

Class of 65 Newsletter

Bulletin d'Information—Classe de 65

Number/Numéro 136



December/décembre 2020

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

Welcome to this year's holiday edition, a somewhat different holiday than hitherto. Nonetheless, I would like to wish all of you and your families a happy and safe holiday. This is a fairly busy edition to close off a turbulent year. Members of RRMC Fraser Class who ended up in the Class of 65 have kindly allowed me to print their interesting and informative exchange of Christmas greetings and personal updates. Edition 135 elicited a number of comments that are reproduced below. There are also a number of other letters and **Andre Gagnon** has joined regular contributors **John Cowan** and **Gord Forbes** with interesting personal insights. But first, it is a sad duty to report the passing of another classmate, **6578 Barry Watson**.

6578 Barry Watson (17 Sep 42—22 Nov 20)



It is with great sadness that we share the news that Barry Sydney Watson passed away in Kingston, on November 22, 2020. Barry grew into spirit unexpectedly but peacefully with his wife, Barbara, by his side. He was: a loving father of Steve (Shauna), Catherine (David) and Jon (Kelly); a dedicated Grandpa (emphasis on the "Grand") to Megan (Steve), Chandra (Garrett), Jenaye, and Charles; and a cherished Great-Grandpa to Jaxon, Boden and Damien. Barry is remembered by his brother Brian (Billie Jean) and family, and he leaves his precious fur baby Holly, along with his loving lifelong relationship with extended family,



the Wood cousins.

Barry was born in Kirkland Lake to Sydney Calvin Watson and Emma Evelyn (Toye) Watson on September 17, 1942. He spent his childhood in Kirkland Lake until he moved to Kingston to attend the Royal Military College. There he met the love of his life, Barbara Wood, on a blind date. On one beautiful and eventful day, Barry graduated from RMC in the morning, convocated in the afternoon, and then married Barbara that same evening. That was the start of 55 happy and memorable years together.

Barry started his Information Technology (IT) career in the Royal Canadian Air Force. He then transitioned



Numéro 136

December/décembre 2020

Page 2

Watson Obituary (Concluded)

to the civilian IT sector, which was then a fledgling industry. He started working in technology when computers were the size of rooms. He was a pioneer of that industry, helping it grow through the years, working on many projects across Canada and Internationally.

Aside from his career, Barry was an active and involved member of his church. He was a calm, kind, gentle man who positively touched the lives of many. Barry was passionate about music; he sang and played the trumpet for many years. Barry also enjoyed photography and running, and participated in the Rat Race in Toronto. He enjoyed passing time with family and friends, and was known for his sense of humour. A true dog lover, he had many beloved canine companions throughout his life.

The family would like to express their deepest appreciation to the First Responders, the KGH Emergency staff and Dr. Anna Grant, and also to Dr. Patricia O'Donnell for many years of excellent care.

Extract from Kingston Whig Standard, 28 November 2020

Letters

A couple of the articles in Edition 135 elicited comment:

6632 Don Hansen: *Class of 65 news and opinions are much appreciated. For rural people with police and wildlife official response times measured in hours arms are important.*

Hunting is important to Canadians. Huge knives are found in virtually every kitchen and many pockets contain ignition keys for cars and trucks. These are just as dangerous.

I am told that truckloads of fertilizer plus additions presents a real hazard. This is a danger of a higher nature. These attract virtually no attention. Guns are in my opinion no worse.

Government has very expensive no win trade off decisions about mental health patients and about dangerous individuals and groups and when the inevitable happens their political rivals relish the role of after the fact judgment of their actions.

There is a temptation to use the opportunity to make political capital by deflecting and dealing with firearms. It is easy to show results as many owners will do as they are told so results are seen. It also serves to distract from huge real problems such as fentanyl deaths.

It reminds me of the global warming movement. Things getting warmer is much more fun to talk about than the real risks of cold weather ruining our crops here in Canada where degree days are precious.

Your readers would know much more about it than I do but I understand that a large volcano, meteor or even a nuclear dust up by any of the expanding group of nuclear groups or nations would affect the number of degree days adversely.

As an amusing anecdote I still can recall my disappointment when the bayonets on our rifles at Royal Roads



Numéro 136

December/decembre 2020

Page 3

Letters (continued)

were tiny toad stabbers. (In boy scouts we had much more impressive bayonets that we regularly played with.) At the time I viewed bayonets as traditional items that should reflect their original purpose as something you could kill the enemy cavalry horses with. (I was probably excellent material but not for an officer but for the ranks.)

I was astonished when we were required to hand in the bolts from our rifles. I had had my own firearm since I was seven years of age. My father took me shooting at age roughly 5 years old.

In short gun control is in my considered opinion a fun political issue that will not soon go away. It seems stupid but then governments don't just govern the enlightened.

6173 Jack Flanagan: *Michael, take a deep breath and repeat after me:*

- 1. Donald J Trump is the President of the United States until at least January 20 2021.*
- 2. If Donald J Trump has lost the election, we will find that out about the middle of December when the state legislatures certify the results - or perhaps not.*
- 3. When the results are certified, If Joseph R Biden has won the election, he may refer to himself as President -Elect at that time. That would leave him about five weeks of transition before he would take office.*
- 4. At this moment, the media have called the election for Biden. The media currently have no legal standing in this matter. There are still states with contested results. Trump has every right to litigate results he deems fraudulent. It ain't over 'till it's over.*

I know you do not hold Trump in high regard, but all he is doing at the moment is contesting the election results - just like Gore did in 2000 and Hillary did in 2016, and Stacy Abrams noticeably did in 2018. I recommend that you relax a bit and wait three weeks until it is over.

On a different note, I still enjoy your newsletters.

I'm keeping my fingers crossed that we may have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Best wishes to you and your family.



Numéro 136

December/decembre 2020

Page 4

Letters (Concluded)

6560 Andrew Nellestyn: *The year 2020, hindsight, had we but known.*

Reflecting on what some may call an Annus Horribilus, I am moved to consider all that has transpired as an omen of positive transformative change wrt inclusiveness, diversity, equality, justice, security, prosperity, opportunity, the environment and human rights.

We have faced many trials and tribulations yet the strength and generosity of community have prevailed. A great debt is owed to our first responders, front line workers and all those who labour tirelessly behind the scenes. These stalwart heroes exemplify the majesty inherent in the human character.

Humanity's ingenuity, focus, resolve and collective, cooperative efforts have produced a vaccine in an unimaginably short time. Miraculous! The first 'jab' was administered in the UK just days ago and trucks loaded with vaccine are rolling out of pharmaceutical plants as I write.

Regrettably, but necessarily, the restrictions put in place to eradicate the coronavirus pandemic will have a profound effect on the traditional way in which families and friends gather to celebrate the holidays and bring in the New Year.

We have all made sacrifices and adjusted our lifestyles yet we have, are and must abide with the mitigative and preventative guidance of our political leaders and chief medical officers. Their tasks have not been easy. They are owed and deserve our complete support and our appreciation. We are all dealing with challenging unknowns. And we have done so in admirable and constructive ways.

I am blessed to enjoy and am thankful for the many friends and colleagues with whom I socialized and participated in volunteer activities. My family has been a constant font of support, love and comfort. Family is the core of our being and defines and shapes us and our values. I am proud, privileged and honoured by your company.

The year 2021 is one of HOPE, PROMISE and FULFILLMENT.

The beginning of a multitude of constructive and welcome transformative changes wrought by 2020's challenges and opportunities.

God Bless!

Stay safe and keep well.



Numéro 136

December/decembre 2020

Page 5

Fraser Flight Greetings and News

6598 George (GAS) Brown: *Another year has passed, and 2020 has given me no adventures to talk about, except that we are all well and enjoying our semi-isolation. Hoping to beat Cope to the punch, I've composed a little poem to lighten the Christmas lockdown.*

'A Fraser Flight Christmas'

(with apologies to the original dude.)

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house
We listened to music; loved to hear *Strauss*.
No one was leaving, that was for sure,
So, we brought out the eggnog, the wine, and the beer.

Because of Covid, we're all in lockdown,
We'd turned on Netflix, and were watching 'The Crown'.
With she in her jammies, and I in mine,
We had just settled down, for an evening benign.

When out on the street we heard a great clatter,
"Was it a car wreck?", I heard myself natter.
Away to the window I ran in a flash,
Pulled back the curtain and looked for the crash.

When, what to my blinking eyes should appear,
But a huge red sleigh, and fourteen clumsy reindeer.
With a gnarly old driver, built like a brick,
I thought in a moment, "Was this Gas, or St. Nick?"

Slower than molasses, he stumbled and fell.
He whistled, and shouted, seemed under a spell,
Up to the door then entered the hall,
Rang the doorbell; I answered the call.

He was dressed all in fur, really a bit scary,
His eyes were all bloodshot, his nose like a berry!
His suit was red. His beard, it was white.
He weaved as he walked as if he were 'tight'.

He spoke not a word but went straight to the bar,
And filled all the glasses; he emptied the jar.
He toasted the Queen, the PM, and the Pope,
And wondered aloud, "How can we all Cope?"

"It's been a rough year", he said with a sigh.
"I've NO presents for you". He started to cry.
"But next year I hope, the plague will be over."
"I will come back again, if I'm still in the clover."

"Now the curfew's at midnight and I'm over the limit"
"But they'll not catch me. I'm not a dimwit."
He sprang to his sleigh when he heard the police whistle,
And away he flew with the speed of a missile.

"On Orbit, On Deano, On Ernie, On Fats,
"On Carswell & Clem & Cooper & Jacques.
"Now Conway, Now Copius, Now Sheep & Chiasson,
"On Deacon & Boomer. Let's all get goin' !"

And I heard him exclaim, "Have a great night".
"FRASERY CHRISTMAS TO ALL", and he flew out of sight.



Numéro 136

December/decembre 2020

Page 6

Fraser Flight (Continued)

6600 Doug Busche: *That's a great pome George! Who'd have thunk you were a pote.*

My deepest sympathies to Bruce and Lida. It is hard to think of anything worse than the loss of a son or daughter. I am sure that all Old Frasers are thinking of you and urge you to be strong.

And a Frasery Christmas to you all. Stay safe -- Stay healthy!

Cheers,

Doug aka the Deacon

6612 Bruce Corbett: *Good one George. It elevates you to becoming Fraser flights one and only poet laureate. However, I think one reindeer was missing....you! But I guess that you can't be in two places at once. Copious, you got pre-empted this year...a well deserved break for you.*

Lida and I are surviving through this pandemic and are really anxious to see things return to normal. For us, there have been times of happiness, sadness and loss this year. We have managed to celebrate our birthdays and anniversaries as a family throughout these covid restrictions. However, our son Don, aged 51 died suddenly of cardiac arrest in November. So, 2020 is a year that we wish never happened. But life does go on and that is why we are looking forward to a loving family Christmas and a much happier 2021.

I wish all of you good health throughout the coming year and a very happy Christmas .

6607 Ken Clarkson: *Such sad news, Bruce, but thank you so much for informing us of this truly sad happening. It is a stark reminder that we need to enjoy each day and try not to focus on the bad stuff for there will be lots of it.*

Anyway, Diane & I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year regardless of how you celebrate it this year. It is a busy time for us. In addition to the normal holidays, the 26th of Dec is our 54th Wedding Anniversary. I hope we are not so old that we can't enjoy a romantic dinner for two. Anyway, you all keep well and enjoy the holidays. Still having this connection with all of you is great!

6611 Doug Cope: *Egad, the Poet Laureate beat me to the punch this year. Believe it or not I had Email Old Frasers on my calendar for tomorrow. GAS, who knew, you should send that poem to eVeritas at RMC.*

Bruce, sad to hear about your son and way too young especially compared to us. Our regards and sympathy to both you and Lida.

Since our last update in September Carol and I have done just about the cube root of SFA.

I did manage to keep my weekly soccer team gatherings going outside until 2 weeks ago but now we are on a virtual weekly meeting. After a few of the younger people had a kick around we would sit in a big distanced circle and have a couple of beers. That is about the extent of my socializing for the last 6 months.

No old Fraser sightings of late. Still trying to sell my book, The Roadants, and if you get Canada's History Magazine you will see an ad for it in the books section.

Why not? Nothing much else to do.



Numéro 136

December/decembre 2020

Page 7

Fraser Flight (Continued)

6606 Roger Chiasson: *Who knew Electrical Engineers were so "cultured"! Well done GAS!*

I echo everyone's condolences over your loss, Bruce and Lida. May memories of your son be a blessing. We survived the pandemic quite well so far, but we can't wait to get back to dining out, travel, concerts, etc. We are social animals, and not being able to socialize sucks. When your grandkids noticeably grow between visits, you know something is wrong!

That said, we are lucky to be in the safest "bubble" on the planet, in the Maritimes.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all – hope to see some of you in 2021!

6602 Jim Cale: *First let me also add our condolences to Bruce and Lida on your tragic loss.*

All considered we have had a good year. Like most people we miss being able to gather with friends, attend plays and concerts, etc. but I always say that if that is the worst that COVID has done to us, we are very lucky. We moved to Ottawa 13 years ago because all of our family was here. Now they are dispersed - not too widely but with the pandemic they may as well be far away. But we are looking forward to the time when we can visit with them again. We were blessed this July with the arrival of a great granddaughter. She was born in Ottawa but Alyson's partner lives in Massena, NY so 3 weeks after the birth they moved there. We did get to hold the new one before she left and we treasure that memory. Our second son and his wife moved to Cornwall at the end of November. Our grandson is in Kingston. He has not been able to go back to the college but decided to move to Kingston where he is renting a place with some of his close buddies. He will be in Ottawa for the holidays. We will arrange some type of get together with him - probably outdoors. Hopefully he, his Dad and I can get together for a hike or snowshoe in Gatineau Park while he is here.

I continue to ride my bike during the warmer weather and hike or snowshoe this time of year. I have not done much of either with the clubs this year because of COVID, but I have a couple of pals that I get out with frequently. Heck, I even had a ride on the parkway with Copious this year!

Gas - thanks for getting this started and for your great rendition of "The Night Before Christmas"

Ken and Diane - congratulations on your upcoming anniversary.

To all Old Frasers and your families Merry Christmas, God Bless and a hope for a return to normal before 2021 is over.



Numéro 136

December/decembre 2020

Page 8

Fraser Flight (Continued)

6610 David Cooper: Greetings to you FRASERS all from a very gloomy, wet, damp Victoria afternoon - not at all enhancing a Christmas spirit!

The year 2020 was much the same which I have survived without any fatalities thankfully.

Yes, one of my lasting memories of my fleeting time as a Roadant was singing "Angles we have heard on High" in the choir on the staircase in the Castle. SC Dick was, I believe, instrumental in that activity! I suppose that if it were possible to repeat the event, GAS would do a recital of some sort! BZ!

Sorry to learn of the loss of your son, Bruce, very tragic for you and Lida. But on a lighter note, in doing some genealogy, I believe that I read that my great-great grandfather Webster and one of your ancestors were hunting (ie fox) buddies some many years ago in Shropshire! My gg grandfather was Master of the Albrighton Hunt! Small world!

Keep calm, keep social distancing and keep sanitizing your hands in 2021.

6601 Ernest Cable: Carol and I send our condolences to Bruce and Lida on the passing of your son. I can think of nothing more heart wrenching than losing an offspring.

On a less sombre note, congratulations, Gas, on your very clever rendition of *The Night Before Christmas*. You have come a long way from piping "Linen Exchange" each Monday morning in the Fraser Flight hallway.

2020 did not start off well for us, I was diagnosed with colon cancer and was operated on in February. Fortunately, the cancer was detected early and thanks to laparoscopic surgery and my otherwise good health the surgery was successful in removing all the cancer and it had not yet had time to spread to my other organs. Consequently, I did not require chemotherapy or radiation treatments. I was discharged from the hospital three days after surgery and had to spend two weeks at home to recover. No sooner had the two weeks expired when the pandemic hit and I had to self isolate at home for another six weeks because my compromised immune system made me especially vulnerable to the COVID. Carol and our two girls were adamant that I did not take a single step out of the house. I had my first year follow-up CT scan this month and there was no sign of the cancer returning. Four more years of clear follow-up checks to be declared cancer free.

While confined to the house I wrote a number of research papers on naval aviation and RCAF history, all of which were published in national naval and Air Force magazines. Last spring I received an email from Dr. Randy Wakelam a professor at RMC who hopes to publish a book on the history of the RCAF between the end of the Second World War and service integration in 1968. The book is to be published in 2024 to commemorate the RCAF's centennial year. He has asked various historians from academia to write each of the chapters and asked if I would write the chapter on RCAF maritime operations, to which I agreed. I feel somewhat intimidated because all of the authors for the other chapters have Masters or Phd degrees in history. I have only my BSc and no formal training in history except Dr. Sherman's 4th year course on naval history at RMC. I think my personal experience in naval and maritime patrol aviation will more than compensate.

On a positive note for 2020, Carol and I celebrated our 55th anniversary, our oldest daughter was hired as a systems analyst by a Calgary company expanding into Ottawa and our youngest daughter received a permanent position as a professor of respiratory therapy.

To all old Frasers, we hope you and your families can finish this trying year with a Merry Christmas and enjoy a happy prosperous New Year



Numéro 136

December/decembre 2020

Page 9

Fraser Flight (Concluded)

6608 Pat Colbert: *Our condolences to Bruce and family on the untimely loss of his son. It is hard for a parent to outlive their child.*

This is one of the 1st years of my life I have actually felt OLD. The health spirits did not treat me well this year, but I am still trundling on. It has been a weird year with one health domino falling into the next, and of course the Corona virus is always a threat with my newly diagnosed chest and heart ailments. After many years of steady, physical activity and almost no illnesses this is all somewhat unnerving. Also, with the pandemic it has been difficult to interact with doctors as most are not seeing patients in person. However, I am adjusting to the need for organization with telephone or online consultations. I also understand the need to be somewhat more demanding and not waiting for treatments to just happen. I have learned the meaning of the phrase "A passive patient may be a dead patient", particularly in the area of idiopathic or rare illnesses. I am not really complaining; my Doctors are dedicated, but many have heavy conflicting demands due to the pandemic.

At the end of the day however, life seems ok. We enjoy our place and location. I cannot cycle, but I can walk, within reason. Glenna is in excellent health, and an exuberant walker; we take frequent walks from our townhouse to Rocky Point Park, and our daughter, husband and our grandchildren are just up the road from us all healthy and full of beans. Over the last 8 months we have occasionally gathered on their large, covered porch, with a propane heater, social distancing with masks. We may do so again for Christmas; we shall see.

We did do some minor travelling this Summer and Fall....two trips over to our sailboat in Ladysmith, mostly to tidy her up and prepare her to be passed along to my son who lives on Vancouver Island, and we also did a short jaunt to Whistler. Otherwise we have stayed close to home except for grocery shopping and the occasional walks along the Pitt and Fraser Rivers in Pitt Meadows.

The possibility of an effective corona virus vaccine is encouraging, and although it may take awhile to get to our age group in BC, we look forward to the freedom of movement it will afford us.

We wish all Old Frasers good health and happiness this festive season and into the new year.

Thanks to the "Frasers" for sharing their thoughts and congratulations for maintaining this close relationship after so many years.

Ed.



Numéro 136

December/decembre 2020

Page 10

Commentary by 6715 Andre Gagnon

I agree with Gord Forbes that 99% of the people on this planet do not want war. The causes of wars are many of course, but here is an idea that, perhaps, could help us live together better...

It is not only black lives that matter; skin colour is only one of 7 differences in human beings about which we have no choice.

We have no input about our conception, so when we arrive on this planet it is not our choice. We simply have to cope with all the situations in which we find ourselves. But here are 7 major variables in our lives about which we have no choice.

We do not choose the colour of our skin, hence not only black, but all colours and different body appearances matter.

We do not choose our gender, male, female or, as we find out more now days, something in between or even changeable! Same thing for sexual orientation...

We do not choose the first language that we learn.

We do not choose the first God to whom we pray, if any.

We do not choose our talents, nor how much of each talent we do have. Physically, intellectually, artistically and with respect to any other variables, we are all very different.

We do not choose our parents, hence our gene pool, our size, our looks, our potential health and so on.

Lastly, we do not choose when and where we are born. This determines our culture, or our way of being and thinking in a given society at a given time. This is why, when I was 13 years old, I did not know that anyone spoke English in Canada. My Canada was French! Imagine my reaction when someone at RMC told me to speak white or to leave my filthy language at the border!

WE HAVE NO CHOICE ABOUT THOSE VARIABLES.

We are all different, but the fact is (yes it is a fact), we all have to live together.

In my book, *"Making Sense of Politics Anytime, Anywhere"*, I explain how this can be done, but basically, it is the role of governments to try and find a place or a role for every member of



Numéro 136

December/decembre 2020

Page 11

Commentary (Concluded)

the polity, regardless of their personal situations about which they have no choice. One cannot blame, or even less, punish, someone for something about which he or she has absolutely no choice, like skin colour, gender, intelligence or lack of any talent....

It is easy to judge, to blame and to even condemn others, specially when we are born with many positive attributes in a given polity. It is even easier to do this for a people or a country about which we know very little except that they are obviously different! When we assume that we, or our culture, is the best (of course it is if it is the only one we know) than we may believe that others must change, hence wars and violence become a mean to that end. In the past, missionaries were sent to "convert" the savages, now we have full blown genocides killing people whose only fault was to be born at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Add to this lack of compassion and understanding less controllable phenomena like pandemics and climate change and I guess we can say that there is room for our children and grand children to play a positive role in this world...

Extract from the Convocation Address May 2009 by H24263 John Scott Cowan, on receiving an Honorary Doctorate

I've long believed that RMC is the finest university in Canada, and extraordinarily high on the world scale as well. I explain this to colleagues at other universities by saying, "First, imagine the radical concept of a university where people do what they say they're going to do."

Whilst they are still in shock, I then describe undergraduate students who are sober, bright and civil, gathered in small classes where individual attention is the norm and anonymity unheard of. Unlike your peers in civilian universities, you are not chosen by some un-stated economic selection, and as paid members of the Canadian Armed Forces you do not need financial assistance from your families to attend the College. You can come from any economic background, and do. You just have to be good. Despite the fact that the four-pillar program and the heavy core curriculum make you incredibly busy and, of necessity, incredibly well-organized, you can often be led to achieve more academically than undergraduates at other institutions. This is because you have clear goals. Yes, for the officer cadets, RMC stuffs six years work into four years, but that gives you two extra years in your twenties to move ahead in your careers and to serve Canada.

The graduate students, of whom about 85% are military, are very unlike graduate students elsewhere. They are not merely fifth year undergraduates: most are between 4 and 15 years from their bachelor's degree when they begin their next degree. They have had substantial life experience and have carried real responsibility for years, and bring that wealth of personal development to the table in discussions and projects. They are the most interesting and committed graduate students a professor could ever hope for. It makes for a level of discourse in graduate courses which is unimaginable in other universities. And RMC is very graduate studies



Extract from the Convocation Address (Continued)

intensive, giving one masters or doctoral degree for every 1.8 undergraduate degrees, a ratio unheard of in Canadian universities, where our nearest competitor would be perhaps at a ratio of 1:5.

Les étudiants mûrs du premier cycle à temps partiel partagent quelques aspects des qualités des étudiants de deuxième et troisième cycle, parce que, après des années ou des décennies d'accomplissement dans d'autres défis, ils apportent ces perspectives très expérimentées dans leur nouvelle tâche d'étudiant.

Of course, graduate study goes hand in hand with research, and for some years RMC has been rated the top research institution amongst the smaller Canadian universities. Indeed, the average full time professor at RMC attracts almost \$150,000 a year in outside financial support for research, a research intensity figure which is normally only exceeded by about a dozen of the universities with medical schools, since medicine is a magnet for research funding. This must imply that there are some quite extraordinary faculty members at RMC. And indeed there are. When I first arrived here as Principal in 1999, I quickly realized that there were at least a couple dozen professors who were the world leaders in their areas of specialization. And it may be even higher now.

And yet, at that time, the institution did not see itself as great, because it had fallen prey to one of the great illogical myths of the university world, the myth that equates bigness with greatness. There are some big, great universities. There are also some big thoroughly mediocre universities. What makes a university great?

Students who are bright, committed, willing and adequately funded.

Faculty and other staff who are bright, creative, well-trained, concerned and diligent.

Well-conceived and well-organized programs.

Good facilities.

Plus a sense of mission and a working consensus about shared values and goals.

None of this requires 60,000 students or 3000 professors. But results do count.

The comparison between RMC and other universities is awkward. RMC is not like other universities. It has a different mission and it fits in a different frame. It is the only federal university and the only military university. The "idea" of RMC is fundamentally different. And that idea has three parts.

The key to the first part of the idea is our roster of unusual degrees. They are not second rate degrees just because they are not in the traditional university disciplines. So the first part of the RMC "idea" is that the concept of "university" is defined by a level of insight, not by a restricted list of customary subject names. We have broken the bounds of traditional university snobbery. We have demonstrated that aspects of the profession which is our special mission are worthy subjects of advanced study and higher learning, and that they meet every test that attends the highest national standard for scholarly endeavour.

The second part of the RMC "idea" is an overarching institutional purpose. Yes, of course, we provide a fine education and undertake exiting research, and yes, we do produce many effective leaders. But read the Act that is our charter. Remember why we exist at all. RMC defends Canada. This higher purpose lies at the heart



Numéro 136

December/decembre 2020

Page 13

Extract from the Convocation Address (Concluded)

of RMC's sense of mission.

And thirdly, the historic purpose of RMC and its enduring culture relies on the “idea” of service. This is in the first instance, but not exclusively, military service. Our graduates have served Canada and the world in many other capacities as well. There is no other Canadian university so steeped in the idea of service, and service before self. No one leaves here unmarked by RMC's ethos of service.

So that's the “idea” of RMC: a level of insight, a sense of mission and an ethos of service. And it has worked well, right from the beginning. Of the first 170 cadets who entered RMC from 1876 up until early 1883, long before the Great War, and decades before Canada had regular armed forces, eight received knighthoods for feats of leadership in many fields of endeavour, and on at least four continents.

The graduates of this place also built our railways, negotiated our borders, policed the remote vastness of early Canada, and have always been and are still disproportionately represented in every aspect of public life in Canada.

The College undergraduate population is less than 3% of that of the esteemed University of Toronto. That ratio has been rarely exceeded and often undershot. But in the lists of those who have been honoured for serving Canada in any capacity, we do not look like a bit player. The key, beyond education, is what someone wants to do with it. Disproportionately, the graduates of this place have always done extraordinary things. They always will.

A Most Influential Man

by 6533 Gord Forbes

Approximately two thousand and twenty years ago a baby was born. He would be named Jesus, although people have since called him Christ, The Messiah, The Saviour, the Redeemer, the Holy One or The King. This baby must now be considered the most influential man in the history of Europe, North and South America, Australia and New Zealand, and large swaths of Africa. His influence has directed the laws and customs of all of these places. But what about that famous birth?

In that time, old age was much younger than we are used to. Disease, infection and injury without modern medication meant that the average death mostly came in the 40s and even younger. A man was middle aged when he was 25.

It is important to remember the conditions when Jesus was born. Judea was a province of Rome and was ruled by a Roman ruler, at the time it was Herod. However, to the Jewish people, local administration was carried out by the Jewish leaders. There were two antagonistic groups of such leaders: The Liberals and . . . er, the Republicans and . . . er, the Pharisees and Sadducees. They had been vying for power for over a hundred years and this caused considerable turmoil among the Jews of Judea and to the Jewish religion. It is interesting to note that the time of Jesus' birth, the Jewish people were a dispersed group. As traders, emigrants, refugees and administrators, they were prevalent in most of the known world. It has been estimated that less than twenty-five percent of Jews actually lived in Judea.



Numéro 136

December/decembre 2020

Page 14

A Most Influential Man (Concluded)

This is the world that Jesus entered.

Let's start with his parents. Joseph, his father, we are told was a carpenter in the town of Nazareth. As a carpenter, he would have been a respected member of his community and well known. His trade would have made him what we would call today, middle class. He was neither a poor nor a rich man. We are told that he traced his ancestry to King David. We are also told that he was older than Mary. Mary is described as a young virgin. In that time, that would put her age at about thirteen to sixteen. That was the age that people got married. We can get some idea that she was that young by noting that thirty-three later, when Jesus was crucified, she was still with him. If she had been in her twenties when Jesus was born, she would have been very old and perhaps deceased; unlikely to have followed Jesus to Jerusalem.

The well-known story of the conditions at Jesus' birth, how he was born in a stable and slept in a manger are quite plausible. The family had travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to "be taxed". This was a Roman decree that applied to all of the Roman Empire. This was long before the days of Holiday Inns and Best Westerns, and Expedia advanced reservations. When you travelled, you took your chances that there would be someplace where you could get a meal and a place to sleep at night. Bethlehem was not a large town, perhaps only a few hundred people, and the places available to rest would be very limited; perhaps one or two inns. There was no Bethlehem Hilton. But with the taxation decree forcing many people to travel to their family home, any town would have been sorely tested to accommodate everyone that needed a place to stay. Jesus' family were probably not the only ones that night to stay in places like stables, barns and even in the open. Some later accounts state that the "stable" may, in fact, have been a cave, perhaps used to house animals or to store grain and animal feed.

Jesus had a mission. He started that mission when he was about thirty years old, certainly not a young man for those times. He became preacher or teacher (rabbi in Hebrew) in his country of Judea where he preached to his fellow Jews. His mission seems to be to reform Judaism from the turmoil and strictures it was saddled with at that time. Perhaps he hoped to put a more human face on the religion. Jesus was born a Jew and he died a Jew, condemned ironically enough by his own people. Why? Probably because Jesus was not the Messiah that the Jewish people wanted. They would have wanted a warrior king, like David, to rid them of the Romans and their other adversaries. Jesus did not envision Christianity. That was done by Paul.

Closing Notes

Thanks as always to this Edition's contributors—much food for thought. Keep those articles and e-mails coming. Janet and I hope that all of you are able to enjoy a happy and safe holiday with the thought that there does appear to be a light at the end of this tunnel.