

Class of 65 Newsletter

Bulletin d'Information—Classe de 65

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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

Is it my imagination, or is COVID-19 (at least in Canada) winding down? I hope all of you and yours are now fully vaccinated or booked to be in the near future. The vaccination progress in Canada has been a very pleasant surprise after the initial slow start to the pandemic response.

A relatively short issue this time, highlighted by a book review by **6584 Keith Ambachtsheer**; a couple of letters following up from the previous issue; and, another thought provoking blog from **6533 Gord Forbes**.

Book Review: **THE ROADANTS OF CANADIAN SERVICES COLLEGE ROYAL ROADS** by **6611 Doug 'Copious' Cope**, reviewed by **6584 Keith Ambachtsheer**.

Why would I review an 835-page book 13 years after its publication in the Class of 1965 newsletter? Because I finally got around to reading *The Roadants* during this crazy COVID period and found myself literally carried back to another crazy period for Class of 1965 members: Recruit Year 1961/62. Painfully and comically at the same time, Doug 'Copious' Cope helped me relive that crazy 9-month period through a series of graphically recalled events ranging from the ridiculous to the sublime. For example, it took him 29 pages just to get off the first-arrival bus from Victoria in September 1961!

Other chapter-worthy events included doggy week, going-over-the-wall, the obstacle course, the mess dinner, night on the town, 'they can't charge us all' (they did!), the first ball, the professors, the unending parade drills, skylarks, home for Christmas, the final exams, the survivors, and Northbound. A special feature of the book is Doug's graphic character development of his classmates, his seniors, military staff, and the professors. In an Author's Note he writes: "While all the tales told in this book are fundamentally true, this is a fictionalized account of them.....Since the majority of the people in the story are still alive, I have changed the names of all the characters to protect myself."

So part of the fun of the book for Roadants is to guess 'who is who'? It turns out that, if you want to check your 'who is who' accuracy guesses, Jim 'Fats' Carruthers has created a 'decoder' that converts the book characters into real people. OK, I understand the Class non-Roadants will miss out a bit on solving this puzzle piece, but remember, both the Royal Roads Seniors and the Juniors eventually made their way to RMC for their 3rd and 4th years.



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Book Review (Concluded)

I asked Doug about writing the book: why did he do it? He wanted to create a permanent record of what was his “most significant life-altering event of his life up till then”. Based on his own memory and those of a few Classmates, he wrote the first draft long-hand in the late 1970s during a 6-month sabbatical in the English countryside. However, he could not get a typed version published in the 1980s. With the aging of the Class of 1965 and the closure of Royal Roads, he decided to rewrite the manuscript in 2008 and self-publish. The first edition came out in 2012, with a second edition following a few years later. To date, some 600 copies have been sold.

Doug tells me he has a few copies left (as do the RMC and CMR gift shops) at the very modest price of \$25. However, he warns that because the book weighs 1 kilo, the shipping charges will be enormous ☐. Every member of the Class of 1965 should own (and read!) this book..¹

¹. Speaking of books by ex-Cadets, there was a May 31 article in the Globe and Mail about Kate Armstrong’s 2019 book “The Stone Frigate: RMC’s First Female Cadet Speaks Out”. A very different story.

Other Books by Classmates

There are several other books that I have read (or written) by classmates as follows:

- Braham, M - *My Father the Forgotten Air Ace*, ISBN 9781537525594
- Braham, M - *Men of Valour, Canada’s VC Winners*, ISBN 9781540459480
- Forbes, G (Navy) - *We Are As One - The Story of the Worst Peacetime Disaster in the History of the Canadian Navy*, ISBN 9781926596945
- Chiasson, R - *Cape Bretoner at Large— From New Waterford to Tokyo and Beyond*, ASIN B079NP3NMV

All of the above are available through Amazon. Another book, although not written by a classmate, features a familiar figure to many of us:

- Nurse, T - *Always a Leader. The Lives of Major Danny McLeod*, ISBN 9781771230483, available through Amazon

Any others? Let me know and I would be pleased to include them in a future edition.



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Letters

6606 Roger Chiasson: The latest edition's comments on military justice was most interesting and timely. All comments were thought provoking, but Yvan Gagnon's particularly piqued my interest. As an author of my "memoirs", I would like the pleasure of reading his book. Can you give me Yvan's email address so I can ask for the details?

Thanks, and keep doing what you're doing. It really is special!

6439 Hugh Spence: Thanx for the informative newsletter, Mike. Interesting to hear from some well informed classmates. I really appreciated Tony Goode's piece, in light of the current FUBAR about alleged hanky panky in the service, in particular at RMC.

When I saw your *mea culpa* about Leitold I checked the SOS list from issue 139 and couldn't find Ron's name anywhere....then I cross-referenced College numbers and saw his was recorded next to the late Jon McLaren's name. So that was the mix-up. Mystery solved. (As an aside, what impulse drives people to check College numbers? Ron was a Roadant so maybe it's an RR thing to know your classmates' numbers. Ron might of course have spotted the glitch himself)

Was amazed and amused to see that CMR shipmate Brian Rigby had surfaced after 58 years! A check of my records shows the curious fact that he passed 2nd year at CMR but "failed summer training - SOS 6 Sep 63". Don't think I ever heard of anyone flunking out of navy summer training, but it was obviously possible. I certainly don't recall anyone saying that if I didn't achieve thus and so I would be cashiered, though getting a BZ or two on one's weekly cadet/midshipman Journal submission seemed to be critical for some reason in the west coast training squadron.

To which I replied - thanks for the comments. An amusing sidebar was a message from Jacques Desautels who was concerned when he saw his name on the list of dearly departed. I was able to put his mind at ease and bring him back to life by telling him that there was another classmate with the same name, who sadly, had passed away. Apparently the living Desautels was not aware of his own college number.



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It's Systemic you know by 6533 Gord Forbes

How often have you heard that recently? Every problem, it seems, is systemic. Our treatment of Indigenous people is systemic. Discrimination against Blacks is systemic. Unequal pay for women is systemic. Police brutality is systemic. Sexual crimes within the military are systemic. Ingrown toenails are systemic. It is the fault of the system. This kind of description tends to suggest that the problem is unsolvable and that it is out of the hands of mere people. It means that we just have to live with it. Only the system has failed. And everyone seems to be in consensus with this assessment.

"Historically, the claim of consensus has been the first refuge of scoundrels; it is a way to avoid debate by claiming that the matter is already settled."

- Michael Crichton

On the other hand, you might notice a different situation. When things go right it is people; individuals or groups that get the credit. When a sports team wins, it is the players who have succeeded. When a medical breakthrough is made, it is the scientists and doctors who have made it. When a battle or war is won, it is because of the soldiers, sailors and airmen who have overcome the opposition. People win. Systems lose? People can think and make decisions. Do systems have no such capabilities?

"That which has always been accepted by everyone, everywhere, is almost certain to be false."

- Paul Valéry

But wait a minute, systems are made up of people are they not? Whether governments, companies, organizations, military forces, or society as a whole, they are made up of and run by PEOPLE. What a wonderful discovery. So, if this is the case, why can't **people** solve so-called systemic problems? In fact, why can't **people** be blamed for these problems that seem to run through societies? Maybe the answer to these two questions is because **people** would then have to take responsibility; would then have to actually do something about them.

"It has been my experience that folks who have no vices have very few virtues."

- Abraham Lincoln

One of my favourite sayings in "there are no problems, there are only challenges". So maybe it is time for us all to not consider systemic weaknesses as problems but start treating them as challenges. Challenges means setting goals, finding solutions, and taking responsibility, either individually or collectively, to work to solve these challenges. Let's get rid of the stigma of systemic. It should only apply to mechanical or electronic systems, and even there, fixes can usually be found.

That's All Folks