



The 709 Communicator

The Magazine of 709 (Toronto) Communications Regiment
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Spring Edition



Commemorating Vimy Ridge

By J.L. Granatstein



On April 9th this year, Easter Monday, Canadians will mark the 90th anniversary of the Canadian Corps' taking of Vimy Ridge during the Great War. The victory was important, but just why it is being celebrated this year rather than in 2017 likely has more to do with the refurbishing of the Vimy Memorial, restored to the condition it was in

when unveiled in 1936, than with the battle.

Still, after major commemorations to mark the fiftieth and sixtieth anniversaries of D-Day and V-E Day, it is surely time that we remember the Great War: 60,000 dead, 172,000 wounded, and a record in battle that established the Canadian Corps as an elite formation. Vimy Ridge was the Corps' first great victory, a perfect set-piece battle that seized the ridge that looked out over a large swathe of German-occupied northern France. The four divisions of the Corps, fighting together for the first time, drove the Germans down the ridge and back to their new lines to the east. The victory was hailed in Allied capitals, and in Canada the population saw it as an indication that a great new nation had been born in battle. It may even have been true, though French Canada, unhappy with the war and fearful of conscription, tended not to share in the celebratory mood.

To the soldiers at the front, the victory was hugely important. Letters home make this very clear—everyone understood that they had participated in a major event. The planning had been well-nigh perfect, each infantryman and sapper seeing the maps and hearing the briefings, and the rolling artillery barrage had led the advancing infantry in measured bounds. The enemy guns had been pounded into submission by a counter-battery campaign, and the German trenches had been flattened by a long pounding from massed

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INSIDE THIS EDITION: CO's and RSM's Comments, Hon Col's Remarks, Editorial, Vimy Ridge 90 years later. WAR BRIDES— Part II a trip down memory lane by Mrs. Phyllis Cummings AFCEA Presents award. Hon Col Awarded for Service. Jimmy & Associates meeting. Bios—J Cook, John Speirs CADETS— 50th Annual parade, St Patrick's Day Fund Raiser, 2605 becomes 709 Toronto Communications Cadets. McKee's Camp trip up north. Obituaries— Bruce Smith, Frank Lillie, Bill Evans, Alan Biggs, Gordon Broadbridge, and Isabel Lawton.



Commanding Officer's Comments



**Maj. Greg Stasyna CD
Commanding Officer**

These are complex and busy times for both the Canadian Forces and the Regiment. With operations both domestically across Canada and internationally across the world, the CF is being stretched to support these missions. At the same time, the CF is undergoing a transformation with the formation of many new commands including Canada Command (CANCOM) which provides for the domestic operations and security of Canadians at home. I am sure all of you have been following the CF's efforts in Afghanistan with its successes and costs. There is also our military transformation in

the domestic theatre which should elicit your attention, particularly that of a new organizational structure that includes the stand up of Territorial Battalions and the changes in the Communication Reserve.

The Communication Reserve has been placed under the Director General of Reserves and is OPCON to the Army. This means that the Communication Reserve will continue to operate within its own structure to support land, air and navy components of the CF. A Master Implementation Plan (MIP) will be developed with the final disposition of the integration for the Comm Res into the Army. This is due to be completed by April 1, 2008. Right now, its business as usual, through Group HQ and Comm Res HQ. At this time, there is no effect on the Regiment's operational status and organizational structure.

It's been very busy so far this year. The Regiment has been involved in multiple exercises. We left off in December 2006 with our participation in Exercise Steadfast Response to support domestic operations with 32 Bde in Shelburne, ON. The unit provided real time support duties during a flash snow storm that had knocked out communications, power and other elements of infrastructure. Since then we have participated in two Jupiter Trillium composite Comm Group exercises, two Iron Talon Brigade Group exercises focusing on Full Spectrum Operations and many other activities. Additionally, 709 hosted a well turned out professional development conference on behalf of 70 Communications Group. On the social side we had good participation with our Christmas Dinner, New Year Levee, Cadet hosted St. Patrick's Day Social and at our Regimental Ball as hosted by the Junior Rank on March 31. I would like to extend my best wishes to our soldiers serving on operations, training and exercises both home and abroad. Also, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all facets of the Regimental family for their participation over the early months of 2007. The Cadet Corps in particular will be celebrating both its 50th anniversary and a name change from 2605 to 709. The Toronto Signals Band, Jimmy and Associates, Hong Kong Veterans Association, and the Regimental Advisory Committee along with our Mess Associations all play important roles in maintain our community foot print. I look to our continued relationships with other organizations such as the Toronto Police Service. Remember, we have our monthly CO's parades on the first Monday of each month from October to May. Please feel free to come out and visit the Regiment.

Greg Stasyna,
Major, Commanding Officer
BA., BEd, MEd, CD



From the RSM



MWO April White CD
RSM

As I reflect on our training year, I echo the CO's sentiment that this year has been one of change, challenges and accomplishments within the Canadian Forces and the Regiment. We have successfully supported 32 Bde, completed Regimental and Group level training exercises, have participated in significant parades and still managed to host several memorable social events. We had a very successful year and it is all due to the incredible dedication and professionalism of the soldiers in the Regiment. The success of the Regiment is a direct reflection of the soldiers within it – you. Thank you very much for your hard work.

As we all appreciate, the operational tempo of the CF has been heightened and with this, comes opportunities. At no time in my career, have I seen the amount of opportunities available to Communication Reserv-

ists for deployments and taskings and I am pleased that many of the soldiers are taking advantage of them. Such as Lt. Lai and Cpl Kim who, as you know, returned from Afghanistan a few months ago and next month, we will welcome home Cpl Major from her tour as well as Cpl Horrigan from his tasking with the JSR. As we welcome them home, Cpl Mawbey-Puglia will be preparing to leave for his tour after spending a year with the JSR preparing. We wish him a safe tour and look forward to his return next winter. Although many are abroad, many are also serving domestically on taskings to 32 Brigade, the JSR, CFSCE, and Shilo Manitoba. Regardless of the tour or tasking, our Regimental soldiers are making a positive contribution to the Canadian Forces and the CO and I couldn't be more proud.

I have enjoyed my first year as the RSM and look forward to next year. Enjoy your summer holidays and to those on taskings and courses, I will see you over the summer!

All the best.

MWO April White, CD RSM



Promoted to Sergeant!

Sgt Dearing rings the bell after his promotion on the CO's parade.

Cpl Natalie Gajewski, a student at the U of T is 70 Comms Group's SOLDIER OF THE YEAR and nominated for the Communications Reserve Soldier of the Year.





HONORARY COLONEL'S COLUMN

Hon Col Sally Horsfall



Congratulations to everyone on a wonderful year. While it's hard for me to believe it went so quickly, I suspect some of you are looking forward to a well deserved break.

Attendance by our troops, both weekly at Fort York Armoury and for various exercises was excellent. I am always in awe at your dedication and commitment. You looked very crisp on parade when our new Group Commander visited – well done. Toronto Signal Band performed at an amazing number of events, both for 709 and the Community. What would we do without these hearty volunteers?

The Cadets have been very active and are growing in leaps and bounds. This year is the 50th anniversary of this wonderful unit, and in celebration, have changed their name from 2605 Cadet Corps to 709 Cadet Corp which far better describes them as part of the 709 family.

On the broader front, transformation of the army is proceeding. 709 will once again come under the command of land forces by April 2008. This move is felt by many to be positive, opening the Comm Res to greater recognition, resources, and career opportunities for our people.

The focus for reserves is now more clearly defined within Total Force. Three important roles are considered within Reserve Capability. Domestically, Territory Defense Battalion Groups are being clarified along with their unique responsibilities and response time expectations. The Expeditionary focus around the world and, at the moment, in Afghanistan (Kandahar) merges reservists and regular forces as a total force – and apparently there is no delineation in the theatre. Finally, the Reserves link to the community is more important than ever. Our soldiers need the support from all Canadians at this difficult time; the involvement of Reserves connecting in various community forums with Canadians is vital if this is to be achieved.

In closing, special thanks to the editors, photographers and writers of this very informative Communication and please everyone, have a safe, fulfilling and educational summer.

EDITORIAL—Paying Respects— As I write this article, the news has come of a Canadian soldier, Cpl McCully, a signaller lost in Afghanistan and I am reminded of William Windover, my great uncle, who served in WWI with the Perth Regiment. He did not come home. His name is on the Vimy Monument, refurbished and rededicated on the 90th Anniversary of the Canadian victory of 1917. My thoughts and prayers go out to the family, friends and comrades of the men and women who have died in our country's service. They are all part of our family history. All Canadians should take the time to visit these war cemeteries or monuments, and pay respects to our brothers and sisters.

MWO Steven Brickenden CD
Editor Spiritus Manet





Harry Palmer © 1997

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artillery. It was a grand achievement, a triumph of Canadian arms, the stuff of myth.

And myths there were and are. The first is that Vimy was an all-Canadian show. It wasn't—the attack was part, a small part, of a bigger, less successful British battle of Arras. Then, the Canadian Corps itself was not an independent and all-Canadian formation. British heavy artillery played a major part in the Vimy operation, the Canadian Corps' leader was Lieutenant-General Sir Julian Byng, a British officer, and almost all the senior General Staff Officers who planned the battle were British regulars. Canada had almost no staff-trained officers in August 1914 when war began, and it took time to bring civilians and militiamen to the requisite standard.

Even more striking, a substantial majority of the soldiers of the Canadian Corps that April 9, 1917 had been born in Britain, and those proportions would not finally be altered until the very end of the war when the Military Service Act put conscripts into uniform. The British-born had personal ties to home, to Britain and its cause, and all those others whose families had been in Canada for generations required persuasion to enlist. Francophones were hardest to persuade, but then neither did the English-speaking automatically have the impulse to serve. Nor, though many were recent immigrants, Germans, Jews, and Ukrainians as many had fled Europe to escape autocracy, conscription and war and had no desire to return.

Nonetheless, the Vimy victory had a huge nationalizing impact at the front. The British-born soldiers, just as the Canadian-born, shared in the sense of accomplishment. They had captured the ridge that had defeated the French and British armies; they had done it, Canada had done it, the Canadian Corps had triumphed. There was no great breakthrough, however, no cavalry squadrons surging through the hole torn in the enemy lines, and the more than ten thousand killed and wounded made it a costly victory. Certainly, Vimy did not mean that the war was won, and the struggle went on for 19 months more.

But the Canadian Corps had become something special in its own soldiers' minds and in the minds of senior Allied commanders. Soon under command of Sir Arthur Currie, this nation's greatest soldier, the Corps won its battles at Hill 70 and Passchendaele. In August 1918 and in the great campaigns of "The Hundred Days" that brought the First World War to its end, Currie's men established an imperishable record, even if it is one that most Canadians have forgotten. The victory at Vimy must be remembered because it began the Canadian Corps' months of unending triumphs.

The great national monument atop the ridge, once more resplendent, commemorates the more than eleven thousand Canadians killed in France who have no known grave. On a site given to Canada by France, the towering memorial forever marks the victory of ninety years ago. Every Canadian should see it and the war cemeteries where Canada's sons lie. A nation exists because its people accomplished great deeds in the past and believe more can be accomplished in the future. The taking of Vimy Ridge was one of the greatest of those deeds.

(Historian J.L. Granatstein writes for the Council for Canadian Security in the 21st Century (www.ccs21.org.)



709 (Toronto)
Communication Regiment

Maj. G.I. Stasyna CD
Commanding Officer

Capt. H. Buller CD
Adjutant

MWO April White CD
Regimental Sergeant Major

Col. S. Horsfall RM SSSStJ
Honorary Colonel
and Chair Regimental Advisory Council

LCol. J. Lee CD
Honorary Lieutenant Colonel
and Unit Historian

Capt (Rev) F. Butler-Caughie Gr. COSJ
Padre and Unit Welfare Officer

Maj. Alex Moseanu SBStJ, CD, ADC
Museum and Archives

709 Communicator

MWO Steven Brickenden CD
Editor

WO2 Eric Cozens
Editor Emeritus

Capt (Rev) F. Butler-Caughie Gr. COSJ
Publisher

Dr. Michael Leahy
Publishing Support

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This is a limited production, domestic publication produced with the permission of the CO for the purpose of recording the activities within the Regiment and the Regimental family. It is intended to provide a wide variety of material relating to military communications and military affairs, both at home and abroad. Comments or submissions can be sent to editor709@yahoo.ca

War Brides Story – Mrs. Phyllis Cummings
Part II

The Year 2006 was unofficially declared the Year of the War Brides.

On August 19th 1946 I stepped off the ship “The Lady Nelson” when she docked at Pier 21, Halifax.



Aboard the Lady Nelson, Aug 1946

The crossing had taken 6-7 days I think, and a lot of that time I had spent feeling most unwell. But I was able to enjoy some of the lovely food, especially the white bread. There were 300 War Brides and children onboard and we were all looked after very well. After locating my luggage,

all neatly arranged alphabetically in the Customs shed, I was escorted to the CNR train nearby. I was allocated a seat which was made up into a bed at night. Everything had been well organized and paid for by the Canadian Government as we were wives of Canadian Servicemen coming to join their husbands in their homeland and now ours to explore and get accustomed to.

I had attended a Club for War Brides in Tunbridge Wells that had been formed to help us get to some of the things that we might find different. A cook book had been put together and it explained some of the foods that we would not perhaps be used to. Like corn on the cob, which I remember thinking, ‘how inelegant’ to eat out of hand. I must say that everybody was so friendly and helpful. I arrived in Belleville at 2:30 AM and Joe was there to meet me. We walked to his parent’s home just down the road and there I was warmly welcomed by his family and a nice ‘lunch’ was served. Joe

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Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association Canada presents the first annual Education Awards to the Canadian Forces Communications Reserves

With the backing and support of AFCEA International, AFCEA Canada presented two awards this year to deserving members of the Canadian Forces (CF) Communications Reserve. The purpose of the awards – one to a commissioned officer and one to a non commissioned member (NCM) (\$1,000 each) - was to provide resources needed for the continuing education and professional development in science-engineering for students who are members in good standing of a Communications Reserve unit.

The first award was presented to Lt. S. Dunn of 745 (Edmonton) Communication Squadron. It was presented by LCol (Ret'd) Stu Tetarenko. Stu was a Royal Canadian Signals officer from 1968 to 1990 and has been a long time supporter of AFCEA.

The background for the occasion was a Mixed Dining In and Ball, hosted by Major Beth White, CD, the Commanding Officer of 745 Communication Squadron. The event was held at the LCol Philip L. Debney Armoury, Sergeants and Warrant Officers' Mess, Edmonton, Alberta on the 28th of October. Music was provided by the Loyal Edmonton Regimental Band and guests were entertained after the dinner with their Drum Line.

After dinner, BGen A. Dunfee, the Senior Communications Reserve Advisor, gave a short speech on the significance of the education award. He then turned over to LCol (retired) S. Tetarenko, to make the presentation of the \$1000.00 cheque on behalf of AFCEA highlighting the role that AFCEA plays in bridging industry and the military in the specialty fields of communications, electronics, command and control, intelligence and information systems.

Lt. S. Dunn has been with the Comm Reserve for 5 years and is currently in his fourth year at the University of Alberta studying Electrical Engineering, specializing in communications related courses.



Cpl Lau accepts his award from Mr. Marv Sywyk, BGen Dunfee and Maj Stasyna
Photo J. Lee

The second award was made to Cpl J. Lau of the 709 (Toronto) Communications Regiment at a CO's parade in Toronto on November 6th. The parade included the only remaining Signals Band (The Toronto Signals Band), members of the affiliated Army Cadet unit (2605, Royal Canadian Signals) and of course members of 709 Regiment. The parade was hosted by the Commanding Officer, Capt Greg Stasyna. Guests included the 70 Communications Group Commander, LCol Brian McDonnell and the Reviewing Officer,

BGen Art Dunfee, the CF Senior Communications Reserve Advisor.

After the march-past, an inspection and BGen Dunfee's address, Marv Sywyk, the General Manager of AFCEA Canada presented the Educational award of \$1,000 to Cpl J. Lau.

Cpl Lau has been with the Regiment for two years and has progressed very well in the unit

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New 70 Communications Group Commander Visits 709 Regiment



LCol McLellan CD, new Group Commander, inspects the troops.

Photo S. Brickenden

The Change of Group Commander parade took place at Connaught Ranges in Kanata March 25, 2007 from LCol Brian McDonnell, CD to LCol Durwin McLellan, CD, who performed his first official visit to one of the units in his command. 709 was fortunate to have had the honor to be the unit. The parade was held on May 7, 2007 at FYA. The customary parade was accorded to the new Group Commander with both the Honoraries present, the unit in DEU and CADPAC, 709 Cadet Corps, the Toronto Signal Band in their scarlet tunics and the Jimmy and Asso-

ciate's Flag Party.

At this occasion, MCpl Troitino was promoted by the Group Commander. Also HCol Sally Horsfall and LCol McLellan presented certificates of achievement to 3 new members of the unit for qualifying Basic Military training. Members of the 709 Cadet Corps were awarded the Vimy appreciation medals presented by HCol Horsfall to those cadets that participated in this years Vimy Parade at Queens Park.

After the parade the LCol McLellan and Acting Group Chief, MWO Mallia were invited to the Mess for an informal meet and greet with the officers and Senior NCM's of the Regimental Family.

WAR BRIDE (Continued from page 6)

had been lucky to rent a little apartment next door to his parents.

It was very hot that summer and I did get a little sunburned. As we lived in the city, I was lucky because I had hot and cold running water, no well or outhouse, but in the winter I had to contend with a wood and coal burning stove. A shower was arranged for us and fortunately someone had told me what it was.

We had some lovely gifts, and five teapots! I kept them all. We have one son born in 1948 and one daughter born in 1959 and two grandchildren, all living near. We will be celebrating our 61st wedding anniversary on October 6, 2006.

Last year, I was honoured to receive an invitation to Rideau Hall to a reception. An envelope was presented to Overseas War Brides by the Head of Canada Post in recognition of their contribution to Canadian society. This year I attended at Queens Park when the Minister for Seniors announced that Ontario had declared 2006 The Year of the War Bride.

Phyllis Cummings is a War Bride and a Member of Jimmy & Associates



Colonel Horsfall Honored for Distinguished Service



Colonel Sally Horsfall and John Craig Eaton

Nominated by Ryerson University and St. John's Rehab Hospital, Colonel Sally Horsfall and John Craig Eaton have a lifetime of volunteer involvement and leadership to their credit. The Ryerson Board of Governors created the role of "Chancellor Emeritus" for Mr. Eaton in recognition of his exceptional contribution of time and financial resources to the University as Chancellor and as an advocate for the Retail Management Program and the Eaton Chair in Retailing.

A former chair of the Board of St. John's Rehab Hospital, Sally Horsfall received an award for distinguished governance leadership following 12 years of service. She continues to serve as Honorary Patron of the St. John's Rehab Foundation Rebuilding Lives Campaign.

Col Sally Horsfall and John Craig Eaton set an example for others through their support and involvement in dozens of community, health and education programs.

Jimmy and Associates was started in 1973 by a small group of former members of 2nd and 8th Signals Regiment. The majority were veterans who wanted to keep the: **Spirit of Signals**: alive and as interest grew, it was decided to include spouses/partners and all Signals/Communications personnel.

Four functions are held each year: Annual Xmas Party, Annual BBQ at Freeman's Farms located by the Zoo (July), Exchange Luncheon with the Dutch Canadian Reunion, Annual General Meeting.



(L to R) Steve Cheney, Secretary Rose Kelly- Membership Chairman John Speirs – President Bob Blenkhorn – Past President

Missing — Renny MacKinnon Vice President Julie Lloyd – Treasurer, Joe Plut – Entertainment Chairman

The Association has been honoured in being asked to furnish a Flag Party for the Regiment to parade with the troops on formal parades. Sgt Jim Kelly is the command of the flag party.

Current membership stands at 166 today, made up of 53 singles and 52 doubles and 9 honoraries. We encourage any members of the Regiment to join the association. Dues are \$20 single, \$25 double per year. If you have any questions concerning the Association ask one of the Executive members or LCol Lee who is a long term member.



709 Gets New Vehicle Compound Work Space

The "hut" is called a "Sprung Shelter". It is an industrial designed external shelter that is known for its durability and ability to stand up to the elements. The shelter as its name denotes is from a company called Sprung Shelter Inc. The Regiment has been trying to build it for at least three years. The shelter will hold up to 4 LSVW vehicles. It is heated, air-conditioned and has lighting. It will provide a good work area both in the winter and summer months for our troops to work in.

The Sprung is a much needed addition to the limited space available in the armoury.

Maj. Greg Stasyna and MWO April White in front of the Sprung shelter.

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training program. He is a 2nd year student at U of T in the Mechanical Engineering Department and has plans to put his education to work in the robotics or bio-engineering fields.

After the parade, the Reviewing Officer and Marv were taken on a walk through the Regiment lines and then to a social gathering hosted by the CO in the Officers' Mess. Here unit members had an opportunity to learn more about AFCEA's role in bridging industry and the military in the specialty fields of communications, electronics, command and control, intelligence and information systems and socializing with Associate members of the Unit.

The AFCEA International Educational Foundation is an independent non-profit tax-exempt public charity dedicated to providing educational incentives, opportunities and assistance for people engaged in information management, communications and intelligence efforts and fostering excellence in education particularly in the "hard science" disciplines related to C4I/IRM.

The mission of the Foundation is to support development of engineers and technical personnel through selective motivational awards, prizes and scholarships, grants for educational activities of unique and high value and professional educational programs.

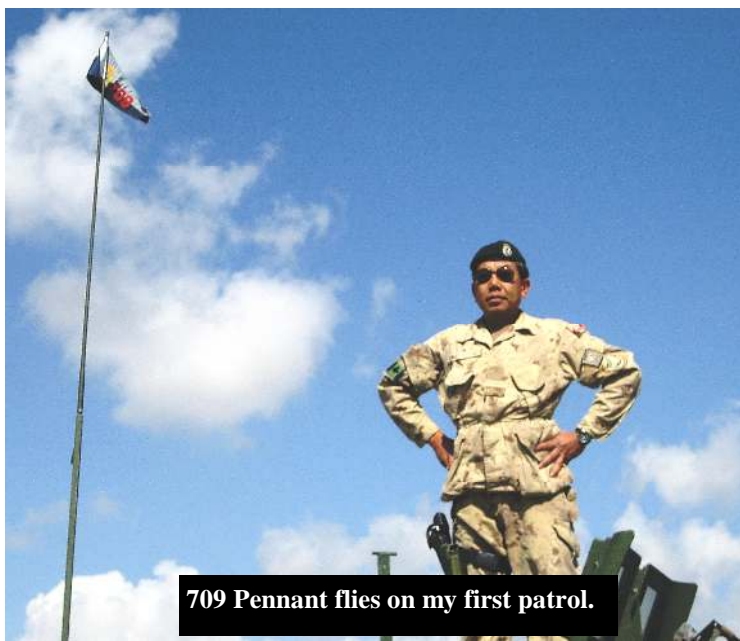
The AFCEA Canada Comm Res Science Engineering Education Award will be an annual event. Units will be advised early in the New Year as to the timings of the submissions (around 1 Apr) and the winner selection for 2007. Awards will be made in the Fall each year at an appropriate venue.

More information on AFCEA can be obtained at www.afcea.org and www.afcea.ca.



My Experience in Afghanistan

Article and photos by Lt. Alfred Lai



709 Pennant flies on my first patrol.

Upon handing over my unit duties in late January 2006; I reported to CFB Petawawa on the 1st of February for the six months pre-deployment training. Never served in a Class C capacity before and having had “gruelling” experiences in “Pet” during various career courses, I approached the prospect of living there with trepidations. As things turned out it was a rather pleasant experience. Life in “Pet” evolved around the regular force garrison rhythm. The pre-deployment training was intense but we also had a lot of down time to recu-

perate. We were put through DLOC, TMST and different exercises geared towards Afghanistan. The CIMIC detachment of which I was a member received specific trainings for our intended role in-theatre. All training activities culminated in a four-week FTX in CFB Wainwright, Alberta in May 2006. All activities from air movement to the deployment on ground were conducted in a manner as close to the “real thing” as possible. Different kind of scenarios that could be encountered in-theatre was practiced and iterations were conducted under the supervision of the Observer/Controllers (O/Cs). Task Force 03-06 was declared ready for deployment upon the completion of the FTX. Much of June was spent in remedial training whenever necessary and we left “Pet” in July for block leave. By then CFB Petawawa has already turned into a home from home for me. During my stay there I have met many familiar faces from the Regiment that were “up at Pat” for their taskings.

My chalk departed CFB Trenton on the 8th of August 2006 and arrive in-theatre the next day. My first impression was the intense heat. When the cabin door was opened a rush of hot air hit our faces not unlike opening the oven door to check if dinner is ready! Hectic activities followed to prepare for our next leg of journey to Kandahar Air Field, known to everybody as KAF. We collected our weapons and were issues with life ammunition. Realty started to sink in when we started to fill our magazines, with life ammo and we were not there for PWT! We spent a few more days in KAF for acclimatization, zeroing our weapons, more training and in-theatre briefings. KAF is the main ISAF base in southern Afghanistan with different coalition forces contingents based there. All kind of different uniforms and personal weapon can be seen; the whole atmosphere reminded me of “Deep Space Nine”. It was at this time that I experienced my first rocket attack. I am told it was a regular feature at KAF. When the siren rang you can tell who is a “newbie” and who is not. Those of us who

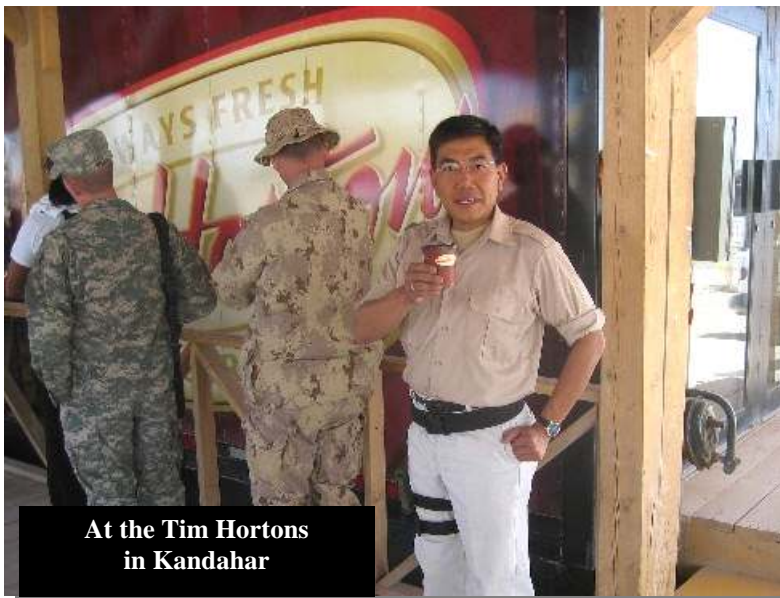
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were fresh in-theatre followed the drill to the letter but the more experienced were pretty nonchalant about it. The CIMIC detachment was deployed by convoy over to the Provisional Re-construction Team (PRT) in Kandahar city. Camp Nathan Smith (CNS) is a small camp in the eastern suburb of the city. After a brief handover we settled in for the challenges ahead.

As part of the Canada's "Whole of Government" approach (3D – Defence, Diplomacy & Development) the PRT is consisted of personnel from the Canadian Forces, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and a contingent of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The 3D approach encompasses Defence efforts to strengthen security and stability, Diplomacy to enhance



**At the Tim Hortons
in Kandahar**

prospects for nation building and reconstruction, and Development to ensure contributions are bought to bear in a co-ordinated and effective way. I worked as the Projects Officer; my role was to oversee various reconstruction projects that are being conducted in our Area of Responsibility (AOR). As a former Civil Engineer my skills became handy again. My first "outside the wire" patrol was to inspect the site of an Afghan National Police (ANP) sub-



With local school children

station. The PRT has a programme of similar constructions around Kandahar City and it's environ. Every "outside the wire" patrols were treated as a mission; battle procedure was strictly followed. We faced constant threat of vehicle born improvised explosive devices (VBIED), road side IED, ambushes and mine threats. During Operation Medusa my convoy was ambushed on Highway One which is known as "Ambush Alley".

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A Visit to Vimy Ridge

By Tom Johnson, Toronto Signals Band

I had the honour, to attend the 90th anniversary of the action we know as Vimy Ridge. I signed up to take this trip with 38 other Canadians, including 5 veterans from WW II. It was very diverse group of people from Winnipeg on the west to St. Stephen in New Brunswick. I knew the trip commemorated the Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, but had not comprehended the emotional impact it would have. There were over 5000 Canadian students carrying the name of a Canadian soldier who died at Vimy. As the student contingent filed slowly and reverently down the hill you could hear in the distance, the Pipes and Drums, from Highland Creek. There was a contingent of scarlet clad RCMP including three mounted on horses carrying our maple leaf flag, plus a choir from Charlottetown. At least 25,000 people from all around the world. It was a splendid tribute to Canada, to be sure.

My father had served in WW I. He seldom talked about the war, but on one occasion he indicated to me that he taken a German helmet as a prize at Vimy. He wrote in his diary that he was part of the group that went over the top that dreadful morning. Fredrick Alfred Johnson came to Canada from England, a 12 year old orphan, to work on a farm near Alliston Ont. At age 19 he was a soldier, doing his duty. After visiting the battlefield 90 years later, I understood how Canada became a Nation that day but we had suffered terribly. Thousands of wounded; almost 4,000 dead.

The three day celebrations at Vimy for the 90th included a 2.5 kilometer parade through the streets of Arras where the Canadian military contingent was granted freedom of the city. Proudly they marched with fixed bayonets, flags flying and drums beating.

Our little group dubbed "Keeping the Memory Alive" marched in the sunshine with the five veterans in our small group through the "square of Hero's" to the cheers of thousands who remembered and honoured everything Canadian.

That evening I attended the Tattoo presented by our forces group at the Vimy memorial site. When I first arrived I was awe stricken by the huge white stone structure. It had just been restored to its original beauty. Later I walked over the massive set of steps and joined those gathered to witness the monuments first illumination. The service that night was impressive to say the least.

Next day, the actual anniversary date of the battle of Vimy Ridge was Easter Monday, the same as it was for the original battle, on a snowy morning in 1917. I arrived around 10 in the morning with thousands of others and spent the day trying to understand how it all had happened 90 years ago. The monument re-dedication; by the Queen and the Prime Ministers of Canada and France took place in the late afternoon.

Sitting just a few feet away, it was an



Vimy Memorial. SW Face/Centre. 1988

Harry Palmer © 1997

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LCol John Cook OSTJ CD

Lt Col John Cook, OSTJ CD. joined the 3 RCR—later 4th RCR in 1964 and served with that unit until commissioned in 1969. He was jump qualified in 1975. In 1980, his civilian occupation with Bell Canada moved him to Toronto where he re-mustered to signals and joined 709 Communications Regiment. He served as CO of the Regiment from 1985 to 1989. He held a BA degree from the U of Western Ontario.

Biography of CWO John Speirs, MMM, CD

CWO (RSM) (Retd) John Speirs was born in Sydney Mines, N.S. and moved to Montreal in his early teens. He began a long and distinguished career (36 years) in the Communications Reserve when he joined 10th Signal Regiment in October 1952. He later served with 11th Signal Regiment, 15th Independent Signal Sqn and 712 (Montreal) Communication Sqn. He held the appointment of SSM of three of these units for 16 years. In the rank of MWO he served, as a reservist, with the NATO forces in Baden Soellingen, West Germany in June 1972.

CWO Speirs was promoted to Chief Warrant Officer in January 1973, the first CWO to be promoted to a Reserve Communication Squadron in Canada. In 1977 he was appointed a Member of the Order of Military Merit, being formally invested into the Order in ceremonies at Government House, Ottawa, on 22 November 1977.

In January 1978, CWO Speirs transferred to 709 (Toronto) Communication Regiment and held the position of Assistant Training Officer. He was appointed RSM of the Regiment in March 1979 and held that position for 8 years. In addition to his duties as RSM he was appointed the first Squadron Sergeant Major of 70 Signal Squadron in 1979. He held that position during six summer concentrations when the Squad-



CWO John Speirs MMM CD

ron in 1979. He held that position during six summer concentrations when the Squad-

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CORRECTION: In the December 2006 edition, the photo of John Cook appeared with the biography of John Speirs. We apologize for the confusion and both are reprinted here in their entirety.
Editor



A meeting with Cpl Major, at a secret location.



AFGHANISTAN (Continued from page 12)

It certainly lived up to its reputation! The re-construction effort is not limited to physical construction. The PRT has a large number of programmes working with local government ministries, the Afghan National Police (ANP), local and international Non Government Organizations (NGOs). One of my projects was to provide local women with sewing, picko and zigzag machines in order to set up skills training classes. A similar project provided computer literacy training for local

women. In the six months there, the PRT CIMIC detachment has completed over 200 projects. I was responsible for five ANP sub-stations and a number of police checkpoints, the refurbishment of fifteen high schools and the Kandahar Technical College, projects in the University of Kandahar, drilling of wells in the Panjiwayi district and organized the delivery of over 80 tons of material aids during Operation Baaz Tsuka.

End of tour for Roto 2 of Operation Athena came in February 2007. We were replaced by Task Force 1-07 from the Land Forces Atlantic Area (LFAA). My last "outside the wire" patrol was to visit the same ANP Sub-station No. 9 which was also my first patrol. I was delighted to see the construction work was now nearing completion and would soon be handed over to the ANP. Personnel departing theatre were sent to Limassol, Cyprus for decompression. The five days spent there gave me the opportunity to reflect on the very intensive six months spent in-theatre.

All in all, it was a challenging, and at times a very dangerous but rewarding experience. I have learned a lot about myself and the world around me. I have felt the emotion of losing friends and colleagues; witnessed the death and injury of innocent people. However, I was grateful that I was given this opportunity to make a little different in some people's life and to serve Queen and country. *Lt. Lai has recently returned from Afghanistan.*

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emotional experience. Towards the end of the service as the final bar from a Celtic fiddle played, four French fighter jets skimmed past the front of the monument at close to mach 1. I was overwhelmed with thoughts of my father and his comrades and I trembled with tears. At that moment you could not have found a more proud Canadian. By the time the final march past was completed I had gained my composure. My colleagues and I laid our wreaths privately and quietly.

I believe most Canadians do not know the depth of gratitude that is felt for what our troops did to help free the people of France and I challenge The Toronto Signals Band to attend and proudly march at the 100th anniversary of Vimy Ridge in France in 2017. With planning and fund raising it is attainable.



Any military exercise always has a certain amount of limitation because everyone knows that it is just an exercise. But last winter, the unit participated in a 70 Comm Gp Exercise with other provincial assets, such as a Telus Satcolt vehicle (top right) which took a sudden turn for reality. As a result of a severe weather front going through Shelbourne, the local communications system was disrupted, turning what was “just an exercise” into a full blown operational requirement. The unexpected change of status did not disrupt the troops who, in typical military fashion, accepted the challenge and got the job done. The interaction with the civilian side of the operation was a valuable lesson for both as each had the chance to see what can be accomplished with mutual cooperation. Future exercises will always be measured against this one event, where training and operational deployment mixed.



Spiers (Continued from page 14)

ron was activated to support The Toronto Militia District with a Brigade Signal Squadron using personnel for both 709 and 705 Signals Regiments. Since retirement he was active in The Canadian Forces Communications and Electronics Association Council and served as President in 1996 & 1997. Since transferring to 709 John has been active in Jimmy & Associates, he has held positions of Secretary, Vice President, President in 1993-1995 and Treasurer. John is also a Director of The Warriors Day Council. His business career was in the Business Publishing field. He was Business Manager of Canadian Business Magazine, Product Manager with The National Post. **He is happily retired and resides in Oakville. He is a member of the Oakville Amateur Radio Club (VA3 RSM), local computer club, an Officer in the Masonic Lodge and Pres of Jimmy & Associates.**



Cadets Mark 50th Anniversary



Cadet Flag Party with the new 709 Corps Flag and the Friends of Old Fort York Gun Crew

The 13th of May was Mother's day. A bright, sunny day with the temperatures a comfortable 15 degrees. At 2:30 in the afternoon, the members of 2605 Signals cadets fell in under Cadet WO Kayla Brown, on the grass parade ground of Old Fort York for their Annual Parade. Decked out with the provincial flags, and the regiment's saluting dais, the parade was a wonderful echo of the military history of this place. Inspecting officer for the parade was Toronto Police Chief William Blair, one of the busiest

people in the City of Toronto. But he is a firm believer in youth organizations and events and for this, he made the time in his tight schedule.

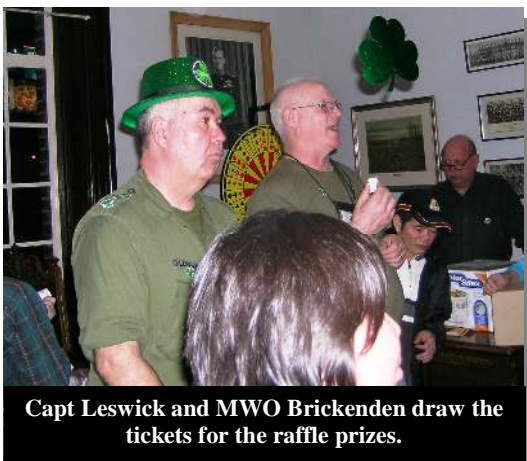
The parade this year was very different from the usual routine in that it was held on the grass parade ground at Old Fort York. The weather was perfect. The Toronto Signals Band was resplendent in their red uniform dress, performing an excellent musical selection to accompany the ceremony. This particular review was especially significant to several band members who had been members of the Corps, including 2 who had joined the Corps when it was first formed, 50 years ago.

In addition to the well-deserved awards of excellence for the cadets, the 50th Annual Parade also marked a transition as the unit was formally changed in its designation. The flag of 2605 Royal Canadian Army Cadets was ceremonially marched off the parade by Hon LCol Jack Lee, a former cadet and former CO of the Corps. It was replaced with a new flag bearing the Corp's new designation, 709 Toronto Communication Regiment Cadet Corps. The new designation brings the cadet organization closer to



Police Chief William Blair presents the Jimmy & Associates Award to Sgt. Vanessa Deneault

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Capt Leswick and MWO Brickenden draw the tickets for the raffle prizes.

St. Paddy's Day Event

Capt Rick Leswick

A wee bit of the Old Sod descended upon the 709 Officers' Mess on Sat 17 March as the 1st Annual St. Paddy's Day Pub night was held at the armoury. Well over 150 friends, family and guests of the 2605 (now officially 709) Cadet Corps attended the function and regaled in the spirit(s) of the good Saint's day. "This is the most people I've seen in the mess in the thirty years that I've been a part of the regimental family," crowed corps commanding officer and acting Irishman, Capt. Rick O'Leswick.

"In just five weeks, the officers, staff and parent's committee organized the event...it just goes to show you what the cadet corps is capable of," the CO clucked. The night featured traditional Irish fare, including reasonable amounts of delicious Celtic ales; a raffle in which most attendees won at least one gift; a silent auction; and fabulous music provided by a group of young men who will be sure to be heard again. "We even had a cadet's sister providing haircuts!" Captain O'Leswick continued, but the big benefit of the night was the fact that almost \$2500.00 was raised to provide training assistance and uniforms for the corps. "Everyone I spoke with had a great time and those who couldn't make it are still kicking themselves...at least until next year," commented a satisfied reveler. In March of 2008, St. Paddy will again be celebrated by those who are Irish and those who are Irish for only a day.

709 Cadets Go Way Up North

By MWO Steven Brickenden

The opportunity to go "north" for some people in this city, means heading up the Hwy 400 to Barrie, but for group of young cadets, a decision was made to take them farther north than many had ever been before. McKee's Camp is approximately 120 km north of Sudbury and the trip took a full 9 hours by train from Toronto to Sudbury and the main party departed Toronto at 0730 on Thursday May 17th. They were followed by a safety vehicle driven by myself and 2Lt Judy Brickenden, who endured an 8 1/2 hour trip in the Regiment's crew cab, to the bush roads north of Capreol, the last 55 km of which were over such rough roads that the best speed was a slow 15 kph.

McKees camp started out more than 50 years ago, as a logging camp and is now a base point for hunters and anglers looking to find deer, bear, moose and trout in the bush of northern Ontario. The weather was totally unpredictable with warm temperatures and black flies one day—don't shoot them, it only makes them mad—being replaced by snow on the last two days of the 5 day trip. The cadets made excellent use of the traveling time to review basic skills such as map and compass, orienteering and field craft. Under the direction of Cadet Sergeants Vanessa Deneault and Kathleen Wallace, the cadets practiced building shelters,

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preparing meals and navigation. The opportunity to go into the northern wilderness and to see places so far removed from a big city that a moose might be in the front yard, was an experience which the cadets found remarkable, and one that they are going to repeat next year. The preliminary planning is already underway by the Corps and the black flies and mosquitoes are doing their menu planning.



Sgt Vanessa Deneault with a moose antler

(Additional photos page 21)



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its affiliated unit. As the old flag was marched across the front rank of the parade, a gun from the Old Fort York guard fired a salute.

The Chief's remarks to the cadets expressed his admiration for their dress and deportment, but most of all, for accepting the challenge of serving their community and their country as part of the Army Cadet movement. He also hoped that some day some of those cadets he was seeing, might choose to continue as members of the Toronto Police Service, as Maj. Greg Stasyna had done.

As part of the inspection, LCol Lee selected Cadet Andrew Williams (photo left) as the best cadet on parade. After the dismissal, a reception was held in the Blue Barracks of Old Fort York, where the Chief and other dignitaries met and chatted with guests and parents of the cadets.

The parade was a great success because of the incredible efforts of the Chief, the Friends of Old Fort York, the Toronto Signals Band, and the support provided by the 709 Communica-

tions Regiment.

Next year, 709 Cadets will do it's first Annual Review continuing the tradition begun 50 years ago. Duties permitting, you are invited to attend. ***Spiritus Manet***

(See additional photos page 21)



Bruce Smith

Bruce Arnold. Smith passed away December 26th, 2006 at the Hamilton General Hospital in his 88th year after a brief battle with cancer. In the Second World War, he served with **Second Division Signals** throughout the European campaign including Verrieres Ridge with the South Saskatchewan Regiment where his 35 men won no less than 12 decorations for valour and dedication. Bruce had a long career with the CBC as an announcer and radio host. For 23 years his morning show 'Toast and Jamboree' was a staple in thousands of households on both sides of the border. He received the Queens Confederation Medal, the North York Civic Award and the Ontario Volunteer Award. Bruce was a member of Branch 60 of the Royal Canadian Legion, the Signals Officers Club, and Monday Men's at Wellington Square United Church.

Since the last publication it is with regret that we announce the passing of two of our Toronto Signals Band Members. **Allan Biggs age 75** (no photo) a baritone player and member of the band for six years passed away on December 1, 2006 after a battle with cancer. Al loved music and was always helping, assisting, sharing new ideas and helping new members and a perfect gentleman. He will be missed by his wife Willy, family, members of the band and regimental family.



Gord Broadbridge

Gordon Broadbridge (right) age 60, also a baritone player and member of the band for seven years passed away on March 4, 2007 from cancer. Gord would always greet you with a hearty handshake, a big smile and a little quip or joke that would make you laugh. He loved the band, enjoyed entertaining and always had an optimistic viewpoint. He will be missed by his wife Doris, family, members of the band and regimental family. We appreciate the respect shown by the Regiment and the prayers from the Padre in helping us get through this sad time. We are very proud, happy and honoured that Al and Gord shared a part of our lives and will be remembered with fond memories.



Capt Frank Lillie CD

Captain Frank Lillie, CD: (left) died May 21, 2007. Frank Lillie was an officer of 8th Signal Regiment, member of the Signals Officers Club and long time member of Jimmy and Associates.

Sergeant Bill Evans (no photo available) died May 14, 2007. He was a member of 8th Signal Regiment circa 1965-1968 and member of Jimmy & Associates.

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Isabel Lawton (right) died January 23, 2007. Norm and Isabel are long time members of Jimmy and Associates. Isabel took her nursing training at the Miramichi Hospital N.B., and Montreal for final courses. Her career started at Saint John General Hospital, and moved to Toronto, Saint Louis, Louisville Kentucky, USA and finally Head Nurse in charge of the Emergency Dept Ajax Hospital Ajax Ont. for almost 20 years. Norman and Isabel were married in October 1946 and raised two children, Linda and Rick.



Isabel Lawton



Chief Blair exchanges the 2605 and 709 Cadet Corps flags with LCol Lee and Cpl Selander



Dr. Michael Leahy relaxes on the train north to McKee's Camp

More photos



Cpl Sophie McPhail-Ferrera practices with field phones at McKee's Camp



709 Cadets prepare to depart for McKee's Camp. The trip was supported by Toronto Police Service and Via Rail



Regimental Group Photo Taken at 2006 Christmas Dinner

**Do you have a story and/or photo of a unit function or activity? Submit your idea to
editor709@yahoo.ca**