



Class of 65 Newsletter

Edition 67-December 2013



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Editor's Corner

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year everyone.

The first items of business this month are health updates on a couple of classmates. **Bob Walker** provided the following on **Dick Wright**: *Dick W telephoned my high school buddy on Saturday (a good sign) & talked at some length. Has been released from hospital & is staying with a daughter in Wilcox, Sask. Still waiting to hear about scheduling at Wascana Rehab. No difficulty carrying on a conversation. No problem reading or writing or walking. More good signs.*

Still having some difficulty with memory. Can remember events and such, but has difficulty with right hand - drops things - or in doing things, Dick said, like creating an invoice (part of his previous pig-farming business life, maybe??) as if he has forgotten how to do that.

In a follow-up to Bob's report, **Roger Chiasson** had the following thought: *Heartening news Bob. Pass on to Dick that to overcome boredom he should start writing his memoirs. I am doing that for my grandkids, because I wish my grandfather had done it. Besides, it's a great exercise in finding perspective in the complex world we live in. Going from RMC grad to hog farmer just has to be a good story!*

Tony Goode provided his own update to his recent heart surgery: *Just to keep everyone up to date. Came home from the hospital just a week ago after successful heart valve replacement surgery. Making very good progress. Following exercise regime and also all Drs' instructions to the absolute letter, which is hard to do. Should be back in fighting trim by Christmas. More to follow.*

Sounds like good new all round. Speedy recovery guys!

Pete Walker gave us the following life update: *I am finally heading out to pasture. On December 5th I will retire and try to discover some exciting things to do. Please note my new email address starting December 5th walkerpeter63@googlemail.com.*

Here is an early Happy Holidays or a Merry Christmas just in case retirement is as busy as some people say it is.

The following is an article from a recent e-Veritas recognizing the annual **John Bart** awards.

6513 John Bart Dinner

By 25982 Officer Cadet (IV) Colin Strong

This past Tuesday the first year cadets of Tango Flight (7 Sqn) and the obstacle course team leaders (ICs) from the remaining first year flights were invited to attend the annual Capt (ret) John Bart Dinner. This dinner recognizes the accomplishments of the winning first year flight from the FYOP obstacle course, as well as the leadership displayed by the other flight ICs that day.

In attendance were members of the training wing including RMCC Cmdt, BGen Meininger, DCdts LCol Lemyre, College Chief CPO1 Davidson, Acting C Div Commander Capt Weaver and 7 Sqn Commander Capt Nam. Representing the RMC Foundation was Executive Vice-President Mr. Rod McDonald accompanied by his wife Micheline. With support from Mr. McDonald and Senior Staff Mess Manager Roch Carriere, Capt Nam and CFL Tango OCdt (IV) Strong were able to organize a memorable and enjoyable evening for the first years, even if most had an exam waiting for them the next morning. All guests enjoyed great food, conversation and a slideshow montage of memorable moments from the obstacle course.

As guest of honour and keynote speaker for the event, RMCC welcomed back ex-cadet Capt Simon Mailloux to speak on his experiences and provide some hard-learned advice for all to share. After being introduced by Tango Section Commander OCdt (III) Sarah Staples and a few words of commendation from BGen Meininger, Capt Mailloux recounted lessons he learned as a young commander in Afghanistan, specifically the importance of mental and physical resilience. Capt Mailloux also extolled the importance of developing

teamwork and camaraderie within the "bubble" of the RMC peninsula, urging all cadets to form friendships now, as they would serve them for a lifetime. When asked about his remarkable return to active duty after the amputation of his left leg (the outcome of an IED blast in 2007) Capt. Mailloux explained that in order to move past life's greatest obstacles, you have to fully embrace them, make them part of you and push forward. A full biography is available at the link provided at the end of this article.



Capt. Mailloux later joined the first year ICs for a presentation of \$2500.00 to Soldier On, the prize donated to the cadets from the John Bart Annual Endowment.

At the end of the evening Tango Flight cadets and staff were awarded for their teamwork and leadership by BGen Meininger, each receiving a plaque as a memento for their hard work during FYOP 2013. The flight then presented a cheque for the Cmdt's Discretionary Fund. The \$10,000.00 benefaction to the Cmdt is for the purpose of leadership Development amongst the Cadets as he sees fit. This cheque is made available due to the generosity of Mr. Bart.

Both the \$10,000.00 donation and the \$2,500.00 donation are made by John and Mary Bart through the Foundation.

Capt Nam and OCdt Strong would like to extend a sincere thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Bart for their continued support of RMCC leadership development, as well as BGen Meinzinger, Capt Mailloux and all other head table guests for sharing their evening with the first years and staff.

Rick Archer has provided another tale from his bag of memories - this time the story of his "love affair" with a car!

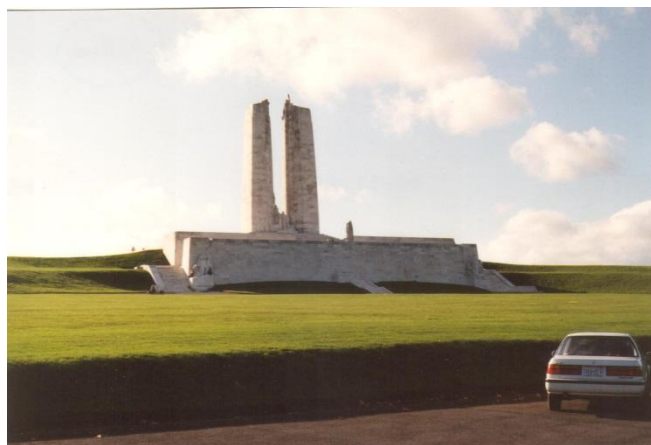
The Ovlov Saga

By 6585 Richard Archer

Did I ever tell you the story of the Archer acquisition of a 2002 Volvo in Brussels? Marilyn and I were within a couple of years of departing NATO HQ, and thought we'd take advantage of the Belgian duty free process to buy a new car. We had heard from some fellow Canadians that the Volvo company handled all the details in stride. When the time came to depart Belgium, one just left the car with them and as part of the purchase price they shipped it to Canada and handled all the customs and other details. All we needed to do on arrival home would be to pay some residual Canadian tax based on the then-current book value of the car and claim the keys. It was a very good deal and we went for it. And in concert with the family predilection for giving everything names, we called the car Ovlov.

Before we had left Ottawa for Brussels in 1997, the car we were driving was a 1990 Honda Accord EX-R (I'll spare you the family name). Before 1997, Marilyn and I had spent two years at NATO HQ, with me in uniform on the International Military Staff, and we had managed to ship the Honda over and back in the same containers as our other personal belongings. So we knew that it was a great car on the European highways. And in 1997 we knew as well that I'd need to use a car to drive to and from NATO HQ every work day. So for the new job at NATO the idea was to ship the Honda over again, and once there buy a second smaller car that I'd use principally for commuting.

As an aside, concerning the Honda we believe it had more sea time than an AB. Most of the original parts presumably came across to Canada over the Pacific...and we shipped it across the Atlantic three times. When the time came at the very end of our second time in Brussels in 2004, we had purchased Ovlov and so didn't want to take the Honda home with us. But we didn't have much hope in selling a 14-year-old Canadian-spec Japanese car on the local market, even if it had been slightly upgraded with Belgian requirements for a fog light and additional safety equipment, and had passed every roadworthiness inspection - a tense and universally hated annual drama called *Contrôle technique* in French or *Autokeuring* in Flemish. But one day towards the end, with Ovlov somewhere westbound in mid-Atlantic, we were shopping for one more Belgian memento in the Brussels suburb of Waterloo (of Battle fame), and on return to the Honda a flyer was under a wiper asking if we were looking to sell the car. We contacted the telephone number, and it turned out to be a group of who appeared to be Algerians. They liked the car, with the only stipulation that it had to have air conditioning. These negotiations all occurred, of course, in French, so we were a little nervous as to what we had agreed to. But we turned the car over to them the day before we departed Brussels in exchange for the proper sales documentation and 1000 euros in cash. So we think that our intrepid Honda-the-Sailor added some extra sea time across the Mediterranean to North Africa. And maybe she's still going strong.



The Honda at the Vimy Memorial in France

But back to 1997: in January I departed Ottawa to start my new job as a civilian on the NATO International Staff, but Marilyn had to stay behind in order to sell the house in Nepean. Luckily I found some temporary accommodation within walking distance of NATO HQ, but one of my tasks was to purchase the small car that would be the adjunct to the Honda once Marilyn and it came over.

I approached the car purchase with some trepidation. In the HQ there was a separate office that handled internal registration and sales transactions. Belgian authorities allowed non-Belgian HQ employees like me to purchase a car from a fellow employee without the 21% VAT being applied. Such cars registered under this regime sported different-coloured license plates than the ordinary Belgian cars. (The foreigners working for the many European Union institutions in Belgium had yet another plate colour scheme.) This was also the office where we purchased the cheap tax-free petrol coupons for use at any Belgian Fina station - we paid less for gas in Belgium than we did in Canada.

I had been warned to be careful of the two guys who ran the office. While they did indeed do all the paperwork associated with registration and issued you the plates, they also had a side business where they flipped cars they perceived to be undervalued. So if they offered to buy the car from you, you probably weren't asking enough....

Regardless, I responded to a sales notice pinned to the notice board and acquired from another staff officer a 1995 Opel Corsa - five-door and five-on-the-floor. This was a great little car that served us very well right up to the time Ovlov came on the scene. When that time came, I had no trouble selling the Corsa to another HQ staff officer.

But eventually the time came to think about a duty-free car that we could take home with us back to Canada. As mentioned, we settled on a Volvo - an automatic, four-door S60 2.4T sedan with a number of bells and whistles, plus what Volvo called the luxury package - heated and power leather seats and the like. Very nice! We dealt with a salesman named Pascal Bell, who handled all sales to non-Belgians and who was therefore well-known to the Canadian community.

The car was assembled in the town of Ghent, just to the west of Brussels, but had to be built to Canadian specs. This turned out to be no problem. When the car was delivered to us we looked for and found the Canadian Inspector's maple leaf insignia on a door jamb.

But as it happened, that delivery was delayed by a month. Apparently, our car had to be sent back to the factory. Uh oh...not exactly a red flag, but perhaps an amber one. But at last we took delivery of Ovlov and drove it home. We loved it!

A few weeks later, our two daughters were visiting and one Saturday we decided to mount an expedition just across the German border to the town of Aachen, where the shopping was felt to be superior. As I left the driveway and was driving down our street I felt a problem in the shifting of the transmission. It was serious enough that we aborted the expedition, and I took Ovlov in to the Volvo dealer as soon as I could. They checked the car over but could find no problem. In any case, they re-booted the electronics associated with the transmission and pronounced the car to be as fit as a fiddle. And sure enough, Ovlov seemed to be acting normally again.

Then a month or so later, we were visited by Marilyn's brother, Ernie Cable, and his wife Carol. I had some leave and we had a great trip planned. First we would drive Ovlov to the walled medieval town of Rothenburg, in Germany. Next we would stay at the town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the foothills of the German Alps, including a visit to the fairy-tale-like castle of *Neuschwanstein*, and to Oberammergau, the home of painted houses and



a famous passion play once every ten years. Following that we would drive via Innsbruck, Austria and over the Brenner Pass (1375 m, 4511 ft) in the Tyrolean Alps down to Venice. After a couple of days in Venice we would make our way to the Lucca, Pisa and Florence area in Tuscany, Italy. Enroute home use the 17 km Gotthard Tunnel and would stay in the small town of Vitznau on the north shore of the Lake of the Four Cantons, or *Vierwaldstättersee*, in Switzerland, so as to visit Lucerne. A great plan, but unfortunately it was one that didn't pan out as hoped.

◀ *Marilyn, Richard, Carol and Ernie in front of Neuschwanstein Castle*

The first sign of trouble occurred in Garmisch. Once again Ovlov's transmission shifting was all

wrong. While Ern and Carol explored the city, Marilyn and I took Ovlov out to the nearest Volvo dealer, some ways out of town. The problem with the transmission seemed to diminish with driving, so by the time we got to the dealer, the mechanic couldn't find anything wrong. Okay, the visits to Oberamagau and the castle went without problem, and back on the road two days later we got across the Brenner Pass and made our way down to Venice.

My boss in NATO HQ was a retired Italian Navy captain. He had used his connections with the admiral in Rome, who was the chair of the NATO Naval Armaments Group, to arrange the difficult-to-make room reservations at the naval officers' mess on Venice's main island. He had also given me a letter in beautiful Italian to present to the *Capitano del Porto* (ie, the Coast Guard's port captain) to allow me to park free in the Coast Guard's compound.

We arrived at the gate of the compound but couldn't get the gate to open for us, so I parked in an empty area across the road. I walked over to the gate and managed to talk my way in and proceeded to the nearby guardhouse. I showed the letter to the petty officer...and began to be treated like visiting royalty. Yes, they would be honoured for us to park there.

In the meantime, Marilyn saw what looked like a member of the port police approaching. She dug out her English-Italian dictionary. "Quickly, what's the Italian word for 'husband'?" After a few questions and Marilyn's references to the *Capitano del Porto*, the policeman was evidently satisfied and left them alone. I returned to the car and drove into the compound through the now wide-open gate.

Once I had parked, a leading seaman who had helped me in the guardhouse came over and offered to help with the luggage. He had no English and our Italian was minuscule, but we seemed to communicate okay. I asked him the way to the *terminale di vaporetto*. Having looked at the map earlier, I believed I knew the way, but wanted to make sure. It wasn't far, a block or two. The guy immediately leapt into action. He flagged down a passing city bus, bundled the four of us and our luggage onto it, and yelled instructions at the driver. Great! We recognized the destination *terminale* when we saw it, without having paid any fare got off at the right stop, and engaged in inescapable negotiations with the *vaporetto*

ticket seller. He recognized us as tourists, of course, and wanted to sell us a three-day pass or at least a *biglietto andata e ritorno*. But all we wanted was a one-way ticket to the stop we knew was closest to the officers mess so as to keep our options open...and we also wanted to ensure that the *vaporetto* we caught was the one that used the *Canal Grande*.

This all came to pass and we steamed down the Grand Canal, under the Rialto Bridge. We suggested that Ern and Carol go up to the bow to see the passing panorama, and they did so. While they were gone Marilyn and I moved all the luggage to the boarding area for ease of disembarkation. When Ern and Carol returned from the bow, they initially couldn't find us, which must have given them a turn. But it all worked out and on arrival we had to walk only a short distance, but over three or four steep, picturesque bridges, to the officers mess, which is located just outside the two pillars which mark the canal entrance to the *arsenale navale*.

The two days in Venice went by all too quickly. Marilyn and I have one abiding memory I'd like to share with you. The first morning I went down from our comfortable room to the ground floor to check out the breakfast arrangements, and found it to be a tiny cup of thick coffee along with a *biscotti* or two. The Italian naval officers were all standing at the main bar, where the morning coffee was served, gearing themselves up for the day. Hmm, other arrangements seemed necessary for us Canadians. The four of us headed out the front door and down to the main lagoon front, where we found a small café with outdoor tables overlooking the lagoon, its islands and the nearby canals. A light shower was just finishing, and we sat there enjoying our croissants, yogurts and a milder version of Italian coffee, while Venice came to life around us. The bustle started from next to none but rose to full pitch. Among the arresting sights, we saw the iconic boatman in his open motor boat heading out on business, holding a black umbrella over his head.

On the last morning Ern and I went to the office to pay the bill. It came to 10 euros each for each of the two nights - a total of 20 euros.

On arrival back at the *Capitano del Porto*, I started Ovlov, but a dashboard warning light came on with the message "DO NOT DRIVE CAR". What now?

The guardhouse sailors graciously let me use their telephone to call the Volvo trouble number. I arranged for Volvo to send a tow truck to take us to the nearest dealer, which turned out to be in the town of Mestre on the mainland. The truck duly arrived and loaded Ovlov on its flat bed. Marilyn and Carol crowded into the cab with the driver while Ern and I sat in Ovlov on the back, maintaining our dignity. We got to the dealer about 11 am, and fortunately the head guy spoke English. One of the younger mechanics gestured me into Ovlov's passenger seat and asked for the key. He took us into the car storage lot, lined up in one of the lanes between the rows of cars and jammed his foot to the floor. We braked sharply at the end of the row and turned up another to head back. He did the same, again applying the brakes just in time. Finally he turned to me, looked me in the eye as I started breathing again and said, "You gotta bigga problem."

I went through about an hour and a half of back and forth telephone discussion with Volvo and our home dealership in Brussels. But 12:30 arrived, and in concert with all retail and other businesses in Italy, the dealership shut down and shuttered for lunch. Fortunately, we could see a small shopping mall a block or so away; we headed over there and found a restaurant. The dealership opened again at 4 pm, and I finalized the arrangements - just in time, as the foreman was getting upset at his burgeoning phone bill. Volvo offered to fly us home, but I insisted that we continue the trip. Ovlov would be left with the dealership, while a taxi would take us to the local airport where a suitably large rental car for four adults and luggage would be waiting for us.

The taxi was an adventure. At times it hit 170 km/hr. Marilyn was sitting in the middle seat in the back where there wasn't any seat belt.

A problem was that Venice's Marco Polo airport was brand new - it had opened officially literally the day before, and the taxi driver didn't have a clue as to where to go. But eventually we found our way to the car rental desk - and not entirely unexpectedly the lady behind the desk hadn't heard of any requisition from Volvo for us. More phone calls to Brussels, and I put the lady on the phone. It was classic - "Fax?", she asked, raising her eyebrows, and turned to a pile of paper, finding Volvo's fax as the top document. More negotiations ensued, this time as to the size of the vehicle.

The vehicle we finally found in the rental car parking garage was a diesel, standard-shift van-type. Fine! We loaded in the luggage and headed out. Next stop, Lucca!

We found the right *autostrada*, obstructed only by a car on fire that held us up for a while and by a heavy hail storm that we worried would damage the van. Night descended. The highway to Tuscany crossed the backbone of Italy, the Apennines, which were a series of sharp ridges interspersed with deep valleys. So the *autostrada* was a series of tunnels joined by high bridges over the valleys. Okay, but a problem was that while the bridges were three-lane in one direction, the tunnels were only two. And the two lanes of the tunnels were always aligned with the left-hand two lanes of the bridge.

The many trucks would inevitably move over to the far right hand lane on a bridge, but when a tunnel approached they would move over to the centre lane without so much of a by-your-leave. So we would be forced over into the far left lane...but this too was a problem. This was night time, so periodically an Italian with a death-wish would pass us going 200 km/hr. Being forced over by a truck would put you in their way. Looking in the rear view mirror did no good, because even though nothing could be seen, as soon as you went to move over they would appear out of nowhere, angrily flashing their lights.

After this adventure and some wrong turns in the dark, we found our way to our B&B outside Lucca. What followed was a great introduction to Tuscany, the medieval walls and buildings of Lucca, the leaning tower of Pisa and by local train to the spiritual architecture of Florence.

From Italy, the rest of the trip went off without a hitch. Home in Brussels, we turned in the Italian rental car, picked up a Volvo loaner from our dealer, and saw Ern and Carol to the airport. We heard from the Brussels dealer that the Volvo dealer in Mestre was refusing to do any repairs. To tell the truth, I shrugged my shoulders - I knew Volvo would fix it.

A week or so later I was back at work and Marilyn received a knock at the door. She could see Ovlov on the flat bed of a tow truck out on the street. The driver spoke no English but indicated that he was there from Italy to deliver the car. Marilyn got out a city map and showed him the complicated way to our Volvo dealer, through a series of roundabouts

and one-way village streets to the dealership in an adjoining suburb. The driver evidently arrived okay, because we soon received a call from the dealer that the front wheel drive and transmission had to be completely replaced - about a week's work.

In due course, we got Ovlov back in one piece, and even though my attuned senses picked up some previously unheard squeaks every time the car was stopped, they eventually dissipated.

But the saga wasn't quite over. On our return to Brussels I wrote a letter to Volvo Sweden to complain about our car's performance and the inconvenience, disappointment, embarrassment, etc. it had put us through. We really didn't trust Ovlov at this point in time and we wanted a new car! Volvo placated us with paying for two nights in a hotel anywhere, which wasn't too hard to take. We knew we weren't going to get a new car out



of them. So we found a very nice hotel in Paris on the left bank, in the middle of what we were hoping to see and visit. We wished Ern and Carol were there to share in the bounty, but a very pleasant weekend ensued.

As it turned out our confidence in Ovlov returned over time, and we continue to drive it to this day. Ovlov is still going strong.

◀ *Ovlov and friend, today*

Yvan Gagnon has taken a brief break from his constant travels to share the following personal thoughts on the "ups and downs of travelling".

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF TRAVELLING

By 6715 Yvan Gagnon

As many of you know, Alice and I have been traveling a lot since I was forced to retired for health reasons in 2000. The trip on the *Prinsendam* by Mike reminded me of some of the good and the bad times we have had on such cruises. I will admit at the onset that cruising is not the best way to see the world. We have been to many places inland so to speak, and that is the only way to appreciate different places; anyway, cruise ships do not make it to the roof of the world in the Himalayas, or in the triangle of Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Nor for that matter in Eastern Europe or on the Indian continent, all places that we have visited, and many others as well.



The worst experience that we ever encountered was actually on a stop-over in Cameroon while going from Lisbon to the Cape and back to Fort Lauderdale.

A few nights before this unfortunate incident, the poor little *Prinsendam* ran aground leaving the Port in Benin. It was at supper time during a major thunderstorm and, from the dining room window we could see all around every time a great bolt of lightning would illuminate the surroundings. But suddenly the ship which was going backward in the port slowed down, listed to one side, maybe ten degrees and came to a full stop in that position. The waiters and the staff hesitated for no more than 20 seconds and just continued doing their usual excellent service as if nothing had happened. It took 2 large tugboats almost one hour to pull us out of there, and away we went, everyone concerned about the seaworthiness of our ship. The captain told us that we would go and anchor a mile offshore to make sure everything was alright, but he never stopped. One hour later he told us that since no water was coming into the ship, if there were a hole, it could not be "large", hence we would continue to our next destination and check for damages there, if any... And that is what he did.

In Cameroon, Alice and I were anxious to see the place because my younger brother and his wife, both medical doctors, had worked there for a year under the old Colombo Plan some 30 years ago. We had places to see in town including a particular Hotel where my parents had stayed when they visited my brother at that time...

Before going in town however, we did the usual bargaining to get a taxi to take us to the foot of a volcano, and two American passengers from the ship joined us on this journey. The driver, a retired army person was very nice and the day looked very promising, until we crossed a bridge which divides the former French and English part of the country. The Japanese were building a much needed, brand new bridge alongside the old raggedy one on which we still had to travel, but as we arrived on the other side, a soldier laid a nail belt across the road and started yelling at us that we could not take pictures of this bridge. Alice had indeed taken a few pictures of fishermen on canoes on the lower side of the bridge, but there was absolutely no sign forbidding pictures at this place. We were ordered back to the other side of the bridge where 4 soldiers grabbed all the cameras in the car and took Alice to go and talk to their superior. They took her because she protested in French and that is the language they spoke. Try to picture the scene; 3 soldiers yelling all sorts of commands and taking her away, God knows where, while the rest of us were to stay put. They took her into a shack barely 8X8 with a table and two chairs in it, and where the "superior" was to take care of the situation while one of the soldiers, automatic rifle in hand, just kept yelling at her.

All the conversation was in French and he first asked for passports, which she did not have since most of the time we leave them on the ship and carry a copy ashore. He gave her hell for taking pictures and he told her he was confiscating all our cameras. Well, that did not go too well with Alice since we had pictures from many previous stops on the memory and these cameras were not that cheap, especially the one from the American lady... the other lady had the time to hide hers under the backseat of the taxi. So there was a long period of silence while the soldier and Alice would lock eyes together, nobody giving in. Then Alice took a 10\$ US bill and asked him if this would help in recovering the cameras? His answer was to ask her if this was a bribe, and she said yes, it was. Then he asked if she thought that he was corrupt, and she said an emphatic "yes" with a big head motion to that effect. He did however put the ten dollar bill away.

Things stayed at a standstill for a while and Alice asked him for his name because her husband was in the military and that in fact, he taught Admirals, Commandants and Generals and that if there was ever to be another conflict involving our military, she would make sure that his name would be remembered. By the way Alice never wanted to learn the military ranks and she never did. To her, a General and a Corporal must be very close ranks because they sounded the same! Anyway, the other soldier then realized that this may not have been a good idea and took away the paper on which the name was written. Another long period of silence followed.

In the meantime the surveillance in the taxi had stopped and one lady ran out to try to stop a convoy of one of the ship's excursion to come and help us, to no avail of course. But I was getting worried. What can take more than 35 minutes to settle? So I slowly walked to the shack and entered to inquire about what was happening. I told the "boss" that his parents must have been more receptive when my brother and his wife, the two medical doctors, came to his country for one year, free of charge to them, etc, etc, but that did not move him much. Finally, I told him that he should not worry about the pictures since we can delete them. He was not aware of this possibility and I showed him how it worked, even taking a picture of him and deleting it. He was still hesitant and did not know what to do. He did not get much money, if that is what he wanted, and he finally said that because I was "in the military", he would let us go for this time. I thanked him for his great comprehension, and we were on our way with our cameras, no picture of the fishermen, but very late in our quest to the foot of the volcano. The whole thing took almost one hour... with automatic rifles pointed at Alice all the time. So we aborted the rest of the taxi ride and made it back to the port just in time to get on the ship. We never saw Yaounde City nor the famous Hotel!

We took this experience as just another part of traveling. Alice says that she thought that the guy was younger than our children and that she was never afraid of him. She says she can tune out outside noises like the other guy in the small shack, because of her years of practice while doing pottery alone in her studio. We told the story to our tablemates at night, and that was to be the end of the affair.

When we got off the ship at the next stop, there was so much security that it seemed unreal. Asking why this was the case, one security personnel at the gangway told us that they had had an international incident in Cameroon the previous day and they were taking no chances. What was the incident, we demanded and it turned out to be what had happened to Alice as reported by the other lady in our car. She was extremely upset and scared and had repeated the whole story to the ship's security personal. Alice told the security that she was the one involved with the guy in the shed. Well, as you can expect, she had to recount to whole thing again with very precise details. We think that the other lady never left the ship again! And, by the way, Holland America has yet to go back to Cameroon!

Now for the other side of the coin.

Coming off the ship in Gabon, I said hello to the first police officer that we met. He obviously spoke French and asked us where we were from. I told him "Canada", and he said "Quebec" and I said yes. He informed me that his DG (directeur general) was from Quebec and that he would most likely like to see us. So we had to wait while he contacted him on his cell. We were then told to wait there because he would send us a vehicle to take us around. There were four of us, so he said he would send an appropriate car. Then after maybe 15 minutes, while we were reconsidering his offer, a large 4X4 Toyota shows up. It had a double cab in front and enough room to seat 14 people on the lateral seats in the back and a big light in the cab. So here we go on another adventure we thought, wondering if we should ever get involved with the military or the Police again in Africa.

Five minutes into our tour, the DG phoned and told our driver to wait; he and his wife would come and join us. That took another 15 minutes while our friends who are from South Africa were beginning to wonder about this whole affair, especially since this was all done in French and they did not know what was happening. Her husband was deaf mute, and even though he had learned to communicate perfectly in English, he showed definite signs of worries. Finally, the DG and his wife arrived in another monster Toyota with another driver. He introduced himself; he was from Grande Baie, Quebec, where my father was born, and his first cousin, Michele Lessard, happened to be the girl I was going out with when I joined CMR in 1961. Well, we were in for quite the tour. We split the group in two, his wife with our friends and he, with Alice and I.

He showed us all the sights, but on his terms. We got to the "Gate of No Return", where the slaves were put on ships for America, never to come back. Walking around the site, locals wanted to talk to us and we wanted to talk to them, but not with him around. He would tell them that we were with the American Embassy and that they could not talk to us! That was a real bummer. On the road, when the traffic was too slow, he would have the drivers use the flashing red lights on the pickups to move faster in traffic. Talk about embarrassing, but there was nothing we could do about it. He in fact was the director of a private police force numbering more than 1500 police officers who provided security for oil companies and Embassies, including the USA and France. We stopped at his residence for him to pick up something. On the second floor on each corner of the building, which was a whole block of streets, there were manned machine guns, and one corner of the building was actually an embassy.

Having such services, I decided to ask him if I could buy red wine since it was a Sunday and every store seemed closed. Out came the cell phone and one of his friends went to

open his store for us. We arrived there a few minutes later and I got 6 good French reds for about 30\$! The only drawback with that stop was that when I pulled myself off the back seat of the cab, his wife slammed the big front door on my fingers and I got away with 3 bleeding fingers and lost 3 nails the following month. The fingers were so bruised that it did not hurt until the next day.

On our way back to the ship we saw a large crowd in a large and beautiful park. After inquiring, he told us that this was an annual beer festival. We asked to see and perhaps taste the local brew. Out came the cell phone again and while we went to turn around, 16 of his police officers arrived in front of the main front iron gate of the Park and formed a barrier for us. They opened the big gate and we proceeded between the two rows of officers. Talk about embarrassing! He paid for our beer, and we could hardly talk to the locals, so we left as soon as we could to go back to the ship. Once there, he wanted to come aboard, but that was not possible, even for him. He may have been the BIG BOSS on shore, but he had no say on the ship and neither did we. So we thanked him very much for a fabulous day and we came back on board with two very opposite, consecutive experiences on the African Continent.

One day we were received with guns and fear for our lives and the next we were hosted by one of the vainest persons that I have ever met. But after the first experience, it was a good balance.

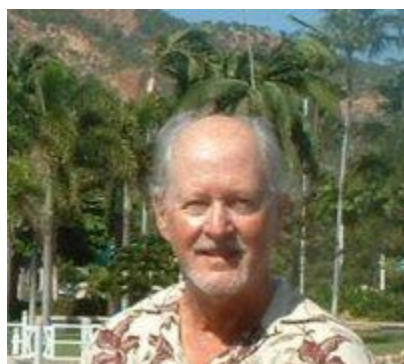
We shall be back on the *Prinsendam* to go around South America next January. The only place that we have not yet been to on that continent is Antarctica. Hopefully we will have no extreme experience on this cruise.

Best seasons wishes and New Years Happiness to all.

Ed Note: Remind me to delete Cameroon and Gabon from my bucket list of places to visit.

Upgrade to Class Website

By 6660 Waine McQuinn



Over the past few months I received a number of emails from classmates saying that they could no longer access the class website at www.rmc65.ca

It turns out that the most recent versions of the underlying Java software program that we all regularly or automatically download, no longer support one of the functions that is used by the Microsoft software I used to originally design the class website. As a result, the menu

buttons were no longer appearing.

I have now upgraded the website by replacing all menu buttons with 'Java independent' buttons with the result the website is now once again fully operational.

Therefore anyone having had problems with the website are invited to return.

Those who have never visited the site are encouraged to have a look. It is a bilingual archive of class data including classmate coordinates, biographies and obituaries, archive of all monthly newsletters as well as info on the Class of 65 Teaching Excellence Awards and current and past winners. The info is updated every two months approximately.

As a result of considerable policy discussions among classmates three years ago, there are now no personal email addresses on the website except for my own and those of Jim Carruthers and Hugh Spence to maintain connection with the class leadership.

Those of you who have courageously submitted biographies in the distant past might want to update them since your lives seem to be frozen in time. I am certain that families have changed and many interesting things have happened to you in your wonderful retirement years.

Closing Notes

That's it for another month. Happy holidays everyone. Hope to hear from more of you next year. There was a good turn-out for lunch by Ottawa-based members of the Class at the HMCS Bytown Officers Mess. The group is shown below.

