling half of a sea container with school supplies. That arrived this summer. But more was needed to equip 520 students.

The organizers decided it would be best to raise money and buy the remainder of the supplies in Afghanistan. The son of a Master Warrant Officers collected \$800 by himself over the summer and the families have sent \$4,000 to Afghanistan with more on its way.

On this end, the children seemed a little overwhelmed to be given their own backpack and pens. But they were also clearly delighted.

Capt. Mike McBride, who was one of the organizers of the drive, said it has helped “take the edge off” some of the things the soldiers have had to deal with in this country.

“We've lost a teammate. We've had a number of guys who were severely injured on our teams and this was the one that stabilized the mission as far as I am concerned,” said Capt. McBride.

And it is important, he said, for Canadian soldiers to know they are helping out the families of the Afghan soldiers who are fighting along side them.

“We have a lot in common,” said Capt. McBride. “Soldiers have soldier stories. Soldiers have soldiers' children with similar experiences. It's allowed us to connect just a little bit strong than in any other sense.”

The soldiers are now trying to find schools in Canada that might be interested in twinning with the Sayd Pacha school. And individuals who want to contribute can do so by visiting the Skills Generation web site.

Thursday, August 28, 2008
 Gloria Galloway, Globe and Mail
 Section: Afghanistan

Second World War Hero Honoured in St Catherines with Federal Support



St. Catharines, ON – Youth will learn more about local Second World War hero, Air Commodore Len Birchall, with Government of Canada support.

On behalf of the Honourable Greg Thompson, Minister of Veterans Affairs, Rick Dykstra, Member of Parliament for St. Catharines, announced today a contribution to the Committee Honouring the Memory of Air Commodore Len Birchall. During the Second World War, Mr. Birchall averted a surprise Japanese attack on Ceylon, one of his many acts of courage.

Funding of up to \$4,000, provided through Veterans Affairs Canada's Community Engagement Partnership Fund, will support a commemorative event honouring the memory of Air Commodore Birchall. The event will take place October 3, 2008, at Connaught Public School where Mr. Birchall was a student. Students, air cadets and the community will take part in the commemorative event honouring the memory of this great hero through a number of dedications and activities. Participants will view the film Niagara's Len Birchall - Canadian Hero, and have the opportunity to see and feel Birchall's uniform and medals.

“Air Commodore Len Birchall exemplified leadership, bravery and commitment,” said Minister Thompson. “Young people—indeed people of all ages—can learn from and be inspired by his life story.”

“Students will take part in a historical re-enactment and hear from Mr. Birchall's daughter and nephew,” said Mr. Dykstra. “This is an opportunity for students and the community to remember with pride one of their own, and to realize their own capabilities as well.”

The Community Engagement Partnership Fund provides funding to non-profit groups, educational institutions and other organizations delivering remembrance activities and events. Administered through Veterans Affairs Canada, contributions are made throughout the year and encompass both national and community-based projects.

To learn more about the fund, call 1-877-604-8489 or visit www.vac-acc.gc.ca.

Thursday, August 28, 2008
 Veteran Affairs Canada
 Section: Veterans

Traffic at military hospital tells tale of Taliban toll



Critical-care nurses Mike Gravelle and Gord Peckham attend to an Afghan patient at the Role 3 medical facility at the Kandahar Air Field.

Credit: Gloria Galloway/The Globe and Mail

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD, AFGHANISTAN — If there is a gauge by which the toll of the Taliban can be measured, it is here at the military hospital tucked just off the runway at the Kandahar Air Field.

The Role 3 medical facility, a collection of tents and aging, low-lying buildings, treated more patients in July than any other unit of its kind in Afghanistan or Iraq.

That is partly because the security situation in Iraq is improving. But it is also attributable to the increasing number of people - soldiers and civilians, adults and children - arriving at the Kandahar base with war injuries.

The exact numbers of casualties are not made public because the military doesn't want the insurgents to know just what kind of damage they have inflicted.

But Lieutenant-Colonel Scott McLeod, the health-services support commanding officer, estimates there has been a year-over-year increase in "patient volume" of about 20 to 30 per cent.

"Most of our patients who come in as trauma patients have been exposed to either a blast injury from an IED [improvised explosive device] or some other explosive event, or a penetrating trauma from gunshot wounds or shrapnel or RPGs [rocket

propelled grenades] or things like that," Col. McLeod said.

"So we see amputations of arms and legs, we see penetrating trauma to the belly or the chest. And because we are also the neurosurgical capability for all of RC [Regional Command] South, we see a lot of head trauma here as well. And that again is also blunt trauma, blast trauma as well as penetrating trauma from gunshot wounds."

The records of all of those patients are kept in a U.S. database called the Joint Theatre Trauma System, which lists every person who passes through a military hospital in Afghanistan or Iraq.

"For the month of July, for all of the reporting facilities, we had the highest number of casualties coming in to our facility," Col. McLeod said.

The increase is not attributable to a corresponding climb in casualties among Canadians. In fact, the military says the number of Canadians hurt during their tactical operations is on a slight decline.

"There are increased numbers of Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police casualties which would, from my perspective, be attributable to their increased role in operations," said Captain Chris Quinlan, a staff operations officer in the current operations branch.

"I have a hard time saying there is any success or anything positive related to casualties. But I would say it's attributable to the fact that they [the Afghans] are doing their job better. They are going places they never would have gone before and taking a lead role that they would not have taken before."

There is also an acknowledgment that the Taliban are more aggressive this year than they have been in the past and more civilians have been caught in the crossfire - or have accidentally walked into a trap set for the coalition forces.

The Role 3 squeezes many highly trained medical professionals into tight quarters. It boasts general surgeons, orthopedic surgeons, neurosurgeons, maxillofacial (jaw and face) surgeons, critical-care internal-medicine specialists, critical-care nurses, a radiologist, psychologists, emergency physicians, family physicians, lab technicians, X-ray technicians and a host of others.

Despite the increase in patients, the specialists are here in about the same numbers as they were last year.

But Col. McLeod says he and his staff have found a way of coping: "We work hard."

And most people who have been treated are not allowed to linger.

"If our hospital is full, we have to transfer patients out," Col McLeod said.

Coalition troops who need more care are quickly sent to hospitals in Europe. And Afghans are moved to the local ANA medical facility.

So, unless Afghans are in critical condition, they will be delivered in short order into the hands of their own doctors. That is true of both Afghan military personnel and civilians. And it is true of the large number of children who come in as victims of the conflict.

"These are the innocent people of any war and it's very traumatizing on a lot of nursing staff and the clinicians that are looking after kids on a daily basis," Col. McLeod said, "but these are medical professionals that know how to look after patients whether those patients are here or back home."

Thursday, August 28, 2008
GLORIA GALLOWAY, Globe and Mail
Section: Afghanistan

New memorial to honour Canada's Merchant Navy



BEDFORD: While some communities are planning barbecues and parties to celebrate 250 years of parliamentary democracy in Nova Scotia, a group of Bedford volunteers are working to create a community legacy.

On Sept. 24, a memorial honouring Canada's Merchant Navy will be unveiled at DeWolf Park as part of Bedford's Democracy 250 celebrations. The memorial will include a dedication plaque, naval anchor and an interpretive panel

dedicated to the Merchant Navy.

"I have learned so much about the Merchant Navy. These guys had a terrible fight just getting recognized. What these guys did during the war was quite incredible," said Bedford D-250 volunteer and retired military officer Bruce Gilchrist.

"What better place to do this (memorial) than at DeWolf Park where we're looking right out where the convoys were?"

Don Lowther spearheaded the initiative to create a memorial at DeWolf Park as a Democracy 250 project. The former naval officer is Bedford MLA Len Goucher's executive assistant. When he discovered each MLA was given funding to celebrate D-250, it didn't take him long to come up with his idea.

"I was thinking of water, anchors and propellers. People were looking at me like I had two or three heads," Lowther recalled. "But when nobody came up with anything better, I pursued it, went to Bruce, and we went from there."

The project has received widespread support. Maritime Command is donating a seven foot, 5,200 pound anchor. Merchant Navy veterans will join other veterans, politicians, volunteers and citizens at DeWolf Park for the Sept. 24 unveiling and celebration.

The historic HMCS Sackville is expected to sail in under tug assist from Cable Wharf in Halifax to the Bedford Jetty, and the Stadacona Band and a choir will add to the festivities.

In addition, a number of sponsors have stepped in to help cover the costs. Gilchrist and Lowther said Goucher's \$10,000 legacy funding wouldn't have covered the estimated \$30,000 project.

"That park is going to be one piece richer than it was before we got there," said Gilchrist. "Anyone going to take a photo of the Bedford Basin will be able to use that anchor as a focal point, and it makes the park more meaningful."

Although the event is scheduled to take place during the work week, organizers hope residents from throughout HRM will attend the event.

"It's called Bedford D-250, but all the surrounding communities like

Sackville, Fall River, Hammonds Plains, and Waverley are part of this history," said Gilchrist.

Lowther hopes to follow this project with a second DeWolf Park memorial in 2010 to honour the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Navy.

"The neat thing about D-250 is you'd think it was all about politics and politicians, but in their charter they've said they're also reaching out to honour our veterans and today's military," Gilchrist said. "We'll be doing that and creating something for future generations to enjoy."

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 YVETTE D'ENTREMONT, Halifax News Net
 Section: Veterans

Governor General announces new Sacrifice Medal for wounded, killed in action



OTTAWA — The Governor General has announced the creation of a new medal, equivalent to the U.S. Purple Heart, as a way of acknowledging soldiers and civilians killed or wounded by hostile fire.

For the military, the Sacrifice Medal will replace the understated army tradition of awarding wound stripes - small strips of gold braid worn on the left sleeve - which dates back to the First World War.

Diplomatic and development staff, as well as civilian contractors, who are increasingly in the line of fire in Afghanistan, are also eligible for the award. However, journalists embedded with the Canadian military and Canadians working for international aid agencies don't qualify.

"Our soldiers deserve our utmost respect and deepest gratitude," Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean said in a statement.

"This medal recognizes the valued contribution of those who sacrificed their health or their lives while serving Canada."

The round, silver medal is 36 millimetres across, has a clasp at the top of it in the form of the Royal Crown and is attached to red, black and white ribbon.

There's a profile of the Queen on one

side wearing a crown of maple leaves and snow flakes and an image from the Vimy Memorial on the other side with the word "Sacrifice."

Eligibility for the medal has been backdated to Oct. 7, 2001, meaning it will be posthumously awarded to the 93 soldiers and one diplomat killed in Afghanistan since the war began. Hundreds of wounded soldiers are also eligible.

Recognition for those who made the ultimate sacrifice was a major consideration when criteria were established, said Marie-Paule Thorn, a spokeswoman for the Governor General.

Limiting the medal to the Afghan conflict irks both the Royal Canadian Legion and individual veterans who have been fighting for years for a medal to replace the wound stripe.

"We're please for veterans," said Bob Butt, communications director for the Legion. "We were hoping it would go back beyond the date (the government) has made it retroactive to, but they haven't done that.

"Although we still support the medal. Anything that honours somebody who serves in the Canadian Forces is a good thing."

The notion of replacing the voluntary wound stripe, first introduced in 1916, was controversial within the rank and file of the army.

Soldiers don't like to talk about wounds. Many brush off injuries as something to be expected in their line of work and say medals only draw unwanted attention.

Thorn said the regulations allow a soldier to decide whether or not to wear the medal in public.

The steady stream of casualties coming out of Afghanistan in the fall of 2006 prompted many veterans to clamour for recognition of the wounded.

Murray Sinnott, an ex-soldier and retired city police officer from Windsor, Ont., started a grassroots campaign for a medal he called the Crimson Maple Leaf.

But Sinnott, a former member of the Canadian Guards regiment, doesn't like the idea of giving the medal to civilians.

"It should be for soldiers under hostile fire, not some civilian contractor hiding a bunker who happens to get

shrapnel in his leg," he said in an interview.

Liberal Senator Colin Kenny, who also campaigned for wounded veterans, disagreed, saying all Canadians who put themselves in harm's way deserve the recognition.

The guidelines drawn up by the Directorate of Honours and Recognition at National Defence stipulate that only civilians employed by the federal government - either directly or on contract - qualify for the medal.

The definition covers diplomatic and development staff as well as civilian contractors in Afghanistan.

This is the second new medal introduced this year. A new, Canadian version of the Victoria Cross was unveiled in the spring as the highest honour that can be awarded for battlefield bravery.

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Vets honoured for their sacrifices - VIDEO



Rudy Roy and Rocky Lalonde share a brother-like bond.

They were among five young Cornwall natives who joined the Navy and served on the battleship HMCS St. Laurent during the Second World War. They were there for the Normandy invasion.

Ships just like the one they called home were sinking in frequent numbers.

"It could have happened (to us) just like that," said Roy, 84, snapping his fingers to solidify his point. "We were lucky."

Of the five Cornwall natives who served on the St. Laurent, only Roy and Lalonde remain.

Their shared experience overseas forged a special bond among the two men that lasts to this day.

The war is never far from their minds.

"It's always there. You can't forget some of the things that happened during the war," said Lalonde, 82.

Roy and Lalonde were just two of a large number of veterans who were honoured during a special Veteran Appreciation Day ceremony at the Cornwall cenotaph on Second Street on Thursday. The ceremony -- which was

attended by a group of veterans, local politicians and residents -- served to celebrate the contribution of Canada's veterans to the country's past and present.

Ten Ontario communities -- including Cornwall -- were chosen to host the special event, which is organized by the Dominion Institute in partnership with the Ontario government.

Ernie Filion, the president of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 297, said it was great that Cornwall was chosen to host the ceremony. The whole goal of the event was to pay tribute to the veterans, he said.

"Without them there, we would not be here today," said Filion.

Henry Kyte, one of the veterans in attendance, said it's great to see people paying tribute to those who served their country in both the past and present. Kyte said he toured some soldier's cemeteries in Europe and he couldn't get over the ages of those buried there.

"We have to keep our thoughts towards those that passed away," said Kyte, who served with the S, D and G Highlanders following the war.

A major aspect of the ceremony focused on the need to educate youth about the importance sacrifices made by veterans.

The Dominion Institute is working on that through The Memory Project, a program which connects veterans and students online and in classrooms across the country.

Lalonde believes the program is long overdue.

In Holland, he pointed out, children are actually taught what happened during the Second World War in the classroom.

"Here in Canada, we've neglected this (history)," he said. "A lot of them (youths) don't know what happened in the last great war."

Some local veterans have already made a point of connecting with local youths.

Roy, for example, visited Char- Lan District High School last year to speak

to students about his experiences.

VIDEO ON STANDARD-FREEHOLDER.COM

He, like many others, believes it is important work that must continue.

During the ceremony, Frances Lauzon (wife of MP Guy Lauzon), local MPP Jim Brownell and Mayor Bob Kilger spoke of the importance of honouring the sacrifices of veterans, especially among young people.

A special certificate was also presented to Filion to mark the occasion.

The ceremony opened with the playing of the Last Post and a moment of silence and closed with the singing of O Canada. A reception followed at the legion.

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KEVIN LAJOIE, STANDARD-FREEHOLDER
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