



Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians)

REGIMENTAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2018

Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) Regimental Society, PO Box 10500 Station Forces Edmonton, AB T5J 4J5

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LdSH(RC) Regimental Society

PO Box 10500 Station Forces
Edmonton, AB T5J 4J5



ONLINE EDITION

Colonel of the Regiment

Colonel Greg Hug

It has been a momentous period in our Regimental history as we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Moreuil Wood in March. This notable event was marked across Canada and in France. Although I was unable to attend any of the events, the feedback that I have received reflects on very successful gatherings throughout Canada and in France.

I wish to extend my personal thanks to the various organizers and all of the participants from our Regimental family and friends. I also wish to recognize the sponsors that allowed us to send a significant number of our soldiers, including the Mounted Troop, to Moreuil to commemorate this fateful action on the actual site 100 years later.

Linda Southern-Heathcott

Spruce Meadows

Argus Machines Co.

Kris Mauthe

Aaron Plawke

Aileen Lubiniecki

Angus Watt

Bernie Robitalle

Brian Talty

Christopher Williams

Doug Goss

Edmonton Oilers Community

Foundation

Gord Wiebe

M30 Retail Services

MGen (Ret'd) Cam Ross

Mike Colborne

Farid Rohani

Robert Lesperance

Murray Cayley

Neil Flowerdew

Quinn Holtby

Raymond James

Richard Labbé

Robert Mebruer

Ross Prokopy

Scott MacDonald

Sean McMaster

Shane Robinson

Sol Rolinger

Vern Pooley

I am looking forward to the completion of the planned photo album/book that captures the key activities that marked this milestone. I thank all members of our family who shared their photos and anecdotes with the Regiment so that we have a comprehensive archive of our activities in 2018.

As the annual posting season approaches, we will see changes in the Regiment this summer. I encourage our family to participate in the Change of Command parade in late June.

CO & RSM

LCol Mark Lubiniecki & CWO Rob Clarke

A few months removed from several Battle of Moreuil Wood centennial celebrations at home and abroad, the CO and I can honestly say that a tangible feeling of pride still lingers within the Regiment at all rank levels thanks to what the team accomplished this spring. Years in the making, more than a few key members of the Regiment dawned several hats as we simultaneously juggled current operations and ceremonial preparations, and in doing so, all did an impeccable job.

All ranks of the Regiment put on a spectacular demonstration of Esprit de Corps which paid appropriate homage to the brave soldiers that died on a muddy stretch of battlefield 100 years ago and several family members that still held the memories close. With revered names like **Flowerdew**, **Willoughby**, and **Mackay** in attendance and along for the ride, our soldiers put on an impeccable show of skill and pride. Those families, and stalwart supporters of the Regiment; such as **Jean Paul Brunel**, continue to wave our flag and keep our fine Regiment at the forefront of the public eye – so it was an honour to meet and celebrate together.

Overall, the events could not have come-off any better - from the well-orchestrated and attended parade in Edmonton,



which featured a stirring video introduction by Col (ret'd) **Greg Hug** and respectfully recognized the sacrifice and memorial aspects of the battle, to an awe inspiring mounted charge at Moreuil Wood on 30 March which brought all in attendance right back to the site of the epic WW1 battle. "I can't believe I'm actually standing on the spot where the charge took place" said one excited Tpr, "I've never felt so much pride and the charge sent chills up my spine" said another. Two events that truly captured what it means to be a Strathcona, and two events that would not have come to fruition had it not been for the generous donations received on behalf of **Linda Southern-Heathcott** and several other notable close friends and supporters of the Regiment. For your instrumental part and participation, the entire Strathcona family thanks you.

We also want to recognize the Association Branches that took the time to assemble Strathconas across the country to commemorate the battle, share stories and connect. Where we all cannot serve at the Regiment, we all still wear the cap badge and it was great to see just how many folks re-connected this March; including a large group of serving/retired Strathconas, led by none other than **CWO Brian Talty**, that mounted a bus in Brussels, toured several battlefields, and met with us at the Wood on 30 March. Well done, and it was great to have so many from the broader family in attendance.

All that said, the Regiment is now poised for yet another Change of Command ceremony, set to take place on 27 June, where we will welcome **LCol Eric Angell** back to the team in preparation for what is sure to be another busy year as the Regiment commences the road to high readiness once again. Hungry to get back into the fight, our soldiers are training with renewed zeal, introducing new vehicles and capability, and preparing themselves for the unknown. Exciting times, and exciting times on the horizon.

Lastly, we want to reflect on the passing of **Roy Jardine** who left us just prior to the commencement of our Moreuil Wood celebrations this spring. An exceptional soldier who served the Regiment proudly through the Korean War, Roy was always a pleasure to talk with and never passed-up the opportunity to 'bend a soldier's ear' when an occasion presented itself. We miss you, Roy, and we will remember you.

Take care of yourselves and each other.



Moreuil Wood Centennial Celebration Kingston Chapter

While celebrating the anniversary of the Battle of Moreuil Wood in Kingston in March 2017, it crossed the minds of many Chapter members that, as this was the 99th anniversary of the Battle, next year would be the “Big One” and something special would have to take place. Chapter President, **Kevin Mulhern**, realizing that he would be dealing with an aged and slow-moving work force, put on his spurs and rounded up an organizing committee of “volunteers” and convened the first meeting of the Kingston Moreuil Wood Centennial Committee on 30 March 2017. Clever man, Kevin, - he caught us all while we were still on a “Moreuil Wood” high and eager to ensure that the centennial event would be a roaring success.



Over the succeeding months many meetings were held over Tim Horton's coffees. As “crunch time” approached, Kevin found it necessary to move the meetings to licensed premises so that the old guys he inherited on his committee would be able to handle the stress.

Right from the start all agreed that it would be a mixed gathering and all events would be of a “Strathcona standard”. It was also decided that the events would be open to all Strathconas, serving and retired, and not restricted to those living in the Kingston area. Those were good decisions as in the end we had great turnouts with representation from all over Ontario and from Kabul in the east (yes, **Dwayne Parsons** made it) to Edmonton in the west, thanks to three Regimental officers who were on course in Kingston at the time.

From the get-go it was agreed that it would be a three day event with a “Meet and Greet” on Friday, a Mixed Dining-in on Saturday, and a brunch (for survivors) on Sunday. Taskings in support of these events, additional taskings such as fundraising and

publicity were assigned, and an informal “peer rating” system evolved at each meeting as OPIs were harassed and berated – regardless of how successful they had been. In reality the meetings were great fun and everyone gave their best to ensure the success of the weekend.

On Friday 23 March, people began to converge on Kingston and were welcomed by the sight of the Regimental flag flying in front of City Hall and over McNaughton Gate and RCME Memorial at CFB Kingston. That evening we gathered at the RMC Senior Staff Mess for a Meet and Greet (and the opportunity to purchase 50-50 tickets or face the wrath of **Spike Hazleton**). It was also an opportunity for **Kevin Mulhern** to thank our generous sponsors – Calian Group, Steve Jeffery REMAX, CAPUA Consultants, and Pericles Consulting . As the setting and catering were excellent, many lingered well past the advertised closing time, catching up with old friends, meeting new ones and telling many of the same old stories.

Saturday was a day to enjoy Kingston until all assembled for dinner at the Fort Frontenac Officers' Mess. Following a period of socializing and meeting up with friends who had not been able to make it to the Meet and Greet, “President” Kevin managed to get control, thanked everyone for attending, and turned the floor over to **Tanya Grodzinski**. Tanya gave us an interesting historical perspective of the Battle, as she does so well, and this was followed by the sound of the bagpipes as our resident piper, **Doug Green**, piped one and all into the dining

room. The dining room had been well decorated with Regimental paraphernalia (mostly from **Russ Ells'** basement) and left no doubt but that the Strathconas had seized the Fort. Central on each Strathcona's place setting was a gift Battle of Moreuil Wood Centennial commemorative medallion. After appropriate graces, the Loyal Toast, an excellent meal and much loud and raucous conversation, everyone retired to the Mess anteroom where the (cash) bar was open and a DJ was presenting a great selection of music – so great that three or four couples actually danced! The spirit of the evening prevailed and so far there has been no credible report of when the last guests departed.

Sunday morning Brunch was served, again in the Fort Frontenac Mess, and the greatly reduced numbers certainly attested to the fact the Dinner the night before had been a success. Nevertheless, it was an opportunity to say good bye to a number of out-of-towners and to assure everyone that the Moreuil Wood 101st Anniversary will be celebrated in Kingston and all will be invited.

On 19 April, **Kevin Mulhern** presided over his last Moreuil Wood Centennial Celebration meeting, praised his 2018 committee and assigned tasks for 2019 to the same committee – **Jamie Cade, Islam Elkorazati, Spike Hazleton, Dave MacLeod, Tom Martineau, Chris Rankin, John Roderick, and John Stuckart.** All gladly accepted the taskings. Smart man, Kevin, hit them while they are still on a high!!



Fall 2018 Edition Deadline

The deadline for submissions for the Fall 2018 Strathcona Regimental Society Newsletter is

5 November 2018

Submissions are to be forwarded to
newsletter@strathconas.ca

Or mailed to:
**Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians)
Regimental Society Newsletter
PO Box 10500 Station Forces
Edmonton, AB T5J 4J5**

Attention: Kathy Batty



COUNTRY WIDE
MOREUIL WOOD EVENTS







BUS TOUR AND FRANCE EVENTS



Moreuil Wood France 2018

Sgt Paul (Crippler) Kruhlak

For all the 20 members of CMT selected to go to Moreuil Wood, it would be the trip of a life time for them with many memories to share for many years. Moreuil Wood 2018 has been long in the planning. Over the last three years the Troop has transformed from not just a Ceremonial Mounted Troop but to one that could relive its proud history as Cavalry once again, 100 years later. This meant the procurement of new bridles, refurbished UP Steele arch saddles and all the other horse furniture required to make this present day troop look the part in France. A huge undertaking by **Mr. Glen Olund**, the CMT Tack Master, ensured all the items were replicated and refurbished from the original designs from 1918. With the approval of a Provincial grant the troop was able to procure replica trooper uniforms and kit the same as Strathcona's of that day. It was a whirlwind of preparations to ensure we were ready for the unknown.

As time went by, we were unsure if we would actually go to France, let alone have horses to ride. Originally we wanted to take our own mounts to France but the cost of shipping horses overseas was a huge expense so it just wasn't going to happen. Eventually, things started to come together. Plans were beginning to be made and the ideas of how this would be possible became clear. With the huge help of fundraising, sending soldiers to France was achieved and 75 Strathconas were sent. For the Mounted Troop, the most integral part of the troop going to France was due to the support of Spruce Meadows CEO, **Mrs. Linda Southern-Heathcott**, allowing 20 troopers to go to recreate the famous C Squadron charge at Moreuil Wood on rental horses from various locations in Europe.

24 March 2018 - Advance party, consisting of **Sgt Kruhlak**, **MCpl Lachance-Webster** (troop translator) **Cpl Hopper** and of course the cowboy **Cpl Hodgins**, left Edmonton heading directly to Moreuil, France. In addition, **Ms. Song Despins** the troop photographer was included to capture the entire trip. The plan was to prepare the 20 horses that were rented from three locations - Belgium, Paris, and Normandy - and have them ready for troop training when the main party arrived, with the end state being a full troop charge on the 30th and a cavalry ride on the 31st. With no rest from the flight, we arrived to horses being off loaded into the box stalls. We went right to work preparing the feed and bedding with only two pitch forks and a couple water buckets. We got all the horses settled and began to prepare tack and saddles for the pre-training the next day.

25 March 2018 - The main body of the Mounted Troop departed Edmonton led by our fearless **Capt Sean Coughlan**. I'm sure he had his hands full with the abundance of horse kit hoping to get aboard the flight. Good thing we can travel Air Canada with three 70lb checked bags, making this trip possible. Also included in that flight were two photographers, **Joel** and **Brett** from Spruce Meadows with all of their top-notch filming gear. While the troop was enjoying the free liquor and naps on the flight to France, we began grooming and conducting practice rides on the newly acquired mounts. With horses being a lot larger than ours, the guidance of the trainer's assistance with the tack and saddlery was necessary. We were quite surprised how everything fit together so well.

26 -29 March 2018 - The arrival of the main body allowed no time for R/R but under **Sgt Kruhlak's** guidance tack was quickly built and the assignment of horses to riders took place. This would be a mark in history where Strathconas were in the same location as they were in 1918 living and working with the horses in and around Castel. Over the next few days we quickly built up the Troops' mounted training, consisting of horse and rider matches and individual riding, luckily in an indoor arena. We would ride twice most days ending with complete Troop drills and practice of the Cavalry ride that was expected to be debuted on the afternoon of the 31st of March. We ensured all the chargers were good with all the WW1 kit, including the sabres. The route march of the same trail to the wood was practiced to get a good time appreciation for the big day. Over the days of training, the Troopers put in all they had to make sure we would be ready for anything. We concluded most nights by enjoying the hospitality of home-cooked French meals, even if they were at 2100 hrs. This allowed more beverages to be consumed. The atmosphere and Troop morale was at an all-time high.

30 March 2018 - The day to be remembered. An early breakfast led to horses being groomed and prepared, then tacked and saddled. The feeling in the air was of remembrance. As a light morning rain occurred five minutes before we hit the saddle, we decided to push on without rain slickers because at this point we were riding for the fallen at

Moreuil Wood and a little rain didn't stop them. **Capt Coughlan** took the lead of his Troop and ordered the half section formation. We rode off to make history. Forty minutes later we arrived at the link up point. The feeling of what had happened and what was about to happen was humbling and it was soaking into all those who were aboard the horses. The jitters, nervousness, and a wonder of how this would all turnout was on all of our minds. We anticipated the moment before we were given the order to move into extended line, we had a job to do, a goal to achieve. Each soldier knew what needed to be done. We moved from the walk to the trot, to the Captain's order, it's a CHARGE boys, CHARGE. The adrenaline and focus was evident on each troopers face as we blazed up the field in line. Both horses and riders with sabres drawn gave their all.. We were ready to bear down on an invisible enemy. We concluded the charge. The feeling was unexplainable, like nothing done before. The reality of the historical event that the Strathcona Mounted Troop had just accomplished was occurring and all were reeling in it. We decided to conduct two more charges for all in attendance. Riding on the ultimate high, the Troop basked in the achievement as we rode off from the wood and back into Castel.

31 March 2018 – Preparations for the Freedom Of The City and the afternoon Cavalry Ride began. The priority of work was the horses, tack, and saddlery, and if there was time, then the riders. All was going exceptionally well. The trainers were impressed over the previous day's actions. They helped prepare the 17 horses to be used for the Cavalry ride. At 1500 hrs the Troop was again in the saddle and warming up for its first ever overseas show! It was so fitting to be in Moreuil, France. Again the proud feeling swept over everyone as the Troop marched on the field for the show. The Riders ability with limited practice to be able to conduct troop drills was amazing, even with the Ride Master's near dismount. The show went off as perfectly as could possibly be, witnessed by so many that day. In true Mounted Troop fashion we dismounted allowing Moreuil's public, old guard and friends of the Regiment the opportunity to meet both the horses and riders. Many photos and memories were made that day. Although we had two action packed days, we still had lots of work to do including cleaning, disassembly and packing of all the Troop's tack and saddlery. It was a good thing supper was late. This gave plenty of time for the Troopers to complete all their packing. Once the remaining horses were fed and watered we concluded the day by gathering as a Troop and enjoyed the evening again with true Canadian and French hospitality at Castel.

01 April 2018 – Not April Fool's Day but a Troop PD day to see Vimy Ridge. What a spectacular way to end this trip. The complete group of Strathconas gathered at the Vimy monument to get a private group photo. Special words were given by both the CO and RSM including coins given to the command teams and one MWO promotion, **SSM Steve Churchill**, which concluded the Moreuil Wood 100th in true Strathcona fashion. The rest of the day was spent enjoying some well-deserved free time, at least till 1500. The remainder of the packing of saddles and kit to prepare for the long trek home was completed. The troop gathered again with our hosts **Carol Anne** and **Steven. Maj Wong** and **MWO Chenier** dropped in to congratulate the troop on its job well done. It was a long night for some, ending in the wee early hours, just in time to head to Paris for their flight home. Good byes were made and a final farewell given to all those left at Moreuil.

I'm sure that I speak for all to say it truly was an honor to be a part of the 100th anniversary of this famous part of our Regiment's history. It was the trip of a life time for all involved, in which we had many challenges and struggles that we overcame and PERSEVERED through. There were a lot of firsts for the Ceremonial Mounted Troop on this trip:

- Mixed herd of horses from Normandy, Paris and Belgium
- Both geldings and mares all being bigger hunter horses
- 3 days training with wet spring France weather
- 3 cavalry charges at Moreuil Wood with sabres drawn
- Cavalry ride in a wet, mucky farmers field
- First Cavalry ride overseas in period WW1 uniforms
- Cavalry ride was led by a mare, ridden by **Cpl Alex Aguila** who didn't ride the horse till the day of the show.









Your Dispatches

Thanks ever so much for sharing this excellent issue with me. It was particularly wonderful to see Prince Charles with your Colonel of the Regiment, **Greg Hug**. Perseverance indeed.

Keep up the wonderful work.

Clive Addy, MGen (ret'd) OMM, OstJ, CD

General. We were all happy to see the Col in Chief and the Colonel of the Regt together. **Ed.**

My entry for Gordon Flowerdew in the Canadian Encyclopedia online was published on 15 Dec 17 at <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/gordon-flowerdew-vc/>

Col JB Boileau (Ret'd)
CO 1985-87

Thanks for the "heads up", John. **Ed.**

Good Morning Fellow Service

Just a note to let you know that I am still kicking around after some heart work. I am on the recovery at home and looking forward to see this snow to melt away so I can go for a walk, lots of snow here to go in Gananoque. The only time that I go out is to get Groceries and Doctors appointment,s. Next month I have three or four in the one week. This is the news here and looking forward to your note.

Keith C Baldwin

You keep on kicking, Keith. Perseverance will get you through all the doctors appointments for sure, but it will take a lot of it to get through this year's snow! **Ed.**

Just a quick note to let you know that the three retired Strathcona's here in Ajijic Mexico, along with friends of the Regiment (RCD and FGH) will gather at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 18-182 in Chapala on Fri 23 March to toast the Regiment on the 100th anniversary of the Battle

of Moreuil Wood. There will be a brief description of the battle. All the best for your celebrations in Edmonton and in France.

Maj (Ret'd) David ILEY

We hope the toast was made with premium Tequila, Dave, not the local "plonk". **Ed.**

The recent death in Halifax of Willard Hinkley brought this story to mind.

I was serving in the Regiment in Iserlohn in the spring of 1968, when five new subbies arrived, fresh from phase training:

Keith Eddy, Ian Munro, Doug Corkum, Randy Davies and Willard Hinkley.

We promptly dispatched "Tpr" **Dickie Green** in the Officer's Mess 3/4 ton to Fort St Anne to pick them up, about a 30-minute drive.

Tpr Green had them throw their kit in the back of the truck—and then ordered them to jump in after it.

No one was going to ride up front with him.

When the newbies arrived at the Mess, they were taken to their accommodation: an attic, where five cots had been set up in a common area, as "no individual rooms were available."

Then they were taken to the bar, where they were cordially welcomed by their fellow subbies.

There, bartenders "Tprs" **John Easson** and **Dave Skinner** were standing behind the bar, waiting for them.

When the recent arrivals ordered a drink, the bartenders asked them for proof of age and made a great fuss over whether their ID was genuine or not.

Then, John and Dave got into a staged argument, started yelling at each other and began wrestling and trading blows behind the bar.

By this time, the new officers were probably beginning to wonder if they had joined the right regiment.

Finally, the rest of us couldn't keep straight faces any longer and burst out laughing.

The joke was over, but not before the giant Egypt recce sqn mug was filled with an ounce of every alcoholic beverage behind the bar—and in Germany at that time, the bar was amazingly well stocked—and the new subbies "invited" to drink it.

All in all, a proper introduction to regimental life.

Keep up the good work,

John Boileau

Good story, John, but you left out any part you may have played. Can't believe you were just an observer! Sad news about Willard's death – our ranks are thinning! **Ed.**

Hi, I am looking for articles and pictures from 1983-88 for B Sqn. I was one of the REME guys with B Sqn at the time. Also does anyone know where **MWO Zwicker** is from that time. He was a really good guy and friend.

My crew commander **MCpl Brian Reid** passed away he lived in Calgary at the time and could get me this stuff many years ago so I really dont have a contact out West.

Thanks

Arte et Marte

Luke Macdonald

womacdonald@mail.com

We have sent your request to our museum in Calgary in the hopes that they may have some articles & photos from the time to which you refer. Are there any members of the Regimental Family that could assist? **Ed**

Strathconas 'Dominate' Ex IRONSIDES

The 41st Annual Royal Canadian Armoured Corps' Curling Bonspiel (named Exercise Ironsides for "security" purposes) was held at the Canadian Forces Base Kingston Curling Rink on 5 – 7 April 2018. As usual there was a great turnout of serving and retired Strathconas prepared to risk life, limb, and liver in support of this long-running Black Hat get-together. It must be mentioned that the success of Ironsides this year, as in the past several years can be attributed in large part to a dedicated Strathcona "Skip in Chief"/Coordinator (pick one) **Dave MacLeod**. Although he won't admit it, there would not have been an Ironsides this year without Dave.

As well as the large and aging contingent from the local area, the event was supported by the Regiment sending a team of "young blood" from Edmonton. The team of **Cpl Phil Breau**, **Cpl Josh Snowden**, **Tpr Matt Engelbrecht**, and **Tpr Cody Sanders** represented the Regiment very well, on and off the ice, and captured the C Event trophy. Their presence was very much welcomed by everyone especially as the "other" two Regular Regiments did not send teams this year. This absence was observed upon by both the Deputy Commander, Canadian Army and the Director of Armour in their remarks to the assembled "athletes" and friends and both congratulated the Regiment on its support of the event, pointing out that the Strathconas were just coming off the celebrations of the Battle of Moreuil Wood centennial in Edmonton and France but were still able to support this Corps event.

The Edmonton rink was not the only Strathcona success story this year. Strathcona names are now being engraved on the A and B event Winners' Trophies, the A event Runners-up Trophy and the Rube Major Sportsmanship Trophy. You might modestly call that a Strathcona coup!

For those who may not be familiar with Ironsides, this long running bonspiel brings together teams from Regular and Reserve Armoured Regiments and their Associations annually, with friendship and comradery taking precedence over competition. Initially the hosting of the event was rotated around the Regular Regiments in Canada, taking advantage of Base curling rinks and social facilities. However as Base curling rinks "disappeared" hosting became a problem and ultimately CFB Kingston, which has an excellent rink and a relatively high Armoured Corps serving and retired presence, was adopted as the host site. For the history buffs, the Strathconas hosted Ironsides for the first time in 1978 (Ironsides IV) when **Jim Ellard** was the CO, the late **Ron Francis** was the RSM, and the late **Al (Mucker) Langan** was the Chair of the Ironsides Committee and also TQMS in his spare time.



Lost Trails

Fall 2017 Newsletters which have been returned by Canada Post as undeliverable and Strathcona Enews recipients whose emails have bounced since November 2017. If you have updated contact information on these individuals, please let us know.

REED BE - Caruel, AB (Fall 2017 Newsletter)	CALOW M - Swift Current, SK (Fall 2017 Newsletter)
CORBY C - Edmonton, AB (Fall 2017 Newsletter)	KITCHER Dick - Enews (May 2018)
MILLS J - West Kelowna, BC (Fall 2017 Newsletter)	MACFARLANE Roland - Enews (April 2018)
CLARK RN - Baldonnel BC (Fall 2017 Newsletter)	MURPHY Bob - Enews (March 2018)
STODDART M - Calgary, AB (Fall 2017 Newsletter)	WALLIS Duane - Enews (January 2018)

A Squadron, Leading the Regimental Advance on Barneveld

April 16, 1945

The following is an excerpt from Patrick Johnson's "Push On, A Photographic History of Lord Strathcona's Horse (R.C.), 1936-46". This book was first published in 2015 and favourably reviewed in the Regimental Newsletter and by Major John Grodzinski, Assistant Professor in the Department of History, The Royal Military College of Canada. Comprising over 1450 photographs of the Regiment taken over this time period, including excerpts from over 100 Strathcona veteran interviews, this limited edition 440-page book is available by contacting the author at PushOn@bell.net

Sgt. Leo Anfossi, Military Medal

Troop Sergeant, A Sqn. 2nd Troop, Tank Commander of "Alder II"

On the 16th we had our first direct encounter with these desperate if not fanatic enemy troops. Again, the ground did not lend itself to tank warfare and favored defenders. It would be so to the end. In the lowlands of Holland in springtime we were mostly confined to the roads. This meant being unable to deploy and take advantage of ground cover. The enemy had a great advantage since we had to advance down roads in single file and in going through wooded areas we were sitting ducks. They cut strips of trees down creating a corridor and placed an 88mm antitank gun at the dead end of the corridor. The gun could not be seen until the first tank of our column reached the open end of the corridor. By then it was a target and before the tank could traverse its turret or get off a shot it had been hit. Sometimes two tanks were hit before the enemy gun position was revealed.

If possible we sent in infantry who rode on our tanks for that purpose. When the gun had been found and destroyed and the crew killed, we could move forward until we met another similar situation. This caused us to average less than 10 miles a day. Squadrons took turns being in the lead and within the Squadron troops also took turns. Within the troop the Sgt. was always the first tank. When our turn came, about twice a day, the Sgt's tank was always in the lead. I have to admit to more than mild trepidation when my turn came on the morning of the 16th. Luck rode with me that morning when I was not fired upon while in that first tank. I was starting to feel that luck was with me again later in the day when my turn came again. I quickly found that my luck had run out.

I guess everything is relative, even luck, for things could have been worse and I would not be here nearly 50 years later writing these words. In the heat of battle one does not take time to try and figure out the why or the how of things nor the sequence in which they happen. Suffice it to say that we were hit, lost our tank which blew up before our eyes, had a crew member wounded and another break his arm: all of this in a matter of seconds. That evening we were able to reconstruct the action when visiting the scene. In one of those inexplicable quirks of fate, we had all been saved from death by one of the enemy. A German Corporal had been lying behind a bush with a hand-held bazooka and as we passed a few yards from him he had fired an armor piercing round into the right front of our tank. This projectile had made a hole about the size of a baseball and after penetrating the armor it spread its pieces - and pieces of the tank - around the driver's compartment on the left front side of the tank.

Had it hit the ammunition or gas tank we would not have lasted long. The driver, severely wounded in the back, threw open his hatch and climbed out while the accelerator pedal jammed and the tank was rolling slowly to the right side of the road. Meanwhile as tank commander with the top part of my body exposed, I had felt a blast that deadened my right cheek and made my right ear ring. My first thought was that a shell had fallen nearby and I had caught the blast. As I saw my driver Tpr. MacPherson leaving I realized we had been hit and bailed out ordering the turret crew out and throwing myself backwards out of the hatch to make room for the two men inside. In falling off the tank my wireless operator Tpr. Pirie broke his arm. We all hit the ditch and kept low as machine gun fire was cutting the grass down around us. The enemy had seen us bailout and were trying to pick us off. In a matter of seconds I saw the still moving tank blow up. A sheet of flame came out of the turret hatch, where I had stood ten seconds before. The flame was at least 10 feet high. An 88mm gun in a field to our left had been preparing to fire at us when the bazooka shot caused us all to get out. The shell had hit the empty tank. It was later determined that the gun and crew were destroyed by Sgt. Johnson of 1st troop within seconds of firing its last shot at my tank.

Unfortunately Sgt. Johnson was also killed seconds later as will be seen when the overall picture of the engagement is revealed.

As for the German Corporal, his body was still behind the bush, the bazooka in his arms. I was told later that the tank commander in the tank behind me (Cpl. Harry Stein) had seen the flame of the bazooka and put most of a belt of .30 Browning machine gun fire into the bush and the German Corporal, for whom I offer up a prayer of thanks each time I think of that day.

As we withdrew down the ditch we came to a culvert under a small earth mound used by the farmer's wagons to cross the ditch to a field but the pipe was too narrow to crawl through so the crew members in the lead made a dash out of the ditch over the open space and back into the ditch beyond. As they made it without drawing fire I took MacPherson on my back and made the dash also. All weapons had been left in the tank except my personal 9mm Browning automatic sidearm which was covered with mud and I was unsure whether it would fire if needed. We headed for a nearby farm house and Tpr. Pirie went behind a bush for a moment to answer a call of nature. He emerged holding a German rifle under his one good arm and herding 8 prisoners who had thought it wise to give up. They knew that life or death is often determined in the first moments after capture and depends on whether your captor is trigger happy or not. They must have felt that an unarmed and one-armed man was the best captor they could hope for. We herded the prisoners into the farmyard and I had the men keep an eye on them as I knocked on the door of the farmhouse. The door was opened by a middle-aged man whose attitude made me suspicious. Whereas most "liberated" Dutch people were joyous and bubbling with talk and thanks, this man was not only solemn looking but his eyes rolled in their sockets with, what I suspected was fear. His aged mother sat in a rocking chair before a huge fireplace and hardly looked up at me. I eased past him and into the room while looking around. I noticed a trap door in one corner of the ceiling with a staircase leading up to it. I caught the man's eyes glancing up and back to me and got his message. I said "Deutsche?" He nodded and obviously feared a firefight in his house and was in a dilemma as there were Germans in his attic. I waved him and his mother outside with my men and fired two rounds into the ceiling door. It opened and two rifles came bouncing down the stairs, followed by shouts of "Kamarad" and the two owners of the weapons. They joined their friends outside.



A photograph of Sgt. Anfossi's "Alder II," a Sherman Ic Hybrid, taken a few days after the battle. After both German 88mm anti-tank guns were knocked out tank "Alder II" was still upright, on the road, with its front hull pressed against a roadside tree. Although the tank was hit twice and was truly knocked out by the 88mm gun to the left of the road, the overturning is due to REME personnel who, following up in the rear, towed the tank off the road into an open field, stripped it of all key parts and ammunition, and then unceremoniously pushed it on its side.

LAST TRUMPET CALL

ABBS, Donald, 3 January, 2018, Age 78, St. Catharines, ON

COOPER, Douglas, 25 January, 2018, Age 89, Calgary, AB

HINKLEY, Willard, 15 April, 2018, Age 74, Halifax NS

JARDINE, Roy, 13 March, 2018, Age 87, Calgary, AB

ROFFEE, Wendell 'Lee', 3 April, 2018, Age 88, Calgary, AB

WRIGHT, Marshall, 5 February, 2018, Age 93, Dundas, ON

In Loving Memory of Wives

GROSS, Irene 'Renie' (Robert) - 10 January, 2018, Edmonton, AB

MACKENZIE, Dora (Lewis) - 21 February, 2018

MCBRIDE, Marina (Charles) - 7 January, 2018, Whiterock, BC

MULLIGAN, Wilma - 31 March, 2018, Gananoque, ON

WILSON, Ellen (Bud) - 21 February, 2018, Mayerthorpe, AB

OUR APOLOGIZES FOR LACK OF DETAILS IN SOME CASES