

Mess and RUSI Vancouver Members News Aug 30, 2011

Wednesday Lunches.

Lunch attendance is struggling to stay above 25. The PNE is on, summer is ending and school is about to start – always a tough time for our lunch. We appreciate the support of our regular attendees and hope that you ‘not so regular’ diners will make a special effort to join us.

Birthday Greetings To BGen Ted Brown

To all Gunners, everywhere –

Brigadier-General H.E. (Ted) Brown will be 99 on 30 August, 2011. He will enter his 100th year.

On behalf of all ranks of the Royal Regiment, I wish Brig Brown a Happy Birthday, and many more in good health and happiness. Thanks for his great service to Canada, the Commonwealth, our Captain-General, and world peace and security.

A truly great Gunner and a legend in the RCA!
Ted (a.k.a. Hawkeye) - Good Shooting!

(Thanks to LCol Retd Barry Downs and LCol Retd John Gibson for the photo)



Ubique

Ernest B. Beno, OMM, CD, Brigadier-General, Retired
Colonel Commandant, The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery

"Meanwhile, in the War in Afghanistan..."

*The decade-long conflict may be old news at home, but in one Marine platoon, it starts new every day
Wall Street Journal April 9, 2011*

On March 17, St. Patrick's Day, a dozen Marines, coated in mud, were sloshing through poppy fields in southern Afghanistan. Walking point for the patrol, Lance Cpl. Cody "Yaz" Yazzie swept a small metal detector back and forth. Twelve grunts from the Third Platoon followed carefully in his footsteps.

Back in the U.S., the news was dominated by events in Libya, the start of March Madness in college basketball and the latest court appearance of Lindsay Lohan. The fighting season in Afghanistan had begun, too, but in the U.S., the decade-old war is now largely ignored.

It can't be ignored here in the farm fields of Sangin district, where the Taliban have buried thousands of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). One wire is attached to a flashlight battery and another to a plastic jug of explosives, and each is glued to a thin board. When one board is pressed against the other, the wires make contact, sparking an explosion.

Over the past six months, two members of the Third Platoon of Kilo Company, Fifth Marine Regiment, have been killed, two have lost limbs and eight have suffered shrapnel or bullet wounds. A quarter of the original platoon is now gone.

I had embedded with the platoon once before, in January, so the routine was familiar. A point man on a patrol detects one or more IEDs, and then a Taliban gang in civilian clothes usually opens fire. Marine snipers and machine-gunners shoot back, while a squad manoeuvres around the flank, forcing the enemy to retreat.

Night-time brings an interlude. The Taliban stay snug indoors, safe from night-vision devices. Third Platoon lives in cave-like rooms inside an abandoned compound. In the evening, the young men, all in their early 20s, act their raucous age, playing loud music and laughing hilariously at absurd jokes.

When I re-joined the platoon in mid-March, the rhythm hadn't changed. We were only an hour into the patrol when Yaz detected a wire buried in the soil. He snipped it and marked the location of the explosives for disposal by engineers. The patrol proceeded north, passing pulverized compounds and a few groups of men who stared with flat hostility. The Marines ignored them. With no police or language capabilities, the platoon knew who was an enemy only when he opened fire.

On the roof of a small, square house, a large white Taliban flag was flying. "That's the classic Italian salute," Lt. Vic Garcia, the platoon commander, said. "There's probably an IED hidden inside."

Now on his third combat tour, Lt. Garcia has infused his platoon with an aggressive instinct, but he's not foolhardy. "We're looking for a fight," he said. "But we think before we move. There's no way we'll search an empty house."

Over the radio came a report of a dozen motorcyclists converging to our front. We watched as several families ran from the fields into their compounds. About 700 yards away, two motorcyclists pattered to a stop and sat watching us.

"We got a dicker [watcher]," Sgt. Joseph Myers said. "He's crawling in the ditch to our left."

The rules of engagement forbid shooting a man for crawling forward to take a closer look or for talking on a hand-held radio, but such actions usually tip off an attack. For several minutes, the Marines watched the Taliban watching them. No shots were fired, so Yaz slowly led the patrol to the west.

The motorcyclists paralleled our movement, keeping their distance. It reminded me of an old Western movie, with the Comanches riding along the skyline, staying out of range of the cavalry's rifles. In this case, the Taliban knew they were safe as long as they didn't display weapons. Eventually we headed back to base, and the motorcyclists drove off in the opposite direction.

Since September, the Third Platoon has shot somewhere between 125 and 208 Taliban—as many as one enemy killed per patrol. That rate may not seem high, but the cumulative effect

has been crushing. Marine tactics, like Ohio State football, have the subtle inevitability of a steamroller.

"We got a radio intercept yesterday," Lt. Garcia said. "Some Talib leaders in Pakistan were chewing out the local fighters for quitting. The locals yelled back, 'Marines run toward our bullets.'"

When we arrived at the Marine base a few miles away, Capt. Nick Johnson, the commander of Kilo Company, was waiting. He had watched the patrol's movement via video streamed from a tethered blimp overhead. I said it reminded me of the blimp at the Super Bowl.

"That's a different world," replied Capt. Johnson, who is on his third combat tour. "In the States, a bad day for a guy on his way to the office is a flat tire. A bad day out here is a double amputee. The public pays attention to Charlie Sheen. No one's heard of Sgt. Abate."

Sgt. Matthew Abate is the Third Platoon's hero. When a patrol hit a minefield in late October, Sgt. Abate had left his safe position and run to apply tourniquets and carry out the screaming, grievously wounded men. He was killed in action five weeks later, but only the platoon remembers his name.

When the U.S. military withdrawal begins this summer, the generals will declare success. But no one knows what will happen after that. Half of the Third Platoon believes the Afghan government will succeed, and half believes the country will remain a mess, with continued tribal fighting. Either way, airpower will prevent the Taliban from seizing Kabul.

The members of the platoon do not care about bringing freedom and development to Afghanistan. They are here because they believe they're defending America. They have volunteered to serve, and most of them will leave the military after four years, with no pension or benefits. They endure the mud, heat, stench, blood, fatigue and terror of lost limbs and lost lives. There is hard bark on these young men.

What bothers them is that the valor of grunts like Sgt. Abate goes without much public recognition. Hollywood's recent war movies tend to feature psychotics instead of heroes. Only one Medal of Honor has been awarded to a living infantryman in 10 years, and the paperwork for a second one has languished for 18 months.

The grunts chose their profession, and they draw satisfaction from their Spartan existence. Almost every member of the Third Platoon said he wanted to be right where he was, living in a cave on the most dangerous battlefield in Afghanistan. It has been a long war, and the American public has understandably lost interest, but these soldiers have not lost their devotion to the mission or their country.

From Col Acton Kilby, son of BGen Peter Kilby, with the US 10th Mountain Division in Afghanistan:

Hi Folks:

I have been negligent on writing, as I have been using multiple excuses, due mostly to the arrival of some of our replacements that are now demanding more attention. It's a positive sign that we will be replaced, but they are drawing some of our organizational energy away from primary tasks and it can be frustrating. Oh well, just a few days until we depart.

We have found while examining what we have done, affected, and changed in our time,

that it's harder to pin specifics down than we thought.

A lot has changed but it's like describing what a rainbow looks like to a blind person. You can say things, but the essence is hard to draw without a picture. We are getting there but it is hard math.

The last few weeks have been demanding and the bad guys continue to poke at us while hacking at the population. Some close calls for us all during different trips and visits and we are now waiting for the end of Ramadan to see what the enemy throws our way. It is obvious that we are reducing the Taliban (TB) as we are seeing maneuvers on all aspects that indicate things are not going well for them.

Desperate acts and employing young children as suicide bombers are indications that they are desperate, but in their desperation they are alienating the population upon which they rely.

I have attached a photo of a 10-year-old boy recently detained. He was rigged as a suicide bomber and drugged by the TB. He was intercepted and then detoxed. He is but one.

We were in a small village the other day when a 9 year old self-detonated and killed two police. This is happening more frequently than anyone wants and puts the citizens on a nervous edge, but the ploy is not working and we believe the TB are starting to realize this, so hopefully it will stop soon.

Quality of life for many of the locals is better. The Arghandab Valley is blooming and produce is everywhere. We are rushing to finish off some cold/cool storage facilities so that the farmers can store the excess and wait for later markets where they can sell stuff in India and Pakistan at more competitive prices.

Sod turning at a new Raisin Processing Plant and the foundation is in place for a juice factory.

Not huge stuff but it will extend availability of produce and allow for non-premium grade items to be processed for wider markets. I had meetings with a company who will help build a new grain silo over the coming year.

Despite Afghanistan's failed wheat crop, the South continues to over produce wheat and this is good for the country. 70% of Afghans diet is wheat-based; if we can store and protect the wheat we can fight the hunger season (Jan-Feb-Mar) and feed other parts of the country.

Texas A&M helped us rebuild a version of a no-electricity juicer and almond husker/sheller. We will start to distribute them to remote communities next week.

We also completed two deep-water wells in Kandahar City (1500 and 1800 ft.) that will start to deliver clean and safe water to the citizens. District 9 (it's just like the movie) has the World's highest incidence of cholera, tetanus and diphtheria - clean water is the only way to fight it and the well in the Sub-district center will help.

There, some good news. It's like measuring the Titanic with a centimeter stick, but it is progress. Despite excitement about leaving, there is a part that wants to stay. The 82nd Airborne Division will have their hands full, but it will be a better than we had and momentum is moving in the right direction. Perhaps a visit back in a couple of years ...;)

George Derby Veterans Celebration

George Derby Centre's 3rd Annual Veterans Celebration

Saturday September 17, 2011 * 10:30am – 3:30pm

All veterans, their families and friends are invited



**The Band of the 15th Field Regiment, RCA * Linda Jones & Company
Western Command Military Vehicle Historical Society * Footlight Theatre Company
Canadian Museum of Flight * The Museum of the 15th Field Artillery Regiment
Royal Westminster Regiment Band * Vancouver Korean Dance Society
BC Veterans Commemorative Association* Vancouver Naval Veterans Band
Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association* CFB Chilliwack Historical Society
Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver * Renowned Piper – Riley Davis
Vancouver Naval Veterans Association * 3rd Canadian Army Veterans Motorcycle Unit**

Military personnel, veterans, families and friends of veterans are invited to attend the celebrations and view the displays.

Churchill Society of British Columbia presents:

“Casablanca”

with guest speaker, Terri Anne Wilson

Thursday, September 29, 2011



Date: Thursday, September 29, 2011

Location: Members' Lounge, the Vancouver Club, 915 Hastings Street West, Vancouver, B.C.

Time: Wine & Cheese starts at **5:00** pm, Program from **5:45** – 7:00 pm

Cost: \$25 each for a **Member of the Society**

\$40 for a Member accompanied by either a spouse, partner **or** an immediate family member

\$35 each for a **non-Member**

(The ticket cost includes one beverage ticket per attendee for 1 glass of wine or beer, or for 2 soft drinks. Additional drinks can be purchased from the bar)

Please inform our Administrator, *April Accola*, of your attendance by email at aprilaccola@hotmail.com, by registering by phone at 778-321-3550, or online at www.winstonchurchillbc.org

Military Families Resource Centre – September Newsletter

The September 2011 Mainland BC MFRC newsletter is available by clicking on the link <https://www.familyforce.ca/sites/MainlandBC/EN/Documents/Sept%2011News.pdf> or by visiting their website at www.bcmfrc.com and following the newsletter links.

From the ‘Punitary’

A woman's beloved cat, Ginger, had grown seriously overweight, so she decided to take him to the vet to find out if there was anything wrong with him - and more to the point, whether anything could be done about it. So she put him into the kitty-carry box, and drove to the surgery. The doc prescribed a course of pills, and she left, happy in the knowledge that Ginger would soon be his slim old self again. But after a few weeks of taking the pills, there was no change: Ginger was as fat as ever. Soon months had gone by, and still there was no difference. In fact, if anything, it was getting worse. The other problem was the invoices from the vet - these pills were costing a fortune.

It soon became clear to us all that Ginger had become a doc-billed fatty-puss.

Murphy's Rules of Combat Operations.

Professional soldiers are predictable; the world is full of dangerous amateurs.