



Class of 65 Newsletter

Edition 66 - November 2013



Disclaimer: This Newsletter is produced for members of the RMC Class of 1965 and is based solely on inputs from members of the Class of 65. It is not an official publication of the Royal Military College nor does it purport to represent the views or opinions of all members of the Class Editorial staff still lacks the linguistic skills to produce a bilingual version.

Editor's Corner

As seems to be the case every year, Remembrance Day has ushered in winter-like weather. This month see the final installment of **Phil Bury's** Sicilian odyssey. We will also usher in what I hope will be the first in a series of articles from **Tony Goode** on his experiences as a Naval Officer in Ghana. There are a couple of administrative notes and some tidying up to do from the last edition. First, however, a couple of medical updates on classmates who have been and/or are under care since our last report.

In a remarkable coincidence, three members of the Class - **Hugh Spence**, **Bill Leach**, and **Tony Goode** - all went in for heart surgery on the same day (25 October). Bill and Hugh were even admitted to the same hospital.

Hugh reported that he, *"went through Heart Institute today - 7.5 hours - and came out with a new stent which hopefully will end the agonies I've been suffering."*

"Will watch carefully post-op function of re-bored carburetor but have every expectation that I'm good for another 100,000 clicks."

Bill summarised his visit as follows, *"I was there to have an ICD (Implantable Cardiovector Defibrillator) implanted in my chest. Operation completed! The recuperative regime for this is more stringent than for my open heart surgery of Oct 2012. They have my full attention."*

Finally, Tony provided the following, *"Procedure went well, but after meeting with the Cardiologist who told me that things had not deteriorated significantly, I expected to get further word at a meeting scheduled with the surgeon for next week. Yesterday, to my surprise, I received a call from the hospital telling me I am scheduled for open heart surgery next Friday. More details will be revealed at pre-admission on Tuesday. I expect that they will replace two old bypasses that are blocked, perhaps others as well along with a valve. Having had the surgery before, I know what to expect, but it's no fun."*

Apparently all three are now convalescing and hopefully on the mend. On behalf of the entire class gentlemen, take it easy and get well soon.

The same sentiments are passed along to **Dick Wright** and his family. Dick was admitted to hospital in Regina on 6 November suffering from a brain aneurism. At last report, he is still in hospital undergoing treatment. We wish him a speedy and full recovery.

Hugh Spence asked me to pass along the following announcement on a Class Winter Convention in Florida.

If I-75 means more to you than your next big birthday, you might be interested in a gathering of classmates and their better halves scheduled for February in Siesta Key on the Gulf. This will be a BYOE (E for everything) luncheon on a day to be determined in the window Feb. 26, 27, 28.

If you intend to attend, please log in with Class Sec Hugh Spence hjm.spence@rogers.com so you'll receive any arrangement e-mails.

Georges Wilson and **Gaetan Dextras** have corrected the identification of a couple of classmates in the 1962 Trooping of the Colour picture submitted by **Hugh Landerkin** in Edition 65.

Next to Hugh, correctly identified is **Peter Kinkaid**. Next to him is **Gaston Lapointe** (deceased). In front of Hugh is **Marc Cantin** and next to him is **Jean Paquette** (not **Marc Jette**).

2013 Teaching Excellence Award Lecture

This year's TEA Lecture will be held at 1900 on Tuesday, 26 November in Curries Hall. As usual, there will be a delegation of Ottawa-based classmates travelling to Kingston for the event. Anyone requiring more information should contact **Jim Carruthers**.

Below is the poster for the event that includes the name of this year's winner and the topic of his lecture.

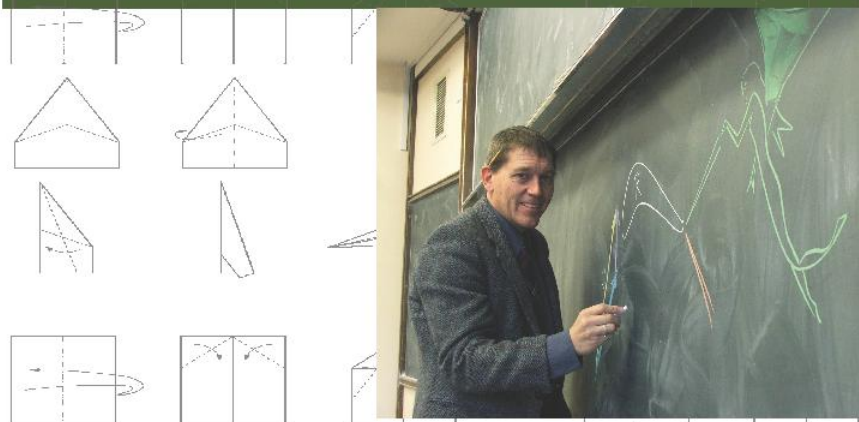
Royal Military College of Canada

RMC Class of 1965
Teaching Excellence Award
PUBLIC LECTURE

Conférence publique du Prix
Promotion de 1965 du CMRC du
prix de l'excellence en
enseignement

Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering
Département de génie mécanique et génie aérospatial

UN APPEL À LA SIMPLICITÉ
Your Absinthe From Class Forum
A CALL FOR SIMPLICITY
Dr. W.D.E Allan



Currie Hall
1900 hrs
Tuesday, 26 November

Salle Currie
19h00, mardi
le 26 novembre

Contact/ Personne-ressources : Huw Osborne, osborne@rmc.ca, x6269

Collège militaire royal du Canada

From his sickbed, **Tony Goode** sent along the following: *"For years, I been trying to make a contribution to your newsletter, but other demands on my time precluded any contribution. However I am currently under forced rest convalescing from open heart surgery that took place on 1 November. I'm making good progress in the recovery but it will take time. In the meantime, I need a non work project to occupy the little grey cells. So I decided to provide some anecdotes from my appointment to the Ghana Armed Forces Staff Collage in the summer of 1976. First installment is attached."*

A Naval Officer on the Equator

By 6440 Tony Goode

Of all the things that I did during a lengthy career of almost 30 years of commissioned service in the Royal Canadian Navy before retiring as a Captain, without a doubt, my appointment as the Naval member of the Canadian Armed Forces Training Team Ghana(CAFTTG) was by far and away the most interesting.

How I ended up in Accra, Ghana is a lengthy story, which I will try to summarize in a few paragraphs, but without a little of the background and context about Canada's role in Ghana, what happened in the spring of 1976 would be difficult to understand.



First, some background: In the late 1950's, the British Empire was in the throes of disintegration as first India and Pakistan and then other colonies were given their independence, sometimes as a result of colonial rebellions or as a result of huge and unmanageable political turmoil. In contrast to many colonies, the Gold Coast, as Ghana was known before independence, was well run; fiscally sound with significant reserves; the best educated population in Africa; and, possessing of many natural resources such as gold, diamonds, and forest products that could support a sound modern state.

After lengthy political discussions, Kwame Nkrumah was duly elected as the Prime Minister and eventually became President of Ghana in 1957. Ghana was held up as the exemplar of what a newly independent ex-colony could achieve. Unfortunately, Nkrumah succumbed to much of the left wing ideology that was popular in English educational circles at the time, where Nkrumah received much of his education and ended up frittering away his financial legacy on nationalizing local industries, creating steel plants for which there were no

markets under the assumption that industrial self sufficiency and an autarkic approach to the economy would insulate the country from the depredations of the capitalist world.

Needless to say, his approach did not work and by the time I arrived in 1976, the countryside was littered with the rusting hulks of industrial plants that could not be maintained or could no longer be supported when the money ran out. On the military side, the Ghanaian Navy, Army and Air Force were small, but relatively well trained given the limited equipment the British transferred to them at independence. The Armed Forces were largely officered by British officers who occupied virtually every position in ships, squadrons and army battalions at the level of Lieutenant and above, including overall command and control, reporting directly to Kwame Nkrumah. As I understand it, Canada provided some officers and NCO's to instruct at the basic schools and also some specialist training to communications and logistics personnel.

In the early 1960's, Ghana's army was heavily involved in the UN Mission to the Congo, where it performed with mixed results, including a mutiny in one battalion against their British officers, due partially to the failure of the British to advance more Ghanaian officers. Nkrumah precipitated a political crisis with his British military advisers in late 1961, which resulted in the expulsion of all of the British advisors to the Navy, Air Force and Army, creating a large hole in the training and command infrastructure. Apparently, Ghana looked to the East including Russian, East European satellites and India for replacements, but given the competition for support in Africa between the USSR and the USA during that phase of the Cold War, it was in the interest of the West to replace British officers with officers from an Allied nation such as Canada.

Therefore, Cold War rivalry had a major role to play in increasing Canada's involvement in Africa, including our mission to Ghana. In the event, approximately 250 Canadian military personnel were sent to Ghana in 1962 and assigned to virtually every unit and training establishment including the Military Academy (1961-1968), the Military Hospital, as Brigade Training Officers (1961-1968), to the air force, to the Navy and later the Ministry of Defence (1963-1968), Ghana Army Headquarters (1963-1968) and the Airborne School. Over the next decade, the Canadian presence was steadily reduced due to a combination of budget cuts in Canada (1st decade of darkness!) and progress in training Ghanaian officers. By the early 1970's, the Canadian military presence in Ghana had been reduced to one Acting Army Lt. Colonel who advised Army and National Defence on training matters.

In common with many developing countries, Ghana experienced political upheavals that were exacerbated by Nkrumah's move to the political left, taking steps to establish a

USSR style socialist republic with him as leader for life. In 1966, Nkrumah was overthrown by a military coup d'état whose leaders committed to a return to civilian government over the next few years. Even though elections were held, politics were unstable and the military took power again in 1972, not to relinquish it again for many years. Even though the leaders of the coup promised honest and efficient government, the reality was significantly different. One leader of the government was known as "Mr. 10%", which was how much he charged for any government contract, in hard currency deposited in a foreign bank account. It is against this backdrop of unstable politics, military government and corruption that the first episode in my adventure unfolded.

The military leadership, which was drawn from the ranks of colonels, navy captains and junior brigadier generals, was acutely aware that the more junior officers and NCO's were restless and eager to share in the spoils. One way of doing this was to send some carefully selected mid-level officers to foreign staff colleges in Commonwealth countries such as India, the UK, Canada and others, including Russia. However, the demand far outstripped supply and another solution was required. For a mid-level officer, attendance at Staff College was a prerequisite for promotion to the next rank and also for assuming civilian responsibilities in the large number of state-owned companies, boards, and administrative positions in the districts. These positions were economically lucrative, with myriad opportunities for graft. To avoid any grumbling in the ranks and to secure their own positions, the military government was desperate to increase the number of positions at staff colleges, but as indicated, foreign governments could not take up the slack.

After a study by Canadian officers, it was decided to create an indigenous staff college- The Ghana Armed Forces Staff College(GAFSC). Initially, Canada was asked if it would assume total responsibility for the organization, curriculum development, provision of directing staff and administration, but under the Trudeau Government, the Canadian Armed Forces were continuing to endure the aftermath of unification and death by a thousand cuts inflicted by continuous budget cuts and had no funds, personnel or even organizational capacity to undertake such a complex task at that point. Discouraged, the Ghanaian Government made the rounds of sympathetic militaries with little to show for their efforts. In the end, Canada and the UK agreed to assist through the establishment of a Commonwealth Training Team to be led by a senior British Army officer with 7 officers from the British Army and 3 from Canada: one each from the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. The organization and curriculum would be based on the new Canadian Armed Forces Command and Staff College course that opened in 1974 at the Staff College in Toronto. As it happened, I was a member of that first course, graduating in 1975. An appointment as the Senior Staff Officer Training and Course Officer for the Combat Control Officers course at the Canadian Forces Fleet School Halifax followed graduation,

my first position in Halifax since my marriage in 1970 and several appointments in various ships and schools on the West Coast including command of my first ship in 1972.

After almost 10 months in Halifax, my wife Terry and I were settling into life in Halifax after an absence of over 5 years. As a local lass, she was delighted to be back home with friends and family and also to be able to return to work in the mortgage banking business. We had no inkling that our lives were about to be disrupted in the most unimaginable way, all as a result of a phone call from my Career Manager who was the last person from whom I expected to hear. It was just before the Easter long weekend when I received the fateful call from Commander Tom Murphy, who was the Career Manager for Navy Commanders; as a Lieutenant Commander at that point in my career, I knew that a call from him was a very positive indicator for my future. He asked me if I wanted the good news or the bad news first. Good news I told him. First, you're being promoted to Commander, but the bad news is that we want you to move to Ghana to become part of the Commonwealth team to establish a staff college in Accra, Ghana. I asked him when he wanted my decision to which he responded you have until Monday to make up your mind. Immediately, I called Terry and told her what had happened, and asked her what she thought. She surprised me when she asked me "When do we leave?" She was truly ready and willing to embark on a great adventure that was to last two years and which was to affect us both up until today.

(More to follow)

Finally, we have the last of **Phil Bury's** letters from Sicily.

The Dog: We left Vizzini for Grammichele right from the centre of town, and from the start we were followed by a dog. Although he seemed to be a stray, we worried that he might get too far from familiar handouts, and tried to dissuade him, but to no avail. It was a hot day, even by Sicilian standards, and he soon began to show it, but he persisted. He was a brown-and-white mix, maybe some spaniel and even collie, but of course we named him Husky. We offered him water at the halts, but he was obviously feeling the heat. After about 18 km, just outside Grammichele, we stopped to dedicate a group of markers. Husky settled beside one of the markers. We tried to move him for the dedication, but he kept returning to one, and finally we decided that perhaps he belonged there. Who knows? After we got to town we never saw him again.

29 July 2013

From my hotel room in Regalbuto, the view is of rolling hills of green vineyards, olive groves and orchards in the valley below, pale brown wheat fields on the lower

slopes, pasture on the upper slopes, and grey rock on the heights. At three in the afternoon, all is more silent and still than at three in the morning, for it is burning hot everywhere, and neither fox nor fowl is any more inclined to stir than any human. Far below is a large artificial lake, soft turquoise in the sun, to which there doesn't seem to be any recreational access at all.

On the hillside near here, four Canadians died, and one wounded soldier was rescued and cared for by the parents of our hotel manager. Everywhere we go we tread on hallowed ground.

30 July

This morning we gather at the Agira Canadian cemetery, one of the few war cemeteries that is all Canadian. Like all Commonwealth War Graves cemeteries, it is beautifully situated and maintained, on a hillside overlooking the ground where so many fell. 484 Canadians lie here. 78 more died of wounds received in Sicily and are buried near Ortona or have no known graves.



Agira Canadian Cemetery

The ranks of Husky 2013 are now augmented by many more Canadians: families of the fallen, regimental associations, and 60 serving CF members, in addition to the Pipes and Drums of the Seaforth Highlanders, who have a special connection to Agira. Our Ambassador Fox and Defence Attache Colonel Tony Battista, who've been invaluable supporters, are here. So are local dignitaries including mayors of many of the towns where we've been received. Today's gathering is well known locally and well attended. Community organising committees have spread the word, and ever since Pachino, Sicilians

have mentioned to us that they plan to be here today. We recognise many, including a number who have been working on the Husky project for years and who have become friends. Others have come from nearby Agira, and some allow that they've never really known much about this plot of land, but are glad that they now do. This is one small but tangible sign that our mission - to tell Canadians and Italians what happened here long ago - is bearing some fruit.

We hold a Remembrance service, the largest and nearly the last of the many in these past weeks. This time there's a Canadian trumpeter to sound *The Last Post and Reveille*; the lament today is played by Pipe Major Bain of the Seaforths, P/M Stewart having graciously ceded his customary place. Prayers are offered in three languages by our own chaplain, Captain, The Reverend Canon Don Aitchison, one of our most indefatigable marchers. At the end of the service, the roll of the fallen is called, and at each headstone stands one who will answer in the name of he who lies there. Families, regimental associations and serving members join the Husky 2013 folk. One who will answer is the Husky veteran who has been with us throughout these many days, Sherry Atkinson, who stands by the grave of a comrade. Many Italians come forward at our invitation, and with their help every grave is attended and every name is answered. These things are hard to measure, but of all the emotional moments of the past few weeks, this must be the most powerful. We know that our pilgrimage is nearing its end.

On the evening of 30 July 1943 the Seaforth Pipes and Drums gave a concert in the main piazza of the mountaintop town of Agira, within the sound of the guns. It was a gesture of defiance to any of the enemy who heard it, and of triumph - and, no doubt, of sorrow and remembrance. It was also a triumph for the tiny and perpetually underfunded CBC, whose Peter Stursberg recorded it and scooped the world. This evening, seventy years to the day later, the Seaforth Pipes and Drums repeat the performance. It's brilliantly staged by Max Fraser's documentary crew and executed by the Seaforths. It begins with Stursberg's recording - his introduction and the church bells - and now the same bells, live, blend in and then the Seaforths play, magnificently. The event is attended by over a hundred Canadians and over two thousand Sicilians. Not, to their shame, by the CBC, no longer tiny, still underfunded but not so badly underfunded as to ignore this moment. Perhaps they will manage to use the recording we'll send them. The Seaforths are followed by Husky 2013's own Jean Miso, singer-songwriter and another tireless marcher, then by a Canadian soldier who wows the crowd with an Italian opera solo in a fine tenor, and then by the duet of Husky 2013's Mitchell brothers, piper Charles David and drummer William, who play the piece that, we all hope, will win them a prize at the Maxville Games this weekend, only three days hence. The event becomes, appropriately, a town festival and continues into the small hours.

31 July

Our last event is the opening and dedication of a Canadian exhibit in the WW II museum in Catania. Until now, the museum featured excellent depictions and artifacts of Italian, German, American and British forces, but no mention of the Canadians. No longer. Dr. Andrew Gregory, brother of our ringleader Steve, with the help of local historians, has assembled a Canadian exhibit that leaves no doubt.

Speeches, mutual thanks, and Husky 2013 is complete. Not really over, because the memories last and the story that we are here to tell still needs telling. But we have done what we came to do. We've marched in the footsteps of our forebears for about 350km. Not every one of us has done every step: I for one have missed many for a variety of reasons and only a handful have done every mile. But the team has done it. We have planted and dedicated 562 memorial markers to soldiers and airmen who fell in Sicily; three to the many lost at sea and in the air before the landings; a number to the Italian soldiers who fell; and twenty-four to the Italian families of Agira we know to have died. We've taken part in nineteen acts of remembrance in as many towns that were liberated by our troops. Every one of us has gained a deeper and more solemn sense of the sacrifices made by so many so long ago, and of the dreadful destruction of war.

1 August

The support team will stay for a day to finish up, but most of us disperse. I've made good friends whom I hope to keep. I've walked close to the footsteps of my father, and of his comrades some of whom lie here still. I have a renewed appreciation for those of my countrymen who came here seventy years ago.

Steve Gregory, whose seven years of dedication have made this all happen, says that no thanks are due to him, only to those whom we are here to remember. He has a point, and we owe them more thanks than we can ever express. But my fellow participants and I owe thanks to Steve for giving us this opportunity. All Canadians owe him thanks for telling this story.

Before he became ill **Dick Wright** wrote the following comment on Edition 65, *"I will share Phil's article with a 94 year old friend who served in Italy in WWII. He drove a fuel truck to the front lines every night until he got blown off the road by a shell explosion and spent a cold night in the ditch. Subsequently he contracted pneumonia and got shipped back to England. He was a bit older, was a farmer, and had a family, so he did not need to volunteer to serve in the early 1940's but it was the thing to do in a rural*

Saskatchewan community in those days. Now he says it was the stupidest thing he ever did."

Closing Notes

That's it for another month. Thanks again to our contributors - keep those articles and snippets coming. Until next month, stay safe. To close - here is a picture of the 1964/65 Fencing Team.

