

Report on Royal Canadian Artillery Association
Annual General Meeting and Seminar 30 Sep to 1 Oct 2011

Col Comdt BGen Beno's last round in the role as Col Comdt

This year's session of the RCAA meeting commenced with a bang. After four years BGen (ret'd) Ernie Beno the outgoing Col Comdt RCA fired his last round to mark his hand over to LGen (ret'd) Mike Jeffery the incoming Col Comdt.

Concept of AGM and Seminar where and why.

This year's Annual General Meeting and Seminar took place at the Home Station in Shilo 30 Sep to 1 Oct. A different venue is chosen each year to permit RCAA members in the various regions to attend the conference close to them should they not be able to cross the country. Last year the Conference was in Victoria, BC. Attending were representatives of each unit in the RCA, both regular and reserve and individual members of the RCAA.

The conduct of both the AGM and Seminar concurrently provides the opportunity for members of the RCAA to contribute to the Association as well as hearing expert speakers from the RCA, academia, other nations presenting and discussing on topics of interest to gunners.

We are changing, and the transformation process is working. Our aim is to bring the regular, reserve and retired family together in a newly relevant and revitalized organization.

The Annual General Meeting

This is a big year for the RCAA as our Transformation Task Force (TTF) study has pointed a direction that was endorsed by the voting membership present of the AGM for further development over the next year to permit changes to our Mission and Roles and make it a more relevant and dynamic organization. This was the major work of this year's AGM.

The AGM approved a resolution to create a Board of Directors to whom the Executive Committee will be responsible. The board will be formed by standing down the Advisory Committee and having its members, along with the President, Vice President, Past President and ex-officio members form the newly created Board. The members of this Board selected, by election, a Chairman from its membership. The new Chairman is LGen (ret'd) Andrew Leslie. The Board of Directors will move transformation forward and present, for approval at the 2012 AGM, a new constitution to replace the current RCAA rules.

The detail of the process and the recommendations of the TTF can be seen on the RCA web site <http://www.artillery.net/rcaa-transformation/>. It is worth your attention.

Normal business was presented to the AGM, specifically the following activities took place which are mentioned for their special interest; The Association presented a cheque to the Commanding Officer of 62 RAC LCol Francois Segard for the work on their book "Gunners of the Mauricie".

The management committee concerned with the writing of Volume 3 of The Gunners of Canada, which will cover the period 1967 – 2014, presented a request for subject matter experts to advise the authors, as well as point of contact for units. The staffing of this project is progressing well.

Two new life members were approved by the AGM; Col Donald Wilkin and MWO Stoneberg, while an Honorary Life Membership was approved for our departing Col Comdt BGen (ret'd) Beno.

The Col Comdt, BGen (ret'd) Ernie Beno presented his last words to the RCAA during the AGM. The text of his presentation is attached.

Finally, the AGM approved an expression of the RCAA's loyalty to our Captain General which will be sent to London.

The Seminar

This year's Seminar started with the artillery staff provide an update on the state of the artillery. The Director of Artillery Col Brian McPherson spoke as to the future of the units of the RCA. He noted we are in good shape and we have much new and capable kit, but our 105mm fleets of guns are experiencing fatigue. Projects to deal and prolong their lives are in progress and a new fleet of guns is programed. He noted that the Royal Regiment and its soldiers have performed well over the past decade in operations. The integration of reserve units into positions in regular force units continues and new specialities such as target acquisition are being adopted by some units.

The Comdt of the Royal Canadian Artillery School, LCol Michael Sullivan spoke of challenges and successes that had been achieved in this era of high tempo and what the future would bring. He noted that some adjustments had occurred over the past year to reduce the backlog in candidates awaiting training and this had been successful. As well the school was continuing to ensure the officers coming through the system were suitable and have the skills required. It was noted that the recruiting system was failing us but that this has been addressed. Finally the training at the school needed to become more challenging to increase the confidence and leadership of students. This was already showing results and coupled with a back to basics direction will give us better NCOs and Officers.

This was followed by LCol Craig Landry, Director of Land Requirements 2, speaking to future artillery requirements and purchases. As mentioned by the Director of Artillery we have some issues with our guns and delivery of new gun tractors but these are being addressed and new projects are in process. We have good equipment now after current operations, however we must strive to replace and update some of it.

The Commander of the Army, LGen Peter Devlin, spoke to the Seminar about the state of the Canadian Army. He noted we were in a situation where we would have to use good leadership and innovation in our training to return to basics and keep our troops engaged as we refocus to the future. He was confident that we were in fine shape and set for success.

On the post-operations front the Seminar was briefed by Capt Pat Lanouette about his experiences as a forward observer in Afghanistan and Capt Stu McBean about his experiences working in the Canadian Airspace Coordination Centre in Afghanistan. Both these officers have been back from Afghanistan for less than two months and provided engaging presentations.

LCol Stephan Boucher the former CO of 5 RALC spoke on the challenges of preparing an Artillery Regiment for “a war” after the Batteries having fought “the war.” He noted that we need to get back to the basics and train in the regimental context again after 10 years of our op experiences having been at the battery level; we need to train using the system that we know as gunners. He explained how he had done this during his command of 5 RALC.

We were treated to a special presentation by the senior serving gunner, LGen Stu Beare, the commander of Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM), on where we will be going as an army over the next decade. He noted that war fighting was not over and we need to ensure that we can bring the capabilities that we have built over the past decade to do this.

Finally the seminar was presented a briefing by Dr. Donna Pickering of the Resilience Group, Individual Behaviour and Performance Section of Defence Research & Development Canada on a study she has completed for the army on “CF reservist post-deployment reintegration and support experiences”. She noted that successful reintegration was critical in reducing stress and was very much dependant on two factors, good administration of the return at the unit level and coming back to a job or school.

As can be seen from the cast of speakers, the seminar was presented a wide range of experience from the operationally current veterans to the planners of the way ahead. We were well served by this year's speakers.

The Special Guest Night

As a tradition at the RCAA, a special guest night is held on the last evening of the conference. This year's conference saw as special guest our departing Colonel Commandant BGen (ret'd) Ernie Beno. A handover ceremony took place before the dinner.

Photos of the event and other activities can be seen at:

http://www.flickr.com/photos/royal_canadian_artillery_association/sets/

Why the RCAA?

Help us move the Royal Regiment forward by becoming a member. Being a member in RCAA will help the Royal Regiment do many things. Your membership permits us to take on various tasks that assist in recognizing the heritage of the RCA and create or maintain memorials at locations that are important to us. The following were our actions over the past year.

This year we contributed to the maintenance of the RCA Vimy Memorial erected in 1918 by Canadian Gunners, at the village of Thélus just below Vimy Ridge in France. We are involved in the following tasks: Working on the development of "Volume 3 of The Gunners of Canada" covering the period 1967 to present, supporting the writing of "With A Few Guns" the gunner story in Operations in Afghanistan. We have also supported the project for the creation of a statue of the author of "In Flanders Fields" John McCrae at the Artillery Memorial in Ottawa with unveiling May, 2015.

As well, we continued our support of the Remembrance Day Ceremony at the National Artillery Memorial in Ottawa and contributed to the creation of the 62e Régiment d'artillerie de campagne led book "Les Artilleurs de la Mauricie". This is how the RCAA maintains the legacy of the Royal Regiment.

The application to join the RCAA is available at this link:

http://www.artillery.net/beta/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Membership-Application_Renewal-2011-Final-revised1.pdf

The RCAA is also the national organization which links local gunner organizations and we want to help by advising you of gunner events. Of note the following gunner events are presently planned:

- Gunner and Airborne Reunion at the Home Station in June/July 2012
- An Apprentice Reunion in Victoria in May, 2012,
- Gunner reunions in both Eastern Ontario and Oromocto, NB during the 2012
- spring/summer season
- "Gunnery of the 80s" in July or August (TBA) 2011 in Kingston

As well the RCAA would point you to the following internet locations for access to gunner information:

- RCA web site www.artillery.net/beta/
- RCAA web presence at www.artillery.net/beta/royal-canadian-artillery-association/
- The Quadrant new and past editions www.artillery.net/beta/the-quadrant/
- The Canadian Gunner new and past editions www.artillery.net/beta/the-canadian-gunner/