

971 RCAF AIR MARSHAL SLEMON WING

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

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Colorado Springs, Colorado



Afghanistan - Can we prevail? See page 2.

Social Calendar

- Sep 12 The Royal Air Force News of 05 Nov 10 included a write-up and picture of 83-year-old Barbara Brown, the WWII fighter pilot who attends our Battle of Britain ceremonies. The picture shows her flanked with the 7 RAF members who drove down from Denver for the event. An insert shows Barbara as she was during the battle.
- Nov 11 22 of us squeezed into a packed house, along with band, piper, and colour guard, a sizeable Canadian Regular Force contingent, RAF from Lowry AFB, Denver, and members of 41 local US veterans' associations. Ten wreaths were laid. Darrell Levitt was again Master of Ceremonies and Admiral James Winnefeld was guest speaker. Afterwards we were invited to brunch at the Canadian Forces new "Pavilion" on Peterson AFB.
- Dec 08 The US Retired Enlisted Association of Colorado Springs honoured Darrell Levitt as *Citizen of the Year* at their annual banquet. Darrell has been associated with the Pikes Peak Veterans Counsel for 18 years and was elected their chairman six years ago. He has been their chosen master of ceremonies at memorial functions for ten years.
- Dec 10 Eight of us enjoyed a great Christmas party sponsored by the Regular Force.
- As of press time there are no volunteers to host future get-togethers.
- Jan 08 1700 at Carol and Art Nielsen's, 730 Wuthering Heights Drive, 80921. 488-8870
Our belated Christmas Party. The usual under \$10 gift exchange.

Carol Nielsen will be retiring from our entertainment committee. We need a volunteer to continue her fine work.

The Editor's Corner Afghanistan

The soldier on page 1 grieving the loss of four comrades has, along with us, much more to ponder. Facing up to world responsibilities, troops from 47 countries are trying to restrain the Taliban. Have they local support? Is so, how long will it take and what will it cost? Our resources are limited, our responsibilities many, so each sacrifice must count. Procrastination multiplies problems.

If you prefer in-depth background over Wikileaks, try the 494-page book "*Descent into Chaos*" by the Pakistani researcher Ahmed Rashid. This single newsletter page can only scratch the problem.

We are in a failed country of rugged, 12% arable, terrain, yet 80% of its 30 million people (less 5 million who fled turmoil with many now returning) are farmers, 90% illiterate in a conservative, patriarchal society. Left from many invasions are: Pashtuns (Semites and 42%), Tajiks (27%), Hazaras (pro-education Shia Mongols and 9%), Uzbek (5%), Turkmen, Persians, and others. Numerous religions were smothered by Islam (80% Sunni) 1,300 years ago. Bribery became a permanent game when the UK and Russia vied for influence. King Abdul Rehman (1880-1901) used British subsidies to create an army that used cruel methods, since copied by Afghan warlords, the Taliban, and Saddam Hussein, to rule. The UK withdrew in 1919 after drawing the Durand boundary with Pakistan that split the Pashtun tribe who ignore it.

In opposing the 1979-89 Soviet invasion we provided arms and money to the Mujahedin that included the rising Taliban. Prior to this women were 50% of the doctors, 75% of the teachers, and 55% of civil servants. Emerging victorious from the civil wars after the USSR departure, the Taliban confined women to the home where 87% continue to be beaten regularly. They also sheltered Bin Laden and al Qaida.

The Saudi-financed madrassas in Pakistan produce a steady supply of jihadist Pashtun Taliban trained in Wahhabism, an austere and rigid branch of Islam. The 56% literacy rate in Pakistan with schools often political tools, and high unemployment gives a large pool for Taliban recruitment. Fearing India, Pakistan needs a friendly Afghanistan so still courts the Taliban there. They even consider the 1,000 Afghans that India trains annually in agriculture as Indian spies. The Taliban had no quarrel with us but their allies, al Qaida, that also thrives in other failed states, does for our alleged crimes against Muslim countries.

Hamid Karzai, born in 1957 in Kandahar, the 4th of 8 children (6 now live in the USA) a member of the Pashtun tribe that ruled the country for 250 years, does not now seem to be the man he was. An intellectual who speaks 6 languages, he was chief of the Popalzai tribe of Kandahar. Among others, the Taliban murdered his father, Abdul, respected for his honesty and wisdom, but was a supporter of King Zahir Shah who refused to yield power to a partially-elected parliament and was overthrown by his cousin, Daud, in 1973. Hamid believes Mullah Omar and the Pakistani ISI were implicated as no attempt was made to find the murderers who were in Pakistan. Hamid was in India studying political science when the USSR invaded. He joined the Mujahadin opposing the Soviets but he never saw combat. He did form an anti-Taliban network so fled to Pakistan when they took over, returning when the Taliban were defeated in 2001, but his wife, a doctor, is confined to the house. Our chasing off to Iraq let the Taliban regroup and emerge is such force as to question our ability to defeat them again. Our war is not going well.

Has anyone whispered to our Military that their failures might be due to tactics and weapons? Why do they stumble when others enjoy huge invasion successes? Blackberry, Coca-Cola, Kentucky Fried Chicken, MacDonald's, Tim Horton's, Toyota, General Motors, Airbus, Boeing, Bombardier, Embraer, football, wines, Harry Potter, and Chinese goods meet little competition from land mines, ambushes, IEDs, or sniper fire when they invade - and they make profits with no loss of life. Karzai posts 2,000 troops to guard Chinese who may destroy an old and large Buddhist complex at Mes Aynak mining Afghan copper.

A recent Canadian survey in Helmand and Kandahar provinces reveals that 92% of Afghans never heard of 9/11, so wonder why foreign troops, grotesquely dressed and encumbered with enormous firepower, are hunting Taliban whom they would also prefer to see depart? Who cares for them? Over 9 years the USSR killed a million of them. Since then a million more have died, 70% by warlords and the Taliban. Annually they pay \$2.5 billion in bribes to corrupt Karzai officials. Much corruption is our fault, giving lucrative contracts minus effective accounting. All US contractors bribe the Taliban to spare their projects and allow the use of roads. Taliban prosper by continuing the struggle. Karzai and cronies see no need to change. All can feed from the same trough. But impressive gains have been made. In spite of Taliban burning many hundreds of schools and killing teachers and students, 2 million girls and 4 million boys are now in school. Increasing pay to \$165/month has improved the corrupt police force. Literacy rates have risen. But, with no effective and honest Afghan government, it is still a task that will take decades. Even if the world's fortunate countries unite to establish a common agenda towards world problems, our abilities are limited. Afghanistan, your salvation is your hands. Use our help wisely and fairly, or lose it.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE: A congressman was seated next to a young woman on an airplane so he turned to her and said, "Do you want to talk? Flights go quicker if you strike up a conversation with your fellow passenger."

The woman, who had just started to read her book, replied to the total stranger, "What would you want to talk about?"

"Oh, I don't know," said the congressman. "How about global warming, universal health care, or stimulus packages?" as he smiled smugly.

"OK," she said. "Those could be interesting topics but let me ask you a question first. A horse, a cow, and a deer all eat the same stuff - grass. Yet a deer excretes little pellets, while a cow turns out a flat patty, but a horse produces clumps. Why do you suppose that is?"

The legislator, visibly surprised by her intelligence, thinks about it and says, "Hmmm, I have no idea." To which she replied, "Strange you feel qualified to discuss global warming, health care, or the economy, when you don't know shit?"

PAT-DOWNS AT AIRPORTS bother me only because it broadcasts that, for the expenditure of a few thousand dollars, terrorists force us to expend billions in counter measures.

When I go through so-called extensive pat-downs at airports I tell the examiners that they are rank amateurs. When I was captured after being shot down in Germany I was searched at every change of location. The Luftwaffe searchers were quite polite and respectful asking me to strip completely so they could thoroughly search my clothing and every body opening. This included me bending over to have a long finger rammed up my anus to ensure I was hiding nothing there.

Airport searchers would invariably tell me that that Uncle Sam did not pay them enough to do that. The long-suffering German "soldats" assigned this task were paid very little and were never issued with plastic gloves. Service to one's country does come in many forms.

MODERN COMMUNICATION AND TRAVEL continue to astound me. On 15 Nov I sent an email to Jane Sumner who lives across town in the Broadmoor area. Her quick reply came back from Nepal where she and her brother were about to take off on a trek through the hills to visit a school and a business venture a Nepalese friend had started to allow local women to become financially independent through making items from straw and used plastic.

Jane added that she would be back in town by the end of the month.

IRANIAN EX-PATS: Most of the 4.5 million living abroad in 27 countries emigrated after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The US has 283,000 and Canada 96,000 with Los Angeles and Toronto the largest. Iraq has 227,000, Israel 48,000. Their net worth is \$1.3 trillion. They invest in their adopted countries, sending little home.

In addition the US is home to 338,000 of Iranian ancestry while Canada has 122,000.

OVERHEARD AT THE KELOWNA AIRPORT: A Westjet agent was busy re-assigning flights to a long queue of passengers diverted from other flights when an irate man raced to the head of the queue demanding immediate assignment to the next flight out insisting it be first class. She replied quietly, "Sorry, Sir. You must wait your turn. I have all these people to accommodate first."

He pounded the desk, asking "Do you know who I am?"

She reached for the airport microphone to announce, "There is a gentleman at Gate 4 who does not know who he is. Could anyone help to identify him?"

The laughter from the queue made him madder and he snarled at her, "F— You!"

She replied, "I am sorry, sir. You will have to wait your turn for that too."

LEFT-HAND DRIVING is the rule in 175 countries including the US Virgin Islands. Major countries include: Australia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, and the UK.

Yes, it goes back to the days when, as most people were right handed, they walked on the left side of the road to keep their scabbards safe and their sword arms free.

DER DEUTSCHES BUNDESWEHR in July 2011 will cease conscription which was instituted after WWII to guard against a new wehrmacht with its own political power. Now 250,000 strong Das Heer (Army) will be cut to 185,000, but the 7,000 serving abroad will be increased to 10,000 ready to serve anywhere anytime. The ranks were opened to women in 2001. Muslims are also welcomed and now number about 1,000. Muslim women have served the army well in Afghanistan, most effectively with Afghan women. Like the army, the navy and air force will remain some of the world's best.

There is no conscription in 21 of 27 EU countries nor in 23 of 28 NATO.

Napoleon is credited with introducing conscription, but it has existed for ages. It is in the Code of Hammurabi (1795-1750 BC) in Babylon.

BACTERIA: We humans are an uncaring and ungrateful lot when we ignore all those zillions of bacteria that have, and are, making our lives possible.

First, there are those 100 trillion that make each of our bodies work. And, unlike us, they know their place, be it mouth, gut, skin, or elsewhere. For instance a bacteria that evolved to be beneficial in the mouth can be harmful if the mouth is used to bite someone else.

Each of us houses more bacterial than human cells. How can we be so selfish as to die and leave them all stranded?

Then there is that superior-than-thou attitude we have towards them. We are just now probing the use of quantum computations for computers and discovering that bacteria have been using them for hundreds of millions of years.

We are now probing ever deeper beneath our feet, finding bacteria have beaten us there: colonies of them in rock 2,000 metres down as well as 1,391 metres down in gabbroic layers that have pushed to within 70 metres of the basaltic ocean floor in the mid Atlantic. Here at 102 °C they feast on methane and benzene. While visiting mines in Manitoba I was pleased to see that biologists had been hired to study bacteria found thriving in veins in deep shafts, particularly where water had seeped down.

They are so adaptable that some use poisonous arsenic rather than phosphorus in their make-up.

We humans have multiplied to an unsustainable degree even though not up to bacterial numbers. We are guilty of causing grievous harm to the environment and the current global warming is mainly our fault. While this will ensure dire consequences it is not yet up to the changes bacteria have caused. Oxygen, once a poisonous vapour, has since been produced by bacteria in such huge quantities that life had to adapt to tolerate it, then to rely on it.

OUR MONARCHY: Euphoria over the April 2011 wedding of Kate and William has surfaced the wish that Charles step aside in the accession to the throne. This scribe prefers to let them wait their turn. Charles is called eccentric but, to me, he is eccentric in the right directions. So he talks to plants. That is not such a useless pastime. Plants do have some intelligence and do seem to respond when they are loved. He has great concern for the environment, tackles global warming, and promotes organic farming. He points out the lack of warmth and beauty in modern architecture. He has founded numerous charities that are doing great work around the world, including Afghanistan.

And, Camilla is a much nicer, and qualified, person than the press allows. While pedigree should not matter, hers is quite impressive including significant Canadian roots.

To me King Charles and Queen Camilla are quite acceptable.

START: It has its failings like every other country, but we have snubbed Russia long enough. The procrastination by the US Senate in ratifying the latest START treaty is dangerous and unforgivable.

We can both destroy the world many times over, so the treaty gives us only a slight reduction - but vital verification. If we fail to act we have no leg to stand on in trying to degrade the arsenals of India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, and in denying any to Iran. France and the UK united and reduced theirs.

BOB AND BECKY JOHNSON, since moving to Sherston, Ontario, are so pleased with their bit of heaven-on-earth that Bob has created a DVD and Becky a 4-page glowing account of the vegetables, fruit, flowers and foliage of their Niagara peninsula with all its pretty towns and villages within easy commuting. They can sit in sunshine while watching storm clouds dump their loads on Buffalo across Lake Erie. Their weather is designed for wimps.

Bob with his vintage 1948 Federal farm truck still joins relic car shows as he has since his NORAD days but Becky has yet to grace the area with historical wall murals like she did in the Ottawa area.

The 30-mile Welland canal offers a continuous show of ships that included the replica of the Bounty that was used in the film "Mutiny on the Bounty".

THE GREEDY GENERATION has taken over from what some call "*The Greatest Generation*".

The US Empire is now on a downward slope and those who care lack the power to fight the greed that feeds the slide. Not so long ago \$3,000 was a good Middle-Class annual income and people were content with what it could purchase. Those of us who saved a dollar back then have seen our thrift vandalized.

Survival demands jobs and a solvent country not tax cuts for the wealthy and the "wealthy" line needs to be set much lower than \$250,000. The pay freeze for civil servants must include Congress and others.

This scribe dislikes taxes but we must all do our bit to put our lonely world on a sound footing with a pay-as-you-go economy and careful husbandry of the environment. Limit borrowing to infrastructure that will pay future dividends.

We can no longer afford wars and huge militaries, huge empires, greenhouse gas emissions, population growth, cheap goods made by child or slave-like labour, and addictions like drugs, oil, and money.

Sure, the rescue task is formidable, dangerous, and costly, but the alternative, like death, is worse.

Restore our faith in government, Mr. President with a stronger fight for your principles even if all the Bush tax cuts expire. The widespread pain at the accompanying loss of unemployment insurance could shame the opposition into improving its stance. Then we need to increase petrol taxes until they pay for our roads and bridges, along with capping salaries to what the economy can handle with fairness to all from entrepreneurs to those who till the soil.

Unbridled capitalism is as dangerous as dictatorial communism.

Book

Reviews



FOB DOC

by Captain Ray Wiss MD, D&M Publishers, Vancouver, 2009, 205 pages

I thank Sue Forgues for loaning me this book.

Doctor Ray Wiss of Sudbury, Ontario, enlisted in the Canadian Army specifically to go to Afghanistan where he maintained a diary during a 3-month tour, Nov 2007 to Feb 2008, about one month each at Kandahar Air Field (KAF), Lynx and Leopard Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). During this period he was mainly with the Royal 22nd Regiment of Quebec (The Van Doos) for whom he has high praise, detailing how they achieved the impossible in hostile terrain, defeating the Taliban in every encounter without loss although suffering several casualties from roadside bombs and from armoured vehicles tipping over on hilly tracks used as roads. He was pleased to find all were staunch Canadians with no separatist aspirations.

He also has high praise for the Afghan National Army (ANA). With incredible bravery they took the battle to the Taliban with open pickup trucks and no heavy armour. Unlike the poorly-paid police they were not riddled with corruption. Having suffered under Taliban rule they were in no mood to see it return.

An expert with ultrasound machines Wiss was the first to train others and put them to widespread use at KAF and the FOBs. He gives several detailed accounts of their value during tricky surgery procedures on severely wounded Afghans and Canadians.

Ray has a laudable concern for other people and, as 3 months is quite inadequate to assess the complications of Afghanistan, he has volunteered for a second assignment there.

Obama's Wars

by Bob Woodward, Simon & Schuster, NY, 2010, 441 pages

Bob is an associate editor of the Washington Post where he has worked for 39 years. He has shared 2 Pulitzer Prizes for Watergate and for 9/11. He has authored 11 non-fiction best-sellers and writes in a style that makes it difficult to put the book down once you have started it. He lives in Washington with his wife and 2 daughters.

Books like this, and Wikileaks, are great for keeping the public (and the enemy) informed of the difficulties in creating policies with all the accompanying squabbles. Secrecy is now an endangered species.

The book's 32 pictures with short biographies of participants are a big help in sorting out their roles in the numerous, and amazingly detailed, meetings that President Obama demanded while continuing to ask for more options. He had inherited far too many problems: the environment, the economy, failing schools, CIA operations in 60 countries, scores of groups responsible for aspects of the Afghan and Iraq wars with no co-ordination, a military concentrating on planning future, highly-technical, wars while neglecting those now waging, and continuing to offer him only four options, two of which were impossible and two so alike that they were really giving him one option. Wanting to make Afghanistan an international responsibility closely linked to the Afghan people he complained of the lack of unity of purpose and actions. Concentrating on Iraq to the neglect of Afghanistan and Pakistan permitted a strong Taliban resurgence.

Coming through clearly is the dedication and workaholic nature of all members of Military and the Obama Team and their loyalty in executing whatever policy they were able to persuade Obama, the intellectual Spock, to adopt. The process was slow with many different viewpoints. Woodward devotes 72 pages just to cover the November 2009 meetings.

The book deals heavily with the importance of, and frustrations with, Pakistan, Afghanistan with its enormous corruption in government and police, and lack of notable progress. In-fighting and protecting turf within the US government and military is also revealed. No time is devoted to Obama's other problems in the area: Palestine-Israel, Iran, the Arab states and so on. India rates a little coverage.

Included are; the complete 6 pages of Obama's November 2009 Orders for Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy, a 3-page glossary, and a 4-page Cast of Characters.

- DARRELL'S PAGE - WOUND STRIPES

It is common knowledge that the Canadian military has never awarded its members a medal for wounds received in battle. However, did you know that during the First and Second World Wars the Canadian military did recognize those individuals wounded in battle with a "Wound Stripe". Following WW I the recognition of wounds was suspended and not until WW II did the recognition once again begin.

During World War II, First World War veterans serving in the Active Army were prevented from wearing their 1914-1918 wound stripe, with the exception of members of the Veterans Guard, in 1941. Orders in 1942 and again in 1943 abolished the wearing of wound stripes by members of the Veterans Guard as well.

Special recognition for injured soldiers in the Second World War was not implemented until 1944, when orders advised that "His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to approve the institution of Wound Stripes." The stripes were not to be considered a reward, and posthumous issues would not be made. Each occasion in which a soldier was wounded or injured, subject to certain conditions, entitled the soldier to a gold stripe of gold braid 1 ½ inches long. Personnel wounded in previous wars, regardless of how many times, were entitled to wear a single red stripe. All stripes were worn vertically on the left forearm. Versions of the Wound Stripe existed in both cloth and metal.

Upon the completion of WW II the practice of awarding wound stripes was once again suspended and not until the early 1990s did the Canadian Forces again adopt the honour. The wearing of Wound Stripes has never been compulsory and left completely to the discretion of the recipient.

SACRIFICE MEDAL

The "Sacrifice Medal" was created in the context of increased casualties in overseas operations to fulfill the desires of Canadians and the Government to provide formal recognition, through the award of an official medal emanating from the Crown, to those who die as a result of military service or are wounded by hostile action. This honour replaces the "Wound Stripe".

The medal may be awarded to members of the Canadian Forces, members of an allied force working as an integral part of the Canadian Forces such as exchange personnel, civilian employees of the Government of Canada or Canadian citizens under contract with the Government of Canada that have on or after October 7, 2001 died or been wounded under honourable circumstances as a direct result of hostile actions on the condition that the wounds that were sustained required treatment by a physician and the treatment has been documented.

The medal is a circular silver medal, bearing on the obverse a contemporary effigy of Her Majesty The Queen wearing a Canadian diadem composed of alternating maple leaves and snowflakes circumscribed with the inscriptions "ELIZABETH II DEI GRATIA REGINA" and "CANADA" and on the reverse a representation of the statue named "CANADA"—which forms part of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial—facing right, overlooking the horizon with the inscription "SACRIFICE" appearing in the lower right half of the medal. A bar is awarded for further occasions which would have warranted award of the medal.

The medal is made of Sterling Silver and lacquered to prevent tarnishing and is manufactured by the Canadian Mint. The medal is engraved on the edge with the serviced number, abbreviated rank, initials, and surname of the recipient.



MEDALS AND REMEMBRANCE

Darrell's article prompts me to add a few thoughts:

It is a chore anymore to polish all these medals and are they really necessary to wear on special days to make me contemplate not only the 125 cherished friends I lost but also the billions of innocents who have perished over the centuries because of man's inhumanity to man?

I continue to attend these ceremonies honouring our dead and I continue to wear my medals even though few now recognize their meaning. But, more and more I feel like James Wolfe who had been deeply touched by Thomas Gray's 1751 *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. In 1759 from his flagship in the St. Lawrence River he surveyed Quebec City with a sadness for what he was about to do. He admitted to his associates that he would much rather be the author of that poem than the general to take Quebec. Both he and the French general, Louis-Joseph de Montcalm, died in the battle, emphasizing in Gray's poem the line *The paths of glory lead but to the grave*.

During WWI and for two years after WWII Canada authorized a golden wound strip to be worn on the left sleeve of those who had been wounded in action, a similar recognition to the Purple Heart of the US. As 17 small pieces of German shrapnel in March 1943 found a permanent home in the bones of a leg that happened to be mine, I wore this stripe for two years until the award was abolished so, today, I remain seated when they ask those with Purple Hearts to stand.

My satisfaction with myself for the small part I played in stopping aggression is tempered by the despicable means I had to use and the knowledge that those whom I was assigned to bomb into oblivion were not the perpetrators but were also victims. The path to the perpetrators lay through decent people also caught up in a conflict not of their choosing. Circumstances delivered my penance. Shot down, I was to meet hundreds of them and to be among them on over a score of occasions when we, all hungry, cold, and lousy, were bombed and strafed by Allied aircraft and artillery from a dozen nations.

So, I attend these remembrance ceremonies as a visible token of the stupidity of wars and in the hopes that we all learn to so conduct ourselves that our grandchildren will have no need to design ceremonies to honour the dead of recent wars.

DARRELL' FATHER, Sergeant Archie William Levitt, also received leg wounds from shrapnel. His came in March 1944 in the Liri valley in Italy while part of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division using 105 mm guns mounted on modified Sherman tanks, rubber wheeled to obtain road speeds up to 50 mph. They were engaged in a prolonged artillery duel with heavier German artillery dug in on Mount Cairo by the Melfa River. Sent to the Canadian hospital near Naples, Archie came down with dysentery and malaria so he could not care less about the Mention in Dispatches he received for the masterful handling of his unit that permitted a substantial advance.

SICK PARADE

Carl Mattson tried a solo flight off a ladder 01 November. The short flight was well executed but his landing was not up to his normal level of perfection and resulted in severe shoulder injuries. He is relegated to a sling and pill consumption for a while longer. He does feel that he and Donna will make their winter excursion to the west coast on schedule.

Bob Freimth had to pass on his annual impression of Al Jolson singing "Mammy" at the family Thanksgiving get together due to a partial left-knee replacement at Memorial Hospital, on November 16th. The tender ministrations of Val and the application of various mechanical marvels are doing wonders for his recovery along with a course of physical therapy.

Miles McMillan remains on oxygen with scarred lungs but his main annoyance is a very painful left leg for which no cause or remedy has yet been found. He and Mary will still spend Christmas and New Years in Phoenix.

WING ELECTION (railroading?) TIME - Minus fund raising, TV sound bites, and tax dollars.

Joan Peterson is retiring after two years of great service and has nominated Dave Bristow to succeed her. Dave was born in the UK in 1949, moving to Canada when his Dad joined the RCAF. Dave attended CMR and RMC graduating in electrical engineering. He has served in Lowther, Borden, and, mainly, Ottawa, before transfer to Space Command in Colorado Springs. He retired in 1994 as a Lcol (Wing Commander to us Oldies). His post-retirement activities include Carnegie Mellon University, Kaman Sciences, and IBM. He married Donna in 1972 while a cadet at RMC. They have 3 sons. Donna sails in from an RCN family spending 16 years in Nova Scotia. She graduated from the Ottawa Teachers' College, and, as an elementary school teacher, taught in Elliot Lake, Ontario.

A formal election will occur at our next social, so nominations remain open.

RCAF STATION CENTRALIA

Memories soften the aches and pains of ageing. RCAF Station Centralia, just north of London, Ontario, where I was Chief Ground Instructor, 1956-58, provided me with many. Here are just a few:

Each new intake of cadets commencing pilot training on Chipmunks consisted roughly of half Canadians and half Europeans. Believing that the friends they would make would, in the long run, be more important to world peace than their pilot training, Joan and I tried to arrange numerous social functions for them.

First, as the flight cadets were billeted two to a room, I assigned to each of the rooms a Canadian and a European (from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Turkey, and the UK).

Joan and I organized Wednesday night dances with the help of Sylvia McPhee, an attractive young school executive in London. We would dispatch two 40-passenger buses to London and Sylvia would fill them with girls. The flight cadets were encouraged to enact a skit during the evening while refreshments were served. Talking to a Luftwaffe cadet during one of these evenings, I discovered he had been a high school student doing night duty near Rotenburg on an isolated flak battery that I knew well because in March 43 it had hit my Halifax after we had survived two very heavy barrages. Crippled, we were easy prey to subsequent fighters and flak. We became friends and he presented me with two large charcoal drawings of a Munich beer garden, still displayed in our rec room.

A natural with horses, we had our eldest daughter, Barbara, take cadets on weekend trail rides. On one of these six of the flight cadets would not admit they had never been on a horse. It was a 2-hour-long trail ride and for 3 days thereafter these cadets stood during classes as sitting was much too painful.

A distraught Dutch student showed me a letter from his girlfriend revealing that his leave taking had been more amorous than he had realized and that she was now pregnant. He asked for leave to return home to marry her. Explaining that this would add to the cost of his training, I asked if Holland accepted proxy weddings. He did not know, so I wrote to the embassy in Ottawa. A week later I received instructions from them, so I took the various forms to a lawyer in Exeter where I took the place of the bride (after getting written permission from her) and got them married. Later, when the baby was born, I got the nicest card with a thank-you letter from the real bride and mother.

The true meaning of Intercourse Leave struck home when a half dozen European students, complaining that there were lots of girls in Canada but no women, went to Mexico during their leave between courses. They all returned with VD.

European trainees came in a mixture of officer and airman ranks. As training them was an immense cost to Canada we tried to economize by treating all as flight cadets accommodating them in the flight cadet mess and barracks. I spent much time convincing officers that we were not insulting their ranks and that it was simply a matter of economics. I was fairly successful until a Canadian supply officer arrived for cross training as a pilot and refused to accept flight cadet status. It made my job much more difficult when the CO gave in and agreed to allow him to reside in officers' quarters.

Four of the liaison officers (Danish, French, German, and Turkish) and I became good friends and continued to correspond for many years. I still correspond with Rod Cescotti who retired as a Luftwaffe general. We had bombed each other in WWII and he and his wife, Otti, entertained us for a week in their Bavarian home. The Turkish liaison officer, Tarik Gokeri, was a big man who had been a wrestler before joining his air force. When I told him I would have to cease training for three of his men who had failed their final exams, he said, "*Let me explain the facts of life to them.*" I loaned him my office. The next day the three trainees, all red-eyed from no sleep, begged to retry the exams which I arranged for the following day. To my amazement they all passed with respectable grades. I hesitated to ask Tarik what means of persuasion he had used. Years later, one of these cadets, after completing a successful short-service commission, wrote to me from Turkey telling me of his new career as a tour guide.

A distraught Rhodesian, who was doing well in his training, asked me to facilitate his release as he had to rush home. He had just received a letter from his parents who owned a large prosperous farm that employed a hundred blacks at fair wages. A neighbouring family had been killed as their farm was overrun and seized by rebels putting all their employees out of work. He was very worried about the safety of his family and his country. It was imperative to rush home to protect them. He knew he would be of more help as a trained pilot but the danger was now, forcing him to forget his dream of flying. I set the wheels in motion and have often wondered how he and his family made out. I know his country is now a wreck.

A French student fell in love with a London girl and asked my permission to marry her. I knew that French Air Force regulations precluded this but I called in Captain Andre Buffet, the liaison officer, who repeated my words, adding "*As long as there is no emergency I cannot authorize a marriage.*" Six weeks later this enterprising cadet rushed into my office with a big smile to announce, "*I have created the emergency!*" He got his permission and, following his graduation at Moose Jaw, took his bride to his first posting to Bamanko in the French Sudan.

MUST GO NOW and start on the March newsletter. Do send inputs to georgesweanor@comcast.net or snail mail to 2702 Marilyn Rd, 80909. Your inputs are needed to cure my verbal diarrhea.

BONUS

Here is Diana DeLuca's latest blog, posted 10 December on her www.coololdtech.blogspot.com site that now has 149 blogs, whereas I have a mere 45.

LOOKING BACK DOWN THE ROAD

These days, we hear endless talk from certain circles about not liking illegals, not liking the national debt, not liking Nancy Pelosi, not much liking the unemployed (but loving the unemployment rate as long as it is going up or down), not liking paying for education, not liking anyone else getting something for nothing all the while greedily accepting whatever pension or public slop comes down the trough. Everyone's unhappy with something; some are unhappy with everything; some just don't want anything but anarchy; some just want change for its own sake.

All this complaining seems to be burned into the human psyche.

I bet when they were building the pyramids, Kufu the stone carver grumbled about all those freeloading illegals from Sinai, stealing jobs from the locals and having too many children. And what about the pharaoh, how intelligent is it to run up the national debt just to build a tomb? It has to be the influence of all the homosexual courtiers waving about more than their fans. And what about Ramses, the new wonderboy stone cutter that everyone wants to carve on their tombs? It's all about youth anymore. Now back in the old days, life was good: women didn't meddle in politics and children were raised to respect their elders--not playing in the streets but working to help support the family. There was more discipline and more respect for the gods--today we need to burn more incense, slaughter more sheep, and return Egypt to what it once was.

So as Kufu chips and shapes the blocks of masonry, he dreams of returning to this wonderful past. It's a time he hardly remembers except through the haze of years--choosing to forget the violence, illiteracy, and short life spans that were part of daily life. It was a halcyon time for Kufu because it was familiar and he had a place within it. The fact that it may not be for anyone else escapes him.

Kufu's unfocused nostalgia continues today. It lives on among our conservative brethren who would like to return us to something, although I'm not clear what.

Is it, I wonder, the days of the early Republic when members of Congress fired pistols in the halls and beat one another about the head with canes? When the South based its economy on cotton and slavery? When a woman who didn't conform was burned as a witch? Or is it the early 19th Century with the settlement of the West when graveyards were full of children dead from lack of medical attention and when law was only as good as the fastest draw? Is it the late 19th Century when women and children were the chattel of their husbands and only men of property could vote? Or was it the early 20th Century when the world was consumed in war after war? When my grandfather would have denied me an education because teaching a woman more than housework was a waste? When my grandmother would have been startled by my irreligious attitudes? When my greatgrandparents would have sent me to work in the mills to help pay the rent?

I have to admit that I can do a credible Kufu too. I remember happy times from my childhood in 1950s Britain. People seemed more neighborly. Life seemed less rushed. There wasn't such an emphasis on what Wordsworth called getting and spending. But before I get carried away, I remember my mother and her friends doing a Kufu over the loss of Britain's empire. Having an empire meant prestige for her generation; yet how many among us today would advocate acquiring one? My memories are obviously cherry picked.

The kids raised today will probably look back on life in the early 21st Century as familiar because it is all they have ever known. Now that is a thought.