



BRANCH 127 NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Just a short note to bring members up to date as to what your President has been up to. It was my pleasure recently to host an all presidents and vice presidents social at our club. Although we did not have a great deal attend, those who did attend did have a good

time. Not only did we have the social time but we were able to field some issues that were concerns of the other clubs. It was also agreed upon that we would have these social times on a three month basis moving around from club to club.

On February 11th, I attended a Navy Cadet League one year celebration mess dinner. During the dinner, several awards and promotions were handed out. The group benefited from a donation from our club for the purchase of new uniforms. On Feb 29th, I received word that the new uniforms were in and would be given to those who were still in need of them.

On February 19, 2012 I drove to the Malahat Branch to attend a Zone meeting where I was able to gather some information on the Gaming issues that a lot of the clubs are having recently. All around, the meeting was very informative.

I would like to take this time to thank all those who work so hard to make this branch so successful. I am excited to see the growth that is taking place and I hope to see more of you out as we have changed our monthly meetings to include a Saturday afternoon social time.

- Comrade Richard Steele

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Back Row: John Palmer, Ted Vaughn, Kim Fortin, Ray Rutherford, Mel Smith, George Bricker, Jim Nishiyama, Robert Sears
Front Row: Art Flesher, Gerry Gerrard, Joe Richards Sr, Bill Morris
Missing from Photo: Ron Aldred, Bob Bauder

Congratulations to the 31 members who earned their membership pins ranging from 25-65 years. It was great to see the above members receive theirs at the 2012 AGM.



2012 EXECUTIVE

President - Richard Steele - richard.steele@gov.bc.ca
Vice President - Len Anderson - andersonsl@shaw.ca
Secretary - Bal Sekha - bsekha@shaw.ca
Treasurer - Vic Marshall - vicmarshall@shaw.ca
Past President - Wayne Fisher - wjf4214@gmail.com
Sgt-at-Arms - Gerry Gerrard - evgerry@telus.net
Entertainment - Miki Simpson - mikisimp@speedymail.org
Membership - Jenny Fossum - jennyfossum@hotmail.ca
Newslettter/Web Site - Bal Sekha - bsekha@shaw.ca
Poppy/Remembrance - Astrid Doidge - astridge8@shaw.ca
Sick and Visiting - Connie Meadmore
Sports - Len Anderson - andersonsl@shaw.ca



*Standing: Bal Sekha, Mel Smith, Vic Marshall, Richard Steele, Len Anderson, Gerry Gerrard, Wayne Fisher
Seated: Astrid Doidge, Miki Simpson, Jenny Fossum, Connie Meadmore*



MEMBERSHIP

Currently, Branch membership stands at approximately 112 members and is slowly growing.

It gives us great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to new members, Janet Adams, John Bond, Zorya Plaskin, Betty Scala and Marg Weber.

At the 2012 AGM on January 14, membership pins were presented to 13 members in person and 18 were delivered or mailed in March to those who were not able to attend.

At the general meeting on March 4, the following members were initiated: Janet Adams, Vic Marshall, Zorya Plaskin, Janet Steele, Marg Weber.

LAST POST:

Since our last newsletter we are saddened to have lost Bill Ozard, our Poppy Chair until he moved to Nova Scotia last August. Although he moved away, he kept in touch via email or Facebook. The following notice was taken from Facebook.

Ozard, William Wakefield - in Bedford, Nova Scotia, signed off the air on November 25, 2011 peacefully at the home of his daughter Tanya Ozard and her husband Chuck Langdon. Born in Victoria, BC, Bill was the son of William Charles Ozard and Evelyn Royal Georgina Bonavia. Bill was a loving and well-loved man with a sharp wit, a big heart and unwavering faith.



5 years ago, Bill was diagnosed with metastatic colorectal cancer. From day one, he was a pillar of strength in his approach to this life-altering news. He handled it with grace & positivity and throughout, maintained his fervid sense of humour.

These qualities along with determination, a cunning intelligence and a talent for public address aided his diverse career in TV and Radio broadcasting, politics and tourism.

Nova Scotians will remember his voice from his 13 year tenure with CJCH and his invaluable contribution to the launch of the Christmas Daddies charity.

Bill is survived by 5 children – Shelley, Jillian (Alex), Tanya (Chuck), Aubrey (Matt) and William Quinton, his sister Stephanie, niece Rachel, and Grandsons Evan, Garrett and Cameron.

Donations can be made to the colorectal cancer association of Cda <http://www.colorectal-cancer.ca/en/hou-you-can-help/make-donation/> or the Nova Scotia SPCA <http://www.spcans.ca/donate.html> on Bill's behalf.

The family would like to thank all of Bill's friends who have been so kind and thoughtful during Bill's illness and the family would especially like to thank Judy MacGillivray for her endless support and friendship.

Ozard... Peace out.

Here are a couple of links to write-ups about Bill:

<http://halifax.openfile.ca/blog/curator-blog/curated-news/2011/cjchs-bill-ozard-signs>
<http://www.bevboysblog.com/2011/12/post-1860-tribute-to-bill-ozard.html>

MEMORIAL SERVICE NOTICE

A MEMORIAL SERVICE IN VICTORIA TO HONOUR OUR FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE, BILL OZARD HAS BEEN ARRANGED BY HIS SISTER, STEPHANIE.

THE SERVICE WILL BE ON SATURDAY, APRIL 28TH AT 10:30 AM AT ST. JOHN THE DIVINE ANGLICAN CHURCH, 1611 QUADRA ST, VICTORIA.

FOLLOWING THE SERVICE, THERE WILL BE A COFFEE/TEA RECEPTION HELD IN THE CHURCH HALL ADJACENT TO THE CHURCH.

IF YOU KNOW OF ANYONE WHO MAY BE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING THIS MEMORIAL, PLEASE GIVE THEM THIS INFORMATION.



I realized that my five year old grandson had been watching too many realty TV shows the day we attended a relative's wedding. As the four bridesmaids walked down the aisle toward the front of the church, he turned to me and asked, "Is this where the groom decides which one he wants to marry?"



CIRCULARS FROM BC/YUKON AND DOMINION COMMAND

A sampling of recent circulars from BC/Yukon and Dominion Commands that might be of interest are provided for your information. Some are edited to reduce the size while others remains intact. If you would like to access the original circulars, instructions will be provided further on.

Dominion Command Media Release
07 December 2011

Legion says death benefit discriminates http://legion.ca/News/11_Dec07_e.cfm

Ottawa – All Canadian Forces members who have lost their lives in the service of Canada should be granted a death benefit says Patricia Varga, the Dominion President of The Royal Canadian Legion.

Under the New Veterans Charter, the death benefit is granted to only the spouse, common law partner or children of Canadian Forces members. Single members are not eligible.

The Royal Canadian Legion fully supported a change to this discriminatory practice at its Dominion Convention in 2010. It requested that Veterans Affairs Canada amend the New Veterans Charter to include single members. Veterans Affairs advised the Legion that single members “may choose to obtain life insurance coverage from The Department of National Defence that allows them to designate a beneficiary such as parent, sibling, or other family member.”

“This is another example of the Government creating different classes of veterans,” says Varga. “The government has an obligation to recognize the sacrifice of all Canadian Forces members who have lost their lives in service to Canada” she continues. “The Legion will continue to advocate on behalf of all veterans including still serving Canadian Forces members and their families,” she concludes.

For further information please contact Bob Butt at Dominion Command, The Royal Canadian Legion, at (613) 591-3335 or by cell at (613) 294- 4159.

Variation Law - If you change lines (or traffic lanes), the one you were in will always move faster than the one you are in now (works every time).

Oliver's Law of Public Speaking - A closed mouth gathers no feet!!!

Legion reaches out to new veterans

A variety of programs are designed to help those who served in Afghanistan make the transition to life at home

- *Inga Kruse, Vancouver Sun March 1, 2012*

The conflict in Afghanistan has created a group of veterans with a different set of problems than older counterparts.

Military service is a noble calling, often unsung and reserved for those who have a commitment for public service far above and beyond. While we as a citizenry respect and value our men and women in uniform, we have a skewed appreciation of how their service for the greater good of others directly relates to our daily lives. We know little about their training, their instilled mindsets or their all-consuming, focused professions. With such superficial comprehension, it is no wonder the issues of ex-military post-traumatic stress, homelessness and unemployment are not known, discussed or addressed by the general populace.

When people think about veterans, they mostly envision an aging soldier wearing medals from a battle long ago. At the Royal Canadian Legion we see a rapidly changing and more shocking picture. We see young people coming home from military engagements the likes of which are almost incomprehensible. The impact of the Afghanistan and other overseas deployments on our young reservists and regular forces has serious implications for the individual, the family and the community.

Although the military provides benefits and programs to those who are serving, there are still tremendous needs for help for some of the hardest hit young veterans. The Legion in British Columbia and Yukon is filling the void and making a powerful, practical difference with our unique, one-of-a-kind programs in Canada.

- . Veterans Transition Program, for veterans suffering post-traumatic stress.

- . Military Skills Conversion Program, for veterans re-entering the marketplace.

- . Cockrell House, in Colwood on Vancouver Island, for homeless veterans.

At the most dire end of the continuum is homeless transition housing and benefit advocacy delivered through our B.C.-Yukon network of 153 Legion branches. For those who are truly at the time of most need in their lives, our Cockrell House is a multiplex safe residence for homeless veterans, which offers a two-year transitional program. In addition to



providing the basic necessities of life, Cockrell House provides health and social programs such as skills coaching, counseling, medical treatment, benefit service referrals and access to transportation. The programs are designed to give hope, optimism and skills for successful re-entry into the community. Cockrell House is 100 per cent supported by volunteers.

Our Veterans Transition Program with the University of British Columbia is our front line in the fight to help soldiers recover from the post-traumatic stress that can ravage their future. What looks like anger and disorganization can be trauma. Drug addiction, alcohol reliance, family breakdowns and risk-seeking behaviour are suffered by many as a result of their service. Not everybody comes home broken on the inside, but for those who do need a whole lot of help, our Legion is there. There aren't as many of them as we saw after the two historic World Wars, but there is a need. Our Veterans Transition Program is a powerful and important arm's length intervention which helps them deal with their service-related invisible wounds, without having stigmatized issues show up on their personnel file or career resumé.

An additional challenge faced by those transitioning out of their military career is re-entering the private sector. Many of the skills and experiences built up in the service of our country aren't recognized by potential employers. The military members themselves have trouble verbalizing what they know how to do in language that is translatable into civilian job offerings.

Our Military Skills Conversion Program with the British Columbia Institute of Technology translates military experience and training into civilian professional credentials and education credits.

Given opportunities, many former military members can go on to a wide-open, promising future without having to start from scratch after they come home from service.

These three programs are made possible by virtue of our ongoing fund-raising through the BC/Yukon Legion Foundation as well as the annual Poppy Campaign. In 153 communities throughout B.C. and Yukon, Legion volunteers contribute over 600,000 hours a year. More and more of those service hours are now focusing on engaging the new generation of veterans, and trying to help. Legionnaires know first-hand that military families bear more than their fair share of the load when one of their own serves in the Canadian military. We fundraise, we reach out to

them and we provide a second family of support for them. Many of our new members are not military related themselves, but they are with us because they care.

There is such a tremendous need in our veteran community right now. From the homeless to the silently suffering 26-year-old who doesn't sleep any more, it is the responsibility of all Canadians to reach out to them. Joining your local Legion or donating money or time helps directly with the services we deliver and creating these tailored health and social programs. Getting involved in your community Legion is a great way to honour those who have put themselves in harm's way. We want them to know they are coming home to their families and to their communities where they can get the support they need.

For those who are serving or retired, injured or whole, and for their families - we remember.

<http://www.vancouver.sun.com/news/Legion+reaches+veterans/6232515/story.html#ixzz1oK5Tp63s>

Inga Kruse is Executive Director of the Royal Canadian Legion, B.C./Yukon Command.

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BC/Yukon Memo 03.12 Home Owner Grant Increase (not yet proclaimed)

The BC Government is proposing to enhance the home owner grant to assist more Canadian Veterans with low incomes, as announced by Finance Minister Kevin Falcon. To pay tribute to the service and sacrifice of younger veterans who have served here at home as well as in foreign conflicts, BC intends to provide an additional grant to help reduce property taxes for lower-income former members of the Canadian Forces by up to \$275.00.

The home owner grant currently provides a maximum reduction in residential property taxes of \$570 in the Capital Regional District, the Greater Vancouver Regional District and the Fraser Valley Regional District and \$770 in other regions of the province.

Homeowners age 65 or over, some homeowners with permanent disabilities, and older veterans and their spouses, may already be eligible for an additional grant of up to \$275.

Under existing rules, only some veterans of the Second World War or the Korean War and their



spouses are eligible for the additional home owner grant.

The proposed changes will create a further grant of up to \$275 for low-income veterans of more recent conflicts, such as Bosnia, the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan, in the event that they do not already qualify as seniors or persons with disabilities.

Details of the intended change will be announced in Budget 2012 and, subject to approval of the Legislature, would take effect for the 2012 property tax year.

LEGION CIRCULARS

Circulars from BC/Yukon and Dominion Commands are available to view at the Branch in a binder on a table below the bulletin board.

Dominion Command's circulars are also available for viewing on its site as follows:

http://legion.ca/Home/NewsRoom_e.cfm
(no userid or password required)

BC/Yukon Command circulars are currently not available for members to access from its site but in the very near future, members will be given access to Command's circulars and other services. When this is available, you will be advised and provided with the userid and password.

In the meantime, if you would like a copy of any circular mentioned here, please contact Bal at (250) 595-6362 and a copy will be mailed to you.

BC/Yukon Command is also accessible via Facebook (www.facebook.com/LegionBCYukon) and Twitter (<http://twitter.com/#!/LegionBCYukon>).

South Mid Vancouver Island Zone is also constructing a web site that will be accessible in the near future at:

<http://www.rcl.smvizone.com>

BC/Yukon Memo 06.12 Military Service Recognition Book

BC/Yukon Command of The Royal Canadian Legion is again looking to its Branches and members to collect stories of its veterans to be published in this annual "Military Service Recognition Book" to help identify and recognize many of the veterans and ex-service personnel.

These books have been distributed to Branches with very positive results. The publishing of this book will go a long ways to help us in our job as "Keepers

of Remembrance" so that none of us forget the selfless contributions made.

Submissions are open to BC/Yukon residents who have served in the military, as we want to recognize all our service personnel.

The deadline for submissions for this book is June 30 and we need more submissions to make this year's book successful.

10,000 copies of this book will be printed and supplied to Branches free of charge for local distribution by November 11th 2012. Proceeds raised from this project will be used by the Legion to improve services to veterans and the more than 150 Communities we serve throughout BC and the Yukon.

Recognition of our veterans is very important to us all. So let's get behind this initiative and help make this year's book even more successful than last years!

Our preferred method of receiving submissions is always digital – either by e-mail to garypeters@shaw.ca or on Command's website <http://www.bcyuk.legion.ca/> If you are mailing your submission please send to:

War Service Recognition Book
The Royal Canadian Legion
PO Box 209, Lantzville Road
Lantzville BC V0R 2H0

Additional information on this project can be obtained at a toll free number: 1 866 340-VETS (8387).

Yours in comradeship,
Gary Peters, Coordinator
Military Service Recognition Book

2012 Alaska Highway Military Vehicle Convoy

- Linda Mussell, BC/Yukon Command

6,600 km in 27 days...

We're happy to share a cool upcoming event. The Military Vehicle Preservation Association is commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Hwy by traveling the highway start to finish with 97 historic military vehicles.

[Click here for more information.](#) or

<http://www.legionbcyukon.ca/sites/default/files/AC12InvitetoVets.pdf>



**BC/Yukon Memo 18.12
Veterans' Transition Program 2012**

Comrades, it is time to give you an important update on our program at UBC that treats Veterans for Trauma and PTSD. It is called the Veterans' Transition Program and we are very proud to help our Veterans with this critical program.

I will try to be brief, although the story is a big one, but there are a few things we really need Branches to know:

- VTP Programs are run based on need. We are experiencing high volumes of requests from Veterans right now due to the fact that the program is getting to be very well known and respected – and more importantly, we have so many young people coming home from service now who really need help before it is too late.
- Our fundraising goal from Poppy this year for the VTP program courses (the hands on counseling done with Veterans) is \$250,000.
- For Branches who think this is a “Vancouver thing” which doesn't help Veterans from their communities, I submit to you a sampling of home towns cited by a few of our 200 graduates:
Sooke, Salmon Arm, Kamloops, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Kelowna, Chilliwack, Hazelton, Nanaimo, Victoria, Vancouver, Anmore, Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Esquimalt, Terrace, New Westminster, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, North Vancouver, Langley, Williams Lake, White Horse, Port Moody, Coquitlam, Surrey, White Rock, Cranbrook, Aldergrove, Gibsons, Vernon, Grand Forks & Maple Ridge.
- Last year 40 Branches completed SUE Forms allocating \$95,500 towards VTP. One Zone gave \$255.00, Seven LA'S gave \$4,500.00 and the 3 large Poppy Funds gave \$31,000. The rest was covered by Command Central Poppy Fund.
- VTP needs significantly more support money this year to cover the urgent need. It is a fact that this year (and the next few) will see more and more of these young folks collapsing under the strain of the burden they carry. This program is unique and is gaining international recognition in terms of results and research publication on the science of PTSD.
- If you can look at your Poppy Fund and consider contributing for the programs this year, every dollar is critical. Simply complete the “Special Use Expenditure” with the amount approved at a

general meeting – your Branch can contribute to one of the most important things we do for our Veterans.

I will leave you with excerpts from a letter we got from a young Veteran who has taken our course:

“The VTP saves lives and for most, it dramatically changes and improves Veterans' ways of coping and dealing with life that are living with any type of emotional challenges resulting from Military or Police service.

Because the VTP is part of UBC therapy and funded by the BC Legion, not in the rigid box of rules coming from Govt orgs such as CF/DND/VAC, it has the power and compassionate therapeutic approaches to work outside the box. That is what truly helps make positive change and alleviate suspicions and fear.

After significant encouragement from my Doctor I attended the VTP. Dr Marv Westwood, Dr David Kuhl, Duncan Shields were the facilitators during my session and I am thankful for their presence. They and the program have made an immensely positive impact in my life. The VTP changed my life dramatically for the positive and I noted many others that had a similar experience. While I was there, Judy Jackson filmed part of her documentary "War in the Mind".

Powerful program for positive change in Vets lives and for military members transitioning back to normal civilian life. I can't say enough about it and am very thankful.

Know this Inga, the VTP works. I am grateful to the Legion for this amazing program of healing, compassion and transformational positive change.”

Comrades, please consider this appeal for funds at your next meeting. Also, if you know any Veterans who could benefit from this important service, please refer them to us at the Command Office and we will put them in touch with the intake process.

In Comradeship,
Dave Sinclair

Poppy Fund - Meal for Veterans

The Poppy Fund annually provides \$18 toward a meal (excluding liquor) for any veteran. Branch 127 veterans have not taken advantage of this even though it has been available for some time. If you would like to go out for a meal at the Poppy Fund's expense, please contact Astrid for details at (250) 995-2128 or sign up at the Branch. Date is to be determined.



BC/Yukon Memo 33.12 New Member Benefit Partners

Great news everyone! We have new Member Benefit Partners and they are anxious to visit Branches and make presentations at your meetings, about the special discount offers to Legionnaires and members of LA.

1. Tapestry "The Art of Seniors Living"
Wesbrook Village UBC & The O'Keefe - Arbutus Walk

www.discovertapestry.com

Tapestry offers the finest in retirement community living with fully equipped suites, services and amenities that are unsurpassed. They offer a wide variety of health, education and community programs to enrich the living experience at Tapestry. Their well trained professionals ensure discreet services are provided, enabling independent living to the fullest. For Legion and Ladies Auxiliary members, a special 20% discount dining card is available so you can visit the centres and see for yourself the quality of life offered at Tapestry. Invite Tapestry representatives to your Branch and they will provide your members with a great overview of their special offers.

Mike Wilson

mwilson@discovertapestry.com

604.736.1640

2. Connect Hearing

www.connecthearing.ca

Connect Hearing's health professionals want to ensure that people live life to the fullest with improved hearing. A complimentary hearing screening will be provided at their clinics and where possible, company representatives may be able to come to your Branch and host hearing test clinics for members. They will work with members to find solutions that fit lifestyle and budget. Legion and Ladies Auxiliary members will receive a 10% discount on hearing aids and 15% discount on Everyday Listening products.

Kathy Kaufman

kkaufmann@connecthearing.ca

604.522.5451

1.800.563.4327

3. Enabled Financial Solutions

www.enabledfinancial.ca

Enabled Financial Solutions will work with Legion and Ladies Auxiliary members to determine eligibility for a Disability Tax Credit refund, possibly retroactive

up to 10 years. They offer a free eligibility assessment for those suffering from a chronic medical condition. They will work with Doctors and the Canada Revenue Agency to the best advantage of our members. They work on a contingency basis and do not get paid unless you receive a refund. It is worth checking out. Plan an Information Session at your Branch.

Linda Chornobay

linda@enabledfinancial.ca

250.514.2699

1.877.381.26102

4. Safe Bathing

www.safebathingcentre.com

Safe Bathing provides improved accessibility and safety with specialty renovations to bathrooms and other areas in the house. Their "Aging in Place" trades specialists will provide a free home assessment. Legion and Ladies Auxiliary members receive a 5% discount with a 3% discount to the referring Branch. Check out all the different modifications Safe Bathing has to offer. You are sure to find something that is needed for you or your loved ones.

Gary Donohoe

gary@safebathingcentre.com 604.536.2261

1.800.411.7101

5. Tee Off Golf Guides

www.tee-off.ca

Tee-Off Golf Guides is Canada's only national Golf Green Fee Savings program. Each year a coupon book is issued and for the 2012 British Columbia edition, the partnership with BC/Yukon Command is featured.

The coupon book is an excellent fundraising program for Legion Branches and Ladies Auxiliaries. It contains thousands of dollars in green fee savings with over 230 facilities and hotels to choose from. The Tee-Off book retails for \$44.95. The Legion price is \$25.00 per book (for an order of 10 books) or \$22.50 per book (for an order of 30 books). It makes a great gift for the golf lover!

Jim Loftus

jloftus@dccnet.com

604.603.2291

info@tee-off.ca

Rod Macintosh

rod@tee-off.ca

250.743.0232



Passing of Another Tradition

It was recently announced that the Queen Victoria Inn has been sold and will become a rental building. As a result, Samuel’s Restaurant, a favorite haunt for Sunday brunch for many of our members for the past few years, will be closing in September following the 2012 tourist season. We will try to schedule at least one brunch, if not a couple, before that sad day.

PTSD Apps

Tablets and smartphones have apps for everything and everyone including for those who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

“PTSD Coach”, “T2 MoodTracker”, “Breathe2Relax”, “PE Coach”, “PTSD Checklist”, and “PTSD Support for Veterans” are some apps that are provided free of charge on the iPhone and Android systems.

Most of these apps have been developed by the Pentagon and the US Veterans Affairs Department to help those with PTSD cope with symptoms and to educate but are not a replacement for professional treatment. Depending on the app, the content covers breathing exercises, recognizing symptoms, tracking treatments, phone list of people to call, etc.

For more information and articles on this, please check the following:

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/PTSDCoach.asp>

<http://www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/Health/20110726/ptsd-smartphone-app-veterans-110726/>

<http://www.informationweek.com/news/government/mobile/229401873>

Where do your Legion Donations Go?

A few examples of your poppy donations at work:

- Assisting any person (and their dependents) who is serving (or who has honourably served) in the Canadian Forces and are in need of assistance.
- Legion Veterans Transition Program (at UBC): a relief & recovery program for trauma-related stress from military service.
- Housing for homeless veterans, such as Cockrell House in Victoria
- Disaster relief when declared by governments.

Other Legion Donations:

- Veterans Transition Program (UBC)
- Legion Military Skills Conversion Program at BCIT
- BC Seniors’ Games
- Spinoza Bear Program
- Bursaries, Grants & Scholarships
- Youth Groups, Girl Guides, Boy Scouts & Cadet
- Medical Equipment
- Geriatric Research
- Professional Training of Geriatric Physicians & Nurses
- Educational Funding for rural doctors
- Veterans & Seniors Housing
- Cockrell House for homeless veterans
- Wheelchair accessible projects
- Fire & Rescue equipment
- And more!

SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

Now that our survival is more assured and if our gaming fund application is approved, for the first time in a long time, we may be able to approve scholarship and bursary applications.

Please make sure that when submitting the forms, **all blanks that need to be filled are completed.** Incomplete applications will not be considered for review. In the past, applications were deemed ineligible when grades or financial information (if requested) was not provided.

BEFORE YOU GO

You may have come across this before but it is worth seeing again. Although it is American in origin and war specific, it is equally valid for Canadian World War II veterans as well for those who serve or have served in conflicts and action since.

http://www.beforeyougo.us/play_byg Make sure you read the story behind the song.



After 70 years, veteran gets Japanese apology

By [Laura Lavin - Victoria News](#)

Published: December 23, 2011 10:00 AM



Gerry Gerrard's Esquimalt townhome is filled with family photographs.

There are photos of his children and grandchildren, many are of his late wife Evelyn, one sits on the table near his recliner, only an arm's length away. The display also includes plaques, photographs and mementoes of Gerrard's time as a Hong Kong veteran.

Gerrard's first name is actually Horace, although no one has called him that in years. "My wife, I don't think she ever called me Horace. She always called me Gerry," a nickname he earned as a soldier, he said, his strong voice breaking slightly.

Evelyn died last year after 64 years of marriage. Evelyn waited for Gerry after he went overseas to fight in the Second World War. She waited for more than four years, not knowing where he was or if he would ever come home.

"When I came back, she was waiting on the dock," he said with a smile. "We got married six weeks later."

Gerrard began his career as a soldier signing up with the reserve army in Red Deer, Alta., at the age of 16.

He was later sent to Victoria where he worked as a wireless operator. For two years he helped protect the West Coast, then he was transferred to the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. Gerrard and his fellow soldiers were soon on a ship headed to China.

After 18 days at sea, they arrived in Hong Kong. Three weeks later, 20-year-old Gerrard was a prisoner of war.

Gerrard was one of hundreds of Allied soldiers that surrendered in the Battle of Hong Kong on Christmas Day in 1941.

"It was a hopeless situation," he said. "We had been fighting 24 hours a day for a couple of weeks."

Gerrard thinks about that Christmas in 1941 each year. He remembers his days as a prisoner of war more often. "It's always in your mind. Every day you think of something that happened over there."

During 17-and-a-half days of fighting, 290 Canadians were killed and 493 were wounded trying

to defend Hong Kong. On Christmas Day 1941, unable to fight any longer, the Allies had no choice but to surrender.

In his recliner in front of the fireplace, Gerrard recalled the day.

He was near Wong Nei Chong Gap when the Japanese landed.

"I can't even remember where I slept the whole time. I know it wasn't in a bed. I guess it just happened to be anywhere I was. You catnapped quite a bit, and when you did, before you opened your eyes you just lay and listen to see if you heard strange voices – Japanese language," he said.

He was with two other signalmen when they heard of the surrender on Christmas.

"We always set up a little ways away from headquarters because of the bombing and shelling that went on whenever we went on the air," he said.

"Then it got quiet so we sent a messenger back to headquarters and he saw the Japanese walking in. That left us a bit behind the lines and we made our way out and didn't find any troops."

They turned toward the main headquarters and found others hoping to make a last stand. "Then the order came through to surrender."

The Japanese took them back to their own camp. "They took us right back to Sham Shui Po barracks, where we had been. Of course it had been stripped clean by the Chinese, all the wood frames, the wood doors, anything wood they took because they had a shortage of fuel for cooking. So we just had open buildings made of tile and stucco."

He was held there for a year. He was then transferred to the mainland and later to a camp in northern Japan.

He took the experience one day at a time.

"(We were) wondering what was the future going to be. What they were going to do to you, from then on you just live from day to day. The food was bad, there was no medical supplies, then they started working us. You had to be on the parade square at daylight and you were getting back just as it was getting dark."

Gerrard and the other prisoners were beaten, starved and forced to work in mines, shipyards and foundries. Many suffered disabilities and many died prematurely.

"When we first went to the camp in Kawasaki in Japan, the commander of the camp gave us a speech and told us that we would probably never see Canada



again. That they would be taking over Canada,” Gerrard said.

“He said we would probably end up dying in the camp. So I was just determined that wasn’t going to

happen. Whenever I got down, I would think of this and it would help me. I was just determined they weren’t going to get the better of me.”

He credits a strong genetic makeup for his survival. “Fortunately, I guess my genes were pretty good. If you got some disease or something in your weakened condition, if you got one thing, you’d get another.”

After four Christmases away, Gerrard and the other servicemen were freed.

“We went back to camp that night and things were still the same. The next morning we got up to go to work and the guards had all disappeared – that was the start of our freedom.”

Many years later, he is recounting his story because the Japanese government formally apologized to Canadian prisoners of war for their suffering.

For Gerrard, it’s a case of too little, too late. “There was an odd feeling about it. We were told we had to keep it a secret from the media (until after the Dec. 8 event in Japan).”

There was no media coverage in Japan and Veterans Affairs Minister Steven Blaney was not in attendance during the apology, Gerrard said.

“There was a few in our organization (Hong Kong Veterans Association) that thought they ought to apologize. But it didn’t matter to me. I had let it go,” he said.

“This important gesture is a crucial step in ongoing reconciliation and a significant milestone in the lives of all prisoners of war. It acknowledges their suffering while honouring their sacrifices and courage,” Blaney said in a press release.

The man giving the apology, Toshiyuki Kato, Japan’s parliamentary vice-minister for foreign affairs, was sincere, Gerrard said.

“He seemed genuine, but I wondered if it was done on behalf of the embassy or if the government of Japan was behind it. I thought that should have been better represented than it was. They didn’t even take a picture.”

But photos aren’t something Gerrard needs to remember.

“There’s always something reminding you of it, I think all the fellows have that problem. At times like

this when you bring it all up again, I lose a lot of sleep over it.

“You’ve got to keep putting it behind you, to drop it, to think of something else. It’s a bit of a struggle sometimes, but as you get older it gets easier, the old memory is failing.”



A surprise for Gerry - Gerry’s family join the members attending the AGM to celebrate his 90th birthday.

Please keep us informed if you, or anyone you know, need our attention (visit, phone calls, assistance, etc). Our Sick & Visiting Committee Chair is Connie Meadmore who can be reached at (250) 383-0491.

Meetings & Minutes

- If you would like to attend meetings but are unable to due to lack of transportation, please contact any member of the executive. We will attempt to find a ride for you.
- If you are not able to attend due to health reasons or competing events and would like to receive minutes via email or postal mail, please contact Bal at psbr127@shaw.ca or (250) 595-6362



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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| General Meeting | 1st Saturday of the month, 1:30 pm, followed by social May 5, June 2 |
| Executive Meeting | 3rd Tuesday of the month, 7:00 pm April 17, May 15, June 19, August 21 |
| Weekly Golf | Tuesday mornings around 8:00 am , Mt Doug, weather dependent, usually April to October, check with Bert Soutar for times (250) 477-8818 |
| Monthly Golf | 3rd Thursday of May, June, July, August, September usually "2 for 1's" or Nine 'n Dine arrangement Royal Oak, Cowichan, Mt Brenton, etc check with Len Anderson (250) 652-4749 |
| Bowling | October-April, 1st Wednesday at Miracle Lanes, Sidney times: 1:30 pm or 3:30 pm depending on time of year |
| Steak/Theme Dinners | usually 4th Saturday of the summer months June 23, July 28, August 25, September (?) dependent on numbers available to attend details communicated via email or posters at Legion |
| Envelope Stuffing | begins Wednesday, October 10-Friday, October 12, and resumes Monday, October 15-16 if necessary at Trafalgar/Pro Patria Branch |
| Poppy Tray Deliveries | Monday, October 22-Thursday, October 25 |
| Rotunda Ceremony | Friday, November 9 |
| Cenotaph Service | Sunday, November 11 |
| Poppy Tray Pick-ups | Monday, November 12 to completion |
| Christmas Brunch | To be determined |
| Socials | Fridays, 4:00 - 7:00 pm after general meetings unscheduled events communicated via email or web site |

