

Class of 65 Newsletter

Bulletin d'Information—Classe de 65

Edition/Édition 79



December/décembre 2014

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 is going to be one of our busiest editions thanks to a bigger than usual submission of articles—so many in fact that some have to be serialised and others deferred to later editions. Not to worry however, they will eventually all get published.

There are a couple of notices pertaining to next year's reunion and undoubtedly there will be many more in the editions leading up to the event. It is hoped that the Class of 65 attendance at the reunion will be even bigger than its record setting presence in 2010.

Before we get there however, it has come to our attention that two of our classmates are battling serious medical conditions. Our prayers and best wishes go out to **Ed Sanford** and **Bob Mulvihill** as they deal with their conditions. Bob has provided an article describing his battle.

In this issue, we will continue with part 3 of **Gerry Mueller's** four part epic on his adventures in Havana in the 1970's. **Gord Forbes (Navy)** describes his first car, a story that rings a bell with me since Janet was driving the same type of vehicle when we met. **David Cooper** was motivated by an article in Edition 78 to send in an interesting article on a UK Memorial Project.

A group of us from Ottawa met several others from Kingston and we attended the Teaching Excellence Award on 4 November. The Class of 65 delegation

was made up of the group shown below accompanied by members of the academic staff and the award winner, Dr. Soundouss El Kettani.



Despite the fact that her presentation was made in French, her enthusiasm made it clear to all, including the unilingual anglophones in attendance, why she had been selected for the award. **Charlie Emond** presented her with the cheque that accompanied the award.

We learn of another classmate receiving a honorary appointment—I'm starting to feel like a bit of an under-achiever!

Finally, **Hugh Spence** provides some food for thought on a topical issue.



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I Wish Someone Else Had Written This (and I'd read and heeded it)

By 6383 Bob Mulvihill

Two summers ago, I noticed that I was lacking energy and my normal ambition to get things done. Plus I was taking a rest every afternoon for an hour or two. I put it down to the aging process but did mention it to my doctor when I returned from the cottage in the fall. He booked an annual medical in January 2014.

Having gone to the local lab for blood and urine tests, I was given the package for the stool test. I completed that in plenty of time before my doctor's appointment and received a letter saying that I had passed the stool test; no blood was detected.

When I went in for my annual medical, my doctor dug the lab results out of my file and advised me my blood count was low that I was anaemic. He told me that this was very serious, because I was probably bleeding internally. Then he asked me, "when was the last time you had a colonoscopy". I thought this strange since he had been my doctor for over twenty years and had never ordered one, nor had I asked for one, although I had seen the poster in his office which stated "it's too bad we're not transparent because colon cancer could then be detected early and easily cured". Then the poster read "ask your doctor about a colonoscopy". Since I had consistently passed the stool test I never considered it necessary.

The subsequent colonoscopy confirmed that I had colon cancer and I was booked for surgery, which involved removing a foot-long chunk out of my large intestine and reconnecting the two pieces. When they remove that chunk of bowel they also remove multiple lymph nodes that are attached to it and do a biopsy on them. If any are cancerous, six month of chemotherapy is scheduled. A good number of mine were, so I was slated to start chemo in August.

Before the second session of chemo we were advised that the latest CT Scan indicated that the "spots" in

my liver had grown since the previous scan. Not good! When the cancer spreads to other organs it is considered Stage IV colon cancer. Suffice it to say you don't want to have Stage IV colon cancer. The good news is that if no other organs are affected and liver surgery is possible, the chances of a cure are greatly increased.

We're still hopeful that the next five treatments of chemo will reduce the size of the lesions in my liver will make liver surgery possible or even unnecessary.

My situation is what it is, but I'd like to use my experience to hopefully save the lives of others who may be living with the early stages of colon cancer and don't know it. A colonoscopy will detect polyps growing in your bowel and remove them before they become cancerous.

Since being diagnosed I've noticed several articles and letters to the editor in the newspapers recommending routine colonoscopies. I'll bet they have been there all along, but I glossed over them, and didn't heed them, thinking that it would never happen to me.

Please listen to this advice. **If you are over fifty and have never had a colonoscopy, ask your doctor to book one, and then another, every five years.** Additionally, **don't be fooled by positive results from the stool test**, most doctors consider it to be essentially useless.

Editor's Note: Thanks Bob. A sobering message. Our thoughts are with you.



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This Man in Havana—**Cuba in the 1970's (Part 3)**

By 6559 Gerry Mueller



The Daily Routine—Sometimes Interrupted. When at CUJAE to teach, the routine was simple. Three hours of class in the morning, Monday to Friday, with a 15 to 20 minute break half way. Back to the house for lunch, and the afternoon was free. Repeat for 4 weeks, which in theory would add about to about 50 hours of instruction for a course. Given

that Canadian grad courses typically ran about 30 hours, this seemed generous. Except language issues slowed down the rate at which one could convey information. And sometimes students, who because of the interrupted nature of the teaching all had other job responsibilities, would sometimes not be available. And at least a couple of times each month, your group would miss an hour or two for a “political” meeting!

During the afternoon there would inevitably be at least one beach run with one of the beetles, with the other being used by a second group who wanted sight-see around Havana. Daytime temperatures in the month that we would be there would be in the upper 20's, although occasional there might be a few days of upper teens temperatures, usually rainy, but generally weather was not an issue. Not very far East of Havana, perhaps a 20 minute drive away, was the small village of Santa Maria del Mar (Hemingway's “The Old Man and the Sea” is set there) which has a several mile long white sand beach. In the 70's this was basically empty (today it has had a considerable number of beach resort hotels), and the beach itself would be considered crowded if you could see more than a handful of people. Cubans did not go to the beach during October through April; more than one jokingly told me that Cubans measure the temperature with a

calendar. Whoever else was on the beach was almost certainly Russian or East German; the former were usually very unfriendly, the latter arrogant. (A note here about these other *tecnicos extranjeros*; there were many of them in the city, although not at CUJAE; most of the Cubans I got to know were quite candid that that they had to tolerate them as a condition of getting the financial support they needed from Russia and East Germany, but that didn't mean they had to like them.)

Exploring the old city of Havana was one of my favourite activities, and I spent many an afternoon wandering up and down streets with my camera. Architectural styles in the old city go from Spanish colonial through art deco to moderns, and there are oddities such as the *Capitolio*, which is an exact reproduction, except slightly larger (!) of the U.S. Capitol. There is also the rococo National Ballet building, and one evening my Cuban hosts accompanied me there to see the legendary Alicia Alonso dance “Coppelia”. The Cathedral, an Spanish colonial building, was always open, and on Sunday's attracted a not bad-sized congregation. The outside of the building however was badly weathered, as were most of the older buildings. By the 70's, paint had been in short supply in Cuba for more than a decade, and many of the buildings desperately needed paint, particularly those near the ocean front. Salt air is not kind to architecture. (During a visit to Havana as a tourist in the early 2000's many of these historically valuable buildings had been repaired and repainted, and others were in the process of being restored.)

Another “run” that most everyone who came to Havana did at least once was to Hemingway House, the mansion the writer had to the south of the city, overlooking it from a hill. It had been maintained much as he had left it, including a partially typed page in his



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This Man in Havana—**Cuba in the 1970's (Part 3) (Continued)**

battered portable typewriter. Even his cats had been allowed to remain, and there were several wandering around the gardens, or sleeping on the furniture. Beyond the literary significance of this house, it is also one that offers great views of Havana.

About once a week there would be a dinner organized, with invitations to all Canadians (I'm using that term loosely, as over the years we had British, Irish, and even one American teaching), and to their hosts, or co-workers for the coordinators. The destinations would vary among Copacabana, a very large outdoor nightclub which put on very 1950's Las Vegas dinner shows, or to one of two Hemingway hangouts, La Floridita, or La Bodegita del Medio; the former, noted for its Daiquiris, has a life-size bronze statue of Hemingway sitting on his usual bar stool, the latter, famed for Mojitos, has Hemingway's chair nailed to the ceiling above where he used to sit. The drinks were good, food selection was still very much limited.

Other diversions in Havana for visitors was a very active cinema scene, with admissions being very inexpensive. There was on theatre that specialized in classic Hollywood movies from the 30's and 40's, and some 50's, and there was one that showed first run American movies at about the same time as they were showing in Canada. I asked how this was possible, and after a bit of foot shuffling, my host told me that there were projectionists in certain European cities that were friends of Cuban movie fans, and would sneak out a film overnight to a lab where a print would be made, and shipped to Cuba!

For those teaching, one weekend in the month they were there would be a resort trip, again with their hosts accompanying, usually to Varadero. At that time, there were only 3 hotels operating on the Varadero Peninsula (today of course it is wall-to-wall with hotels), and again, given the time of year these trips would happen, the miles of white sand beach

would be almost empty. Varadero village itself had a few small restaurants (today these have become quite prosperous from the tourist influx), but mostly meals were at the hotel one stayed at, with mornings and afternoons occupied by beach walking, swimming in the Gulf of Mexico, or, sitting around the hotel pool, with drinks, telling stories. Sunday lunch was always at Las Americas, the restaurant in the mansion on the former DuPont estate, and estate that had its own yacht basin, landing strip, and 9-hole golf course. And there we would experience the Cubans' idea of the perfect Sunday dinner, roast port, with rice and beans. Scarce as pork for domestic consumption was, this one restaurant always offered it.

Car Troubles; Other Troubles; and Gordo. In theory, a state in which everything is centrally planned and controlled should be very smooth running; in practice of course, because it is humans that are doing the planning, it is anything but. That led to some interesting episodes, and unexpected glitches when you introduce a novel program such as CUSO-CUJAE. Our Cuban hosts of course had been living with their system for a long time, and realized that inevitably there would be foul-ups, and part of the project team was a very large man, inevitably nicknamed Gordo, who had contacts in every ministry and department, and who was, basically the "fixer". Over and over again one of our instructors, or one of us coordinators, would make what we thought was a perfectly reasonable request, and would be told it was "impossible" – let's talk to Gordo. (It took a bit of time, but eventually we worked out that we had a translation problem, when they said "impossible" they really meant "forbidden" or "there are rules against that".) And Gordo inevitably fixed it.

One such early snafu was gasoline for the two VW beetles. Because they had been bought for CUJAE, they were the property of the Ministry of Higher



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This Man in Havana – **Cuba in the 1970's (Part 3)** (Continued)

Education, and had Government of Cuba licence plates. (That had a beneficial effect; the only other VW beetles in Havana were driven by the Ministry of the Interior-Department of State Security aka the secret police, and since everyone knew the secret, people drove very carefully around VW beetles.)

Gasoline in Cuba at that time was rationed, and could only be bought with pre-paid coupons. Also, government cars could only fill up at government stations with government coupons, private cars filled up at private stations with private coupons. Initially, we foreigners were given a supply of government coupons out of the Ministry of Higher Education's stock, and knew the gas stations where we could fill up. Then some bureaucrat somewhere in the system decreed that since these cars were being driven by non-government drivers, they would have to be filled up at private stations with private coupons. Fair enough, CUJAE simply requisitioned the appropriate coupons, and the, Catch 22; government gas stations were not permitted to take private coupons, and private gas stations were not allowed to put gas into cars with government plates! Gordo worked it out; thereafter we had a map of several gas stations, government and private, that would put gas into two specific VW beetles (and apparently no others) no matter the plates or coupons.

Gordo's skills were also useful in less serious ways. Sometimes a weekend at a resort or night at a restaurant was going to fail because one of the many requisitions from ministries, for accommodation, for food, for drinks, for entertainment, was not coming because the person that knew this project was sick, and their replacement had no idea why a bunch of foreigners were being wined and dined. Gordo inevitable knew how to make clear to these persons from on high that producing these requisitions was not optional.

Gordo sounds like a scoundrel, but he was actually a dedicated Communist, one who realized that if anything was going to actually get done, sometimes you had to skate around orthodox process. He was quite large, and enjoyed eating, but his story was that he had spent several years in jail for taking part in student protests against the Batista regime, where he had lived on a starvation diet. When he was released after the Revolution, he swore he would never be hungry again, and he kept his vow. His party piece, which I am sure everyone involved with CUSO-CUJAE heard at least once, was how to roast a pig. It involved a whole pig, digging a pit, lining it with stones, building a fire in the pit and heating the stones for many hours, and finally burying the pig wrapped in the leaves of a particular tree in the pit for more than a day! (I used to think that perhaps there was a bit of exaggeration to this recipe, but one of my more recent tourist trips to Cuba, on the bus returning us to the airport, as we pulled up to a stop light, and beside me was a motorcycle with a side-car containing a very large, and very dead, pig.)

Funny, and not so Funny! In any project of this magnitude, involving sending more than 100 academics (many taught more than once) into an environment very different from what they are used to, things will go wrong, some potentially very wrong. We were very lucky in not having anything tragic happen, but there were some that still remain at the forefront of my memories of those days.

One was an Irish by nationality professor whom I recruited, who taught at a Canadian university, who upon arrival in Cuba promptly started a torrid affair with a Cuban professor; which became public, and caused great scandal among the Cubans (more on that below). To make it worse, he tried to persuade her, publicly, to leave Cuba, and come to Canada with him.



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They were both married! Of course, the Cuban professor was a Communist Party member, which brought that organization into the act. The whole thing looked like blowing up into an international incident, and with it the collapse of the Project. Eventually an official from the Canadian Embassy read him the riot act, noting that as he was Irish, his continued welcome in

Canada was not guaranteed, and the affair was shut down. He returned to Canada, and I doubt if his wife ever heard about it; she ended up being divorced by her husband, which in Cuba is easy. The course this man taught was scheduled to be taught again, later in the project, but it was made very clear to me that it would have to be by someone else!

The National Memorial Arboretum By 6610 David Cooper

I was interested to learn about the Never Forgotten National Memorial to be sited on the Cabot Trail. A splendid initiative. This spurred me to wonder how many Canadians are aware of the National Memorial Arboretum in England which I visited in September. I only became aware of its existence when I came across an appeal to raise funds to establish a memorial to the Land Army Girls of WWII, and since my late aunt was one of them, I made a donation in her name to the fund when winding up her estate and also decided that I should visit the site. It was unveiled in October, so I only saw its location in the Arboretum.

The National Memorial Arboretum is the UK's year-round Centre of Remembrance celebrating and honouring all those who have served the Nation in many different ways. Set in 150 acres of fine woodlands and gardens, there are over 300 unique memorials to see telling amazing stories, acts of heroism and symbolism. Unfortunately, I only had a two hour window to explore so touched only the surface of what should or could be a day's visit. I have attached a photo of the memorial to the Falkland War, but there is one to the Battle of River Plate, Coronel (100th Anniversary was yesterday, 1 Nov, where 4 RCN Midshipman were lost, first Canadian casualties in WWI) as well as regimental and air memorials. The "Shot at Dawn" Memorial, on the eastern boundary (note location), Bevan Boys, Nursing Sisters, Police and Firemen are but some of the many other unique memorials. But the

evocative, stunning centrepiece is the Armed Forces Memorial which commemorates Regular and Reserve personnel "who have been killed on active duty while performing functions attributable to the special circumstances and requirements of the Armed Forces, or as a result of terrorist action, and those who died while deployed on designated operations" since the end of WWII. Lord Mountbatten and the off-duty soldier who was brutally stabbed to death in London last year are the only exceptions to this criteria. There are over 16,000 names on this memorial. Incredible! The memorial is a 43 metres diameter stone structure of two curved walls and two straight walls which list the 16,000 names. In the centre are two bronze sculptures depicting the fallen. A slot is located in one wall so that on 11 Nov at 1100, the sun's rays shine on the centre of the memorial. It was unveiled by the Queen in October 2007. (*Ed. Note. The Canadian War Museum has a similar feature for the headstone of the Unknown Soldier.*)

For anyone visiting the UK, it is worth a visit. Unlike Vimy, it tells the story of those people, among others, who were lost in our life time. It is located just north of Birmingham, north east of Litchfield on A513 near Tamworth. As a registered charity, although it costs 4,000 pounds to operate daily, admission is free but a donation is appreciated. It has an excellent website at www.thenma.org.uk.



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Cars I Have Survived – Part 1 by Gord (Navy) Forbes



There it sat on the used car dealer's lot in Kingston, beautifully silver in colour with genuine red naughahide (accept no artificial substitutes) seats. It was December 1964 and I had just bought my first car, a 1963 Corvair Monza Coupe. It came with the promise that I could store the car at the dealer's lot until spring term when it would be legal for us to have cars at RMC. This was, of course, before Ralph Nadler wrote "*Dangerous at any Speed*" which would forever condemn Corvairs for their handling faults. Mine came with large oversize snow tires on the back which probably helped the stability somewhat. The other clue to safely driving this thing and avoid the "floaty" front end came from a retired RCME Colonel, a friend of Colonel King, who advised me to adjust the tire pressure front to back to get equal deflection of the tires. This was accomplished on my way home from Kingston to Oakville the morning after the Christmas Ball. I stopped at each gas station along the way, exasperating my girlfriend, and adjusted the pressure in the front until I had 28 psi in the back and 17 in the front tires. After that the car drove fantastically including, later in the spring, a test drive around country roads to see how fast the car would go (about 95 mph) and how well it could handle. The answer to both was very satisfying.

One day in February '65 a classmate, it might have been Bob Beardmore, asked me to test drive a Corvair he was thinking of buying since I was known as the only Corvair owner in the class. I asked why me, and he said that he didn't yet have his driver's licence so the salesman wouldn't let him drive it. So on a beautiful sunny day, off we went to see this model. It turned out to be a 1964 Corvair Monza Spider convertible. The Spider designation meant it had a turbocharged engine giving it 30 more horsepower than mine and a four speed manual transmission (mine

had a three speed manual). With the me in the driver's seat and the prospective buyer in the passenger seat, plus the salesman and a curious CWC in the back, off we went. We headed for the 401 highway which was almost empty. Before entering the highway, I stopped the car, put it in first gear and said, "Let's see what this car can do." I took off and got it close to the red line on the tachometer (the speedometer was inoperative) in each gear. It handled great and went like the wind and I'm wondering if someone will trade my car for this one. Back at the college that evening, I was summoned to the head table by the Dave Harries to discuss the afternoon drive. He informed me that given the RPM I was doing, he had calculated that we had been doing between 105 and 110 Miles per hour! I don't know if my classmate bought the car, but in the end, I stuck with my own.

One trouble with the car was its carburetors, two of them. You remember carburetors, don't you? They were those troublesome things that always needed to be cleaned and tuned. Gary Umrysh, in trying out his new status as a Mechanical Engineer, tried to dismantle the four barrel carburetor from his Pontiac one day in spring term, only to find on reassembly that he had 23 parts left over. Anyhow, the Corvair Monza had twin Rochester carburetors, one for each bank of the flat six engine. The problem with them was that if they were not balanced perfectly, the car would start shaking its booty like there was no tomorrow. The only person who I ever found who could do it properly was a mechanic in Halifax who did the final tuning with a stethoscope.

The ultimate test of my beloved Corvair came when I was posted from Halifax to Esquimalt in December 1965. On the first day, I was trying to get as far into New Brunswick as possible, but once I got into the province, it started to snow. But you remember those oversize snow tires? This is where they really proved their worth. The first real problem



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Cars I Have Survived – Part 1 (concluded)

happened as I approached the outskirts of St. Stephen, N.B. just before 5 PM on a Saturday night. The car just quit. I was at the top of a hill, so I was able to depress the clutch and coast down the hill and into a gas station. The gas station was just closing, but the owner was kind enough to help me push the car into the service bay. He inspected the car and declared that the alternator was shot. Could he get another one? Probably not until Monday, he said, but he would try one phone call. He returned a few minutes later to announce that his friend had a reconditioned alternator for my car. He drove off and retrieved it and installed it that night. God bless him.

I drove home to Oakville to see my Dad and then it was off on the drive to the West Coast. The snow on the first day was no problem (remember those snow tires). Where it did become dicey in the icy was in North Dakota where a bit of snow one night had laid down a thin layer of ice on the roads. That was when the Corvair showed off its prowess for trying to drive backwards by making the (heavy) back end become the front end. Rear engine cars do that, you know. The car and I fought over that the entire day. Ultimately I won and we arrived frontward somewhere in Montana for the night. I arrived safely in Esquimalt just before Christmas. A few days later, they had a snow “storm” in Victoria and it seemed I was the only one who had been able to safely drive to the ship that morning (remember those snow tires).

A few weeks before our wedding, my soon-to-

Reminder

You will recall from Edition 77 (those that read them), that Gerry Mueller volunteered to put together a booklet of attendees at next year’s big reunion. All it requires is that you give him a short bio (5-600 words) in Word or Word Perfect format plus a recent picture in JPEG format. Identify them with your Col-

lege Number, First and last Name and send them to him as e-mail attachments to gerry.mueller@sympatico.ca. Deadline for entry is 31 December. This would make a really nice souvenir of the event.

be wife, Denee, arrived in Victoria. We shared the car, but it turned out that the Corvair hated Denee. Several times, when she was going shopping, or picking me up, the car would not start for her. I would get plaintiff calls from her using her newly discovered sailor language telling me to get to her and start the &%@# car. The culmination came one Saturday about three weeks before the wedding when I was going to play golf and she was going to shop. She dropped me off at the golf course and off I went for my game. At the end of eighteen, I came across the parking lot and there she was sitting in the car. I said her timing was fortuitous and asked how long she had been waiting. “I never left!” she said.

The final demise came on our return trip from San Francisco on our honeymoon. I pulled into a gas station to fill up and the attendant came out and said that I was leaking coolant on the way in. The air cooled engine in a Corvair has no coolant. It turned out we had only a few spoonfuls of oil left in the engine. It was just too close a call to put off the inevitable. That plus the slipping clutch, the horn that no longer worked, the need for new tires and a few other minor things spelled the end. Three days after we got home from that honeymoon, we had another car. After 27 thousand miles in 16 months, my beloved first car was gone.

There would be other cars and a few more adventures, but more of that in a later story.



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Another Reminder

Mark your calendar!

**2015 Reunion – 50th Anniversary of graduation
RMC Ex-Cadet Weekend, Kingston,
September 24-27**

Stand by for further news on planned activities, hotels, costs, suggested apparel, Old Brigade matters, *etc.*

The “program” will be similar to that of our 45th reunion in 2010 at which we had a record attendance of over 90 classmates and nearly 170 including “better halves” for the major Class events.

If you’ve never been to an RMC reunion weekend and would like a sort of “retro-preview” of this one, suggest you read Mike Braham’s excellent article in the Class Newsletter, Edition 30, October 2010. [Go to Class website www.rmc65.ca/, find *Class Newsletter, Archives* and click on that edition.]

Remember, if you entered CMR, RR or RMC in the early 60s, and ultimately expected to finish in 1965, then you are a member of the Class whether you graduated or not.

This is a really big one, fellas; hope to see you there.

Quick questions? hjm.spence@rogers.com

Inscrire à votre agenda!

**Réunion de 2015 – 50^e anniversaire de la promotion =65
Weekend de rencontre, Kingston, 24-27 septembre**

Tenir à d’autres nouvelles qui s’en viennent sur nos plans, hôtels, coûts, habillement suggéré, événements de la Vieille Brigade, *etc.*

Le “programme” va ressembler à celui de notre 45^e réunion en 2010, où la participation a été formidable: plus de 90 membres de la Classe et presque 170 en total, les conjointes incluses.

Jamais assisté à une réunion de notre Classe? Pour se faire une idée de l’atmosphère et des expériences, voir le compte-rendu écrit par Mike Braham à la fin de notre dernière rencontre en 2010. [Visiter le site www.rmc65.ca/, *Bulletin de la Classe, Archives 2010* – édition n^o 30.]

Noter: tous ceux qui sont entrés au CMR, RR ou RMC au début des années 60, en prévision d’obtenir finalement leur diplôme en 1965, sont membres de la Classe, diplômé ou non.

Réunion 2015 -- C’est vraiment un grand, les gars; j’espère vous y voir.

Des questions préliminaires?
hjm.spence@rogers.com



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Calling All Golfers by Hugh Spence

The 2015 Ex-Cadet weekend planners, guided by the *Class of '70* Old Brigade new recruits, are setting up a golf tournament for Friday morning, Sept. 25th, at either the Garrison or Loyalist clubs (exact location TBD.) They hope to have 120+ participants, principally from the quinquennial reunion classes of '70, '75, '80 and of course '65.

It would have a shotgun start at 0830, with the objective of a 1430-1500 finish including the round and a short lunch and prize session, so that players could get back to the College to witness the Obstacle

Course event if they wish.

The RMC Club will handle registration and the collection of fees.

If you would be willing to be the **Class of 65 Golf Steward** to organize foursomes and liaise with the 2015 Golf OPI (believe that's mil-speak for Office of Primary Interest,) please advise Secretary Hugh at hjm.spence@rogers.com as soon as you can. In your application, feel free to present arguments for the Class to subsidize your tournament entry fee.

RCEME Corps Gets New Colonel Commandant

The Corps of RCEME Colonel Commandant Change of Appointment Parade took place on 24 October 2014 in the 2 Svc Bn, Maint Coy lines at CFB Petawawa.



The individuals seated at the table are (l to r): 6560 Colonel (Retd) Andrew Nellestyn (incoming Col Comdt), BGen Scott Kennedy (DGLEPM), 8684 BGen (Retd) Peter Holt (outgoing Col Comdt).

Standing:

19350 LCol Carla Harding (CO 2 Svc Bn), CWO Mark German (DGLEPM CWO), CWO Rene Gilbert (RCEME Corps SM) and CWO Dany Dubuc (RSM 2 Svc Bn).



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Cross of Valour Petition by Hugh Spence

An organization I belong to recently forwarded to all members one fellow's suggestion that we might want to sign an Internet petition to the Governor General, urging that Parliament's Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin Michael Vickers be awarded the **Canadian Cross of Valour** (CV) for his actions on Parliament Hill on Oct. 22 this year.

You are probably aware that in the Canadian regimen of honours and awards, the CV is second only to the Victoria Cross for an act of bravery, but unlike the VC may be awarded to non-military as well as military personnel, and not necessarily in wartime.

The following is an edited version of my response to my group, which, I'm happy to report, resulted in nothing but supportive comments:

Thank you for sending this (message) on...but I feel (the) impetration to sign the "bravery" petition is way off base, specially at this time. If you think the following might be instructive for our guys, please forward.

Let's cogitate a bit...at this point all we really know about what happened that terrible day is full of media hype, politician sound bites and third person reports; a lot of "golly gee" that drives the unsophisticated media into a frenzy. The security forces are even keeping their cards close to their chests on the details, and it may be quite a while until we know whether Vickers had only a sidearm or an MP5 sub-machine gun.

Undoubtedly, Sgt-at-Arms Vickers performed well, as did others in the Parliamentary security team, but in the absence of precise information it is way too early and kind of presumptuous to petition the GG or the government for one of Canada's absolutely top bravery awards to go to a guy (a civil servant) who was, frankly, just doing

his duty.

Points to ponder: Is there ballistic evidence that Vickers actually killed the gunman, and if so, so what? Our brave RCMP and city police unfortunately have to do this from time to time. Was he in mortal peril while he used his weapon?

And what about the (unarmed) guard who actually wrestled with and slowed down the invading eejit at the Peace Tower entrance, and was wounded as a result? Shouldn't he be honoured for bravery at a level equal to or higher than the apparently well armed Vickers? (There isn't any Canadian valour medal higher than the CV for a non-military person.)

I'm not against awarding medals - for a century or more the Canadian government has traditionally been terribly stingy with them, which really, really bugs me - but personally, I'd like to see a complete after-action report before contemplating pressure on the powers that be to reward bravery at the supreme level the petition demands: the Cross of Valour. Don't people realize what that medal is actually for?

I believe we must avoid diminishing in any way the extreme honour of this award that our military members and others have received, which, just to make you think, like the Victoria Cross has often been awarded posthumously.

At this point I might sign a petition to recognize Kevin Vickers as a public servant worthy of high public recognition (whatever that might be,) but I have no reason to imagine his actions (yet to be fully detailed) would prompt the award of the Canadian Cross of Valour.

In fact I'd go so far as to say it is entirely unseemly that anyone should try to "get a medal" for someone by petition. That is crass, unworthy,



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Cross of Valour Petition (Concluded)

insulting to the intended recipient, and smacks of a modern TV reality show "vote". I expect Sgt-at-Arms Vickers would be absolutely embarrassed by such a thing.

In the fullness of time Vickers may be awarded an appropriate formal honour on the basis of the facts of his actions. If, contrary to logic, it should

happen to be the CV, that would be quite a precedent and in my opinion would cheapen the medal forever, (e.g. many police shootings of criminals would necessarily result in the award of the CV to the shooter.)

Bottom line is we surely must not try to advance the cause of our heroes by simple popular vote.

Closing Notes

Not much I can add after that little tirade! But, I think Hugh raises an interesting point. Thanks to all those who contributed this month and apologies to those whose entries did not make it. Rest assured they will be appearing shortly, I did not want them to get lost in the chaff of a lengthy tome.

Please give the two reminders some thought as well as the plea for a golf steward at the forthcoming reunion.

I hope you are all looking forward to the reunion as much as Janet and I. It promises to be a memorable

and fun event.

You can expect information pertaining to the event—schedule, reservations, costs, etc. to be forthcoming shortly via this monthly rag as well as from your dedicated organising committee.

Keep those inputs coming. Best wishes to you all for the Holiday Season. We'll be back with Edition 80 early in the new year.