

# Class of 65 Newsletter

## Bulletin d'Information—Classe de 65

Issue/Numéro 100



February/février 2017

*Disclaimer: This Newsletter is produced for members of the RMC Class of 1965 and is based primarily on inputs from members of the Class of 65. It is not an official publication of the Royal Military College nor does it purport to represent the views or opinions of all members of the Class. Unfortunately, the Editorial staff lacks the linguistic skills to produce a bilingual version. Items are published in the official language in which they are received.*

### Editor's Corner/Coin du rédacteur

This edition is a bit of a milestone for this newsletter. The 100th since my HMCS Gatineau shipmates conned me into this editorial task. Seventy eight classmates have contributed articles to the first 100, with several being the mainstay of the publication with numerous articles. Sadly, five of the contributors are no longer with us.

Keeping this effort afloat for another 100 issues will require the continued input from the faithful, and more important, a more concerted effort from those who have remained silent over the past eight years. I'm not looking for much—a simple update on your life since graduation will do; or a brief description of a favourite vacation or activity. Give it a few minutes of thought and fire something off—nothing is too trivial to print. Every small item contributes to increased Class cohesion. (See the exchange of e-mails in this edition).

Since publication of Edition 99, we have learned of the passing of **6426 Serge Arpin** and we join his family in mourning his loss.

We have also learned from Janice Johnston that her husband, our classmate **6033 Pat Johnston**, is suffering from dementia. I am sure you will want to join me in sending our sympathy and best wishes to Janice and Pat as they deal with this very difficult and debilitating disease.

I have taken the liberty of printing some message replies to a Christmas e-mail greeting from Ernie Cable to his Royal Roads Class of 63 Fraser Flight colleagues.

This short edition also includes the annual report from the Florida "Rump" of the Class. I guess, in this case, and considering the individuals concerned, "rump" could have many interpretations.

Finally, we'll conclude Terry Colfer's excellent and interesting article entitled, "Middle East Maritime Musings". Thanks again to Terry and to the Naval Association of Canada for allowing us to reprint the article. As noted previously, my technical skills did not permit reproduction of the original photos so, where appropriate, I have substituted generic images.



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### Royal Roads Fraser Flight —Class of 63

**6601 Ernie Cable:** As previously reported Carol and I relocated to Ottawa to be closer to our daughters' families and grandchildren as well other family relatives on both Carol's and my side. When we were raising our daughters we mostly lived on the East Coast while both sets of grandparents lived on the West Coast with the result that our kids never really knew their grandparents. So, we just wanted to play a part in our grandchildren' lives. We were torn between a rock and hard place as we we had just built our "retirement" home in Dartmouth and the next move was supposed to be in a pine box. But we decided that blood was thicker than bricks and we made the decision to move - so far so good. This past summer we took a trip to Kamloops, BC to visit Carol's brother and family and a bevy of long lost cousins.

I am still busy as a volunteer RCAF Associate Historian and as the historian for the Shearwater Aviation Museum in Nova Scotia, there is never a shortage of requests to research. I also wrote an article for the Defence Program Review, which judging from the number of requests for copies from defence analysts and defence related magazines was well received.

In September I celebrated my 75th birthday. There was no pomp and ceremony, no massive fleet reviews, nor gigantic flypasts associated with 75th anniversaries, just a wonderful surprise party attended by all our family members in the Ottawa area at our favourite restaurant.

**6611 Doug Cope:** Well it had to happen, I have been usurped as the Christmas greetings leader. I must be getting old – no wait, I am old.

I was hoping to see Chias today at the Fats lunch but alas I am currently snowed in 30 miles from Ottawa so I am staying put. This seems to be recurring theme, I missed GAS in the spring during yet another big snow fall. As I was telling Fats, I barely made it home from Ottawa in a whiteout on Thursday night and that used up my winter driving nerve for a few weeks.

As Coop mentioned I did manage to have lunch with he and Jacques a couple of months ago in milder weather. A couple of weeks after that I managed another lunch with that would-be Fraser, Steve Crutcher, and a guy from the end of the alphabet, Matt Wilson.

Do not worry, GAS, MARS Baker lives. I had a good day signing and selling copies of my book at RMC on the grass outside Panet House in September. I sold 23 copies mainly to guys from years far removed from ours. Only sold a couple of copies to guys from the Class of 66 since they still do not like me. Also, thanks to a series of plugs for my book in E-veritas I have recently sold 7 copies either by mail or otherwise. On Saturday an ex-Roadant (entry 1966) by the name of Laurence Sianchuk 8581 came by the house to pick up a copy.

I hope you guys are all doing as well as possible and I hope to see some of you in 2017.



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### Royal Roads Fraser Flight —Class of 63 (Continued)

**6602 Jim Cale:** This year Jane and I did our travelling in-country with a trip to Halifax in July, a run to Stratford in September and one or two trips to Montreal. Coming back from Stratford we stopped in my home town of Guelph (once famous as a manufacturer of jock straps) for the 75th anniversary of my Sea Cadet Corps. There were 5 others from my era there and we quickly re-bonded and reminisced about those days, much as we do at our reunions. It was a great experience.

I managed to do quite a bit of cycling this year with trips in Victoriaville, Cape Breton, Pembroke area, The annual MS ride, and Cuba - the exception to the in-Canada holidays. The old legs are still hanging in and I am looking forward to more cycling trips next year. Our family members are all well and very busy with school and other activities. Our grandson is in Grade 10 and is seriously considering going to RMC. I took him to Kingston this year for the reunion events - obstacle course and badging parade. He was duly impressed and is forging ahead with his plan.

**6610 David Cooper:** Last spring, I took a trip to Guyana where my wife hailed from - according to her birth certificate, she was a White Native of British Guyana - but never wished to return! An interesting week in a 3rd world country, but most exciting part was the two hour flight in a 10 seat single engine plane over the broccoli jungle to Kaieteur Falls, the highest falls in the world with a single drop of 741ft. It is spectacular from the edge of the gorge, but even more so on leaving when the pilot flew up the river then turned to fly down the river and over the cusp of the falls at under 10ft!!!! I also visited Trinidad and returned via the Panama Canal. I did some RVing in my camper, including joining the Lt Governor on the Okanagan Wine Tour visiting a dozen wineries that won LG awards - an interesting event! During a visit to Ottawa for the NAC Conference and AGM (that was well supervised by Fats), I was very kindly hosted at Chez Cale (an unlisted AirB&B). Jim and I took the opportunity to have a great Pub Lunch with Copious and enjoyed some fine conversation! Next year, it is my plan to drive in my RV to Newfoundland, so may see some of you along the way.

**6598 George Brown:** Life has changed a lot over the past year, with good news and some not-so-good news. Our world can be a dangerous place, but there are many good things that happen too. We believe that reconnecting and sharing good news can be positive.

We are now both finally both retired (and thoroughly enjoying it). Bea took up her new position as chef de maison and active grandmother on March 1st. I have been demoted to XO, planning trips to places we have not been, and some that we have. I would see as much as we can, while Bea would have more breathing space between the different destinations so she can remember where she's been and where she's going. We have ongoing summit meetings on this subject, but both enjoy our travels. I still attend Flemish lessons and a French discussion group. Progress is extremely slow since I could learn neither language in 20th century



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### Royal Roads Fraser Flight —Class of 63 (Concluded)

Alberta. FATS will understand the language barrier, but each year there is a slight improvement. Bea has begun Italian lessons and is taking it by storm – stand by Italy!

We began her retirement with an extended vacation in March to see the Ottawa family, with side trips into the USA. We followed that with a Baltic cruise in June. While we were in the Baltic, Bea's mom 'Super-Oma' went off to the hospital for open-heart surgery. We were somewhat worried, standing by, ready to fly back, but the surgery went well. After a long, slow recovery period, she has bounced back and is living on her own again in her home at the Belgian coast. We still go down to visit her regularly and we are happy that we are able, since we can postpone most everything else. She will be 90 in January.

The children and grand-children in Ottawa are all doing well as is Bea's son and family near Brussels. This year, we will be in Ottawa for Christmas and we'll be back with 'Super-Oma' and all the Belgian family for New Year's. We will see some classmates in 2017, on our trips to Ottawa, and in 2018, we plan to be at the Fraser Flight reunion at Royal Roads. Hope everyone can be there.

### 15 No Trump by Hugh Spence





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### 15 No Trump (Concluded) by Hugh Spence

On a rare rainy day when the usual Geezer State sun was hard to find, the Dockside Waterfront Grill in Venice, Florida, was the site of this year's Class of 65 snowbird rump lunch. Guests were Carol Harries and Brock and Lori Horseman, bringing the group total to 17. From left to right, disregarding rows: Virginia Ambachtsheer, Carol Harries, Nancy Berman, Mike Houghton, Chris Spence, Hugh Spence, Keith Ambachtsheer, Frasn Holman, Sandy Holman, Gord Diamond, Irene Diamond, Lynn Colfer, Terry Colfer, Nellie McQuinn and Waine McQuinn. (Photo by the Horsemans)

### Middle East Maritime Musings (Part 2)

By 6523 Terry Colfer

In certain regions, Canada and the US as well as other allies, cooperate closely when grappling with evacuation contingency plans for their embassy personnel as well as expats. With this as background, I had a discussion with the US Ambassador in Kuwait in late 1998. On account of the deteriorating circumstances in the Gulf at that time (Saddam was not cooperating with the UN weapons inspectors) it was suggested that we meet on board the USS Enterprise to update our evacuation plans and review other issues of importance. The following morning we took off from Kuwait International in a USN C2A Greyhound (COD - carrier onboard delivery) aircraft bound for the "Starship Enterprise". She was on station in the southern Persian Gulf.

The landing on the *Enterprise* (CVN-65; the world's first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier) was picture-perfect as was noted in a photo presented to us by the captain shortly afterwards. Landing on a four acre steel flight deck was certainly exhilarating. The tail hook caught the arrestor wire and we were screeched to a halt in seconds. Blood can rush to the head and for a short time the G force can restrict vision. According to the pilots with whom I spoke, landing on an aircraft carrier was difficult during the day, more difficult during inclement weather, but exponentially more difficult at night.



**USS Enterprise (CVN-65)**



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### Middle East Maritime Musings (Part 2) (Continued)

But I digress ... after a briefing by the captain we got to work on the contingency plans.

However, there was some spare time available. With the exception of a few sensitive locations we pretty much had a free run of the ship. I was billeted in a guest suite which was very comfortable except for the regular roar and crashing sounds of launches and landings. At times, it seemed that the aircraft were penetrating the deck as the noise was often deafening. The landings (aka controlled crashes) seemed loudest of all.

With a crew of more than 5,000 (including the air wing), the Enterprise functioned much like a small US town, although there were clear hierarchical lines. Updating our plans involved a couple of nights on board so we meshed into the normal ship routine as much as possible. The massive flight deck was unusually quiet in the early hours of the morning and I took advantage of this for my daily run. One had to be prudent. On arrival I had met the chief naval medical officer on board (he had grown up in Newfoundland) who mentioned that a lot of his work involved sewing up sailors who would injure themselves bumping into wings, tripping over chains, etc. on the flight deck. The flight deck was an extremely hazardous area. In fact, a number of the enlisted crew with whom I chatted had never even ventured up to the flight deck during their several months deployment on board. The exceptionally well-equipped sick bay also served as the main hospital for the entire battle group. Coincidentally, when I was on board I visited with a Canadian sailor who had been flown to the carrier from a Canadian frigate (HMCS *Ottawa*, I believe). He was a patient in the sick bay recovering from an appendectomy.

While the size of a US carrier may be enormous there seemed to be little in the way of extra space available. Every square inch appeared to be occupied. For example, if there was any space available in the hangar due to aircraft flying, the area was quickly occupied by off duty sailors taking part in a pickup game of basketball.

The fighter pilots appeared to be top of the food chain on board ship. After witnessing aircraft launch and recovery at night it was definitely “hats off” to those skilled aviators. The overall sound and light show of nocturnal flight operations was beyond impressive. Landings included burnt rubber odours, sparks and smoke everywhere. Launchings were ferocious involving a solid wall of flame from the jet blast not to mention the screech of metal enhanced by the rolling deck.

Aviator call signs displayed on the side of the aircraft intrigued me. Apparently these nick names have to be carefully screened before approval as they can sometimes border on the unacceptable. Derogatory call signs are the order of the day and it is considered bad form to try and give oneself a call sign. After landing, the pilots were normally greeted by the members of the flight deck crew responsible for the maintenance of that particular aircraft. Interestingly enough, one of the fighter pilots had the call sign “Bunny” on the side of the F-18. It was even more surprising when after “high fiving” the ground crew the aviator doffed the helmet and revealed that “Bunny” was not only a fighter pilot but also a female. The flight deck was full of surprises.

The aviators were indeed high-spirited. While present at one of the pre-flight briefings there was a large bolt suspended from the ceiling by a string above the chair of one of the pilots. It seemed that the pilot who experienced the most “bolters” (overshoots for failing to catch the arrestor cable) during the previous operations was thus identified. “Bolter” aircraft needed to accelerate at full power to become airborne again and then re-attempt the landing after a go-around.



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### Middle East Maritime Musings (Part 2) (concluded)

My brief but intense carrier sojourn ended too quickly. Following a couple of days at sea I was buckling up after climbing into the Greyhound-COD for the return flight to Kuwait. The deck crew did their magic between the catapult and the under carriage, the jet blast deflector was raised and we were ready. Seconds later the steam pressure of the catapult slammed the COD forward like a rocket over the edge of the flight deck. That sudden movement propelled the Greyhound from zero to 266 kph in 2 seconds. It was like getting hit in the butt by a speeding freight train. Difficult to put this experience into words ... it was indeed a rush!

The return flight to Kuwait International was uneventful and observing the 10,000-foot runway ahead while on final approach I could not help but contrast how straightforward it looked to land this aircraft. It was not just the length of the runway but, unlike a carrier landing, the runway was not even moving.

Operation *Desert Fox* took place in December 1998 shortly after our *Enterprise* visit. Some Canadians, US and other nationals were evacuated from Kuwait around that time. A few Iraqi Scud missiles hit Kuwait and hundreds of coalition air sorties attacked Iraq. Our contingency evacuation plans were successfully tested during this conflict and further fine-tuned in preparation for expected future crises. We did not have to wait long. Three years later it was the 9-11 terrorist attacks followed closely by the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

#### Conclusion

These Persian Gulf maritime experiences left a lasting impression that served to reinforce my understanding of the agility, utility, flexibility, and professionalism of naval forces.

Appreciating that the current RCN frigates were acquired primarily for our national defence, it was impressive to witness how Canadian naval assets can project commitment, power and influence so far from home. Significantly, this is accomplished with minimal logistical or human resource support needed on foreign soil.

The Persian Gulf (and the Middle East generally) remains an extremely unpredictable and volatile region. The naval challenges are constantly changing but, whether they be surveillance, control, boarding, combat operations, showing the flag, or whatever, the members of the RCN have demonstrated over the years the leadership, judgement and overall capacity to expertly meet Canadian domestic and international expectations. **Bravo Zulu!**

#### Concluding Notes

I'm off to have my second knee replaced in May, so I will have lots of time on my hands to put together the Newsletter so get to work and send me your stuff. My recovery from the first replacement has been remarkable (I was out snowshoeing less than two months after the surgery) and I'm hoping for more of the same with the second.

It's starting to look like Spring here in Ottawa and I for one won't be sorry to see the back of another winter. I'm looking forward to sitting on my deck, which backs on to a golf course fairway, with a cold beer, critiquing all those duffers, while blithely forgetting that I was once one of them.