



# “Take Post”

## The Journal of The Toronto Gunner Community

### Edition 8, 20 November, 2015

#### THIS EDITION

- Passing the Baton – CO’s Words of Farewell
- WWII Vet Fires Salute
- Remembrance Day 2015
- Iron Man 2015
- Capt Jeannette Chau – Supporter and Role Model
- And Much More!

This journal, “Take Post” is published bi-monthly under the authority of the Honorary Colonel, 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery. Take Post reaches out to all Gunners and those interested in being part of the Regimental Artillery Family of the Greater Toronto Area. The purpose is to share information and strengthen the ties between serving members, retired Gunners, Gunner families, friends of the Artillery, and the greater Toronto and region community.

Notes and Letters to the “Editor” can be sent to:  
[beno@kos.net](mailto:beno@kos.net)

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### Regimental Part II Orders

#### Honours, Awards, Promotions & Appointments

##### Promotions

The following was promoted to Major:  
Maj S. Graham (Photo to the Right)

The following were promoted to Gunner:

- Gnr M. Broderick;
- Gnr H. Fong;
- Gnr E. Kwan; and
- Gnr K. Tustin.



### **Attached Posting**

Captain Erica Leslie, Right, joins us on Attached Posting from 30<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment, RCA commencing November 2015 – photo to Right. Welcome Erica:



### **Honours and Awards**

The following were awarded the 7th Toronto Regiment Command Team Commendation: **7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Ultra Niagara Running and Marching Teams.**

### **Regimental Family Calendar of Events**

- 28 Nov – CO's/ HLCol's Dining Out/ Saint Barbara's Day Combined Guest Night. CFC Officers Mess.
  - 29 Nov – 7 Tor Change of Command and HLCol Stand down Parade. MPA.
  - 7 Dec – 7<sup>th</sup> Tor Regt Band Christmas Dinner. MPA.
  - 12 Dec – Soldier's Christmas/Festive Dinner and Holiday Stand down Parade. MPA.
  - 19 Dec – Regimental Children's Christmas Party. MPA
  - 01 Jan – Levee. MPA.
  - 04 Jan – Stand To Parade. MPA.
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### **A Shot Downrange – Words from Honorary Colonel Ernest Beno, OMM, CD**

What a great Regiment – *“A Regiment worthy of its hire!”* I continue to be impressed with our Regiment, both operationally and from a Regimental Family perspective. As I reflect on the past couple of months I am tremendously pleased with what I hear, see and sense. We continue to build in capability and capacity. Collectively, we communicate (could do a bit better), facilitate (supporting the serving members), collaborate (pretty good), and celebrate!



I'd still like to see us attract more people into our extended Regimental Family – especially Toronto Gunners, Limber Gunners and the Toronto Artillery Foundation. And, I'd like more serving members to invite friends, families and employers, and the public at large, to come by and see what we do.

A great deal of our success over the past couple of years is directly attributable to the vision, planning, hard work and leadership of the



*LCol Szabunio – ever his eye on the sights!*

Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Szabunio, CD. What a tremendously professional, dedicated and energetic leader. We have truly been blessed to have such a fine Commanding Officer. His strategic vision, operational manoeuvring and tactical leadership have truly transformed the Regiment and the greater Regimental Family – and set us up for continued progress and success for the coming years. We are especially indebted to Paul’s lovely wife Anna for letting him play with us,

in fact muck around in the sandbox with us. We know with certainty that his accomplishments will continue to benefit us and that as he moves on he will continue to have a positive and significant impact on the Army. Paul, on behalf of all ranks of the regiment and all members of our Regimental Family, thanks much. Good Shooting!

We are also saying adieu, but not goodbye to Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel Tom Bitove, Order of Ontario – What a wonderful gentleman and great leader. For the past four years we have been blessed with an absolutely fantastic Hon LCol, a man who brought his extensive business experience and acumen to our Regimental Family, and whose network of friends has helped us



*Hon LCol Bitove – a straight shooter!*

connect with Toronto and Canadians. We thank Tom’s lovely wife Karen for loaning him to us – even though she no doubt wondered about him wearing those funny uniforms and coming home smelling of gunpowder. Hon LCol Tom has been a great friend of the Regiment and an inspiration to us all, and he’ll continue his close association with us and support to us – he is one of us! Tom – thanks much, and continued “Good Shooting!”



Next week we welcome Lieutenant-Colonel Ryan Smid, MMM, MB, CD as Commanding Officer. He knows the Regiment and Regimental Family very well indeed, having been part of 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto for the past few years, and he knows the Army and most of the key leaders in the Army. We are truly fortunate to have a proven leader of his calibre taking the reins. Ryan and his better half, Lisa are a wonderful couple and they sense and understand the pulse of our Regimental Family. We are most certainly set up for continued success.



Our motto, “UBIQUE” could not be more fitting. “Everywhere” I look, go, see and read about, I see our Regiment and the fine people of our Regiment. This newsletter, “Take Post” can only capture the highlights of the great accomplishments of our members. On Remembrance Day Lt Lum, Sergeant Kase and Master Bombardiers Gawley and Jackson went to the Weston Golf and Country Club to speak to a golf tournament crowd of about 100. The golfers were blown away by the quality of soldier we have in 7<sup>th</sup> Tor. That’s but one example of our great soldiers, and you’ll see more in this Take Post. Next week you’ll hear words of honour, praise and thanks at the Change of Command events, and these will be sincere, based on the great accomplishments of so many led by such talented and dedicated leaders.



*This is my “Photo of the Month,” a real Regimental Family: MBdr Ray Li and Gnr Grace Li, with their pride and joy (perhaps a future Gunner!)*



*The Honorable Bill Blair, with Hon LCol Bitove. Recruiting for 7<sup>th</sup> Tor, Queen’s Park, 11 November*

Well done, all ranks 7<sup>th</sup> Tor and the greater Regimental Family of 7<sup>th</sup> Tor. Good Shooting!

### **7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment RCA Command Team**

Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Szabunio, CD, Commanding Officer

Recognising it is impossible to say thank-you to our entire 7th Toronto RCA Regimental Community in a few brief paragraphs, I will instead simply highlight a few of your many accomplishments over these last three years, each of which but scratches the surface of your collective work as individual soldiers, associates and affiliates, and greater Regimental Family. Reflect and bask in the pride of your efforts to get us here. Know too that your pride is



*LCol Szabunio leads the Regiment up Yonge Street for our Remembrance Church Service, 8 November 2015*

matched only by my gratitude for your trust and support during our journey together:

- Our soldiers are now routinely at the forefront of domestic operations (like PANAM Games security support), international humanitarian efforts (like the Nepal earthquake relief, and Canadian Forces Disaster Assistance Response Team support), and expeditionary actions (like support to Op IMPACT—Canada's contribution to the military intervention against ISIS/ISIL; and to Op REASSURANCE—Canada's support to NATO assurance measures in Central and Eastern Europe). As I write this, contingency plans for Op PROVISION—managing the potential influx of Syrian refugees—are being drafted, for which Canada's Militia, and some of you, will no doubt play a key role;
- We now routinely field two simultaneously- and independently-operating firing batteries, and are building capability towards a third service and support element. 7th Toronto Regiment has demonstrated unique skill within the RCA and Army by cohesively building endemic Regimental live-fires capacity, and is now planning to collaborate and integrate other Southern Ontario Artillery units within this capability fold during exercise BLACK HAND 2016;
- Professional development is now integral to our training regimen. Be it 'battle procedure,' unarmed combat, Ultramarathon, Ironman, or parachute training; conducting operational-level staff rides to Niagara or Gettysburg; or taking part in commemorative celebrations in Normandy, Vimy, Holland and other far off locales, we are increasingly rigorous at how we grow within the profession of arms, and how we understand our joint-interagency-multinational-public (JIMP) capabilities as 'warfighters' within that chosen vocation;
- Our Regimental Community has become increasingly and intimately connected within the fabric of our city and region:
  - The Band is a true Unit ambassador. Not only does it feature prominently in many annual Toronto events, it was also at the fore our "Two Worlds of 'Charlie-F' Friendraiser," and at our recent (and outstandingly successful) Toronto Officers' Garrison Ball 2015 (due in no small part to the active engagement of our Regimental Senate and Toronto Gunners Association). Band members will also play a leading role in our 'Connection to Canadians,' as the planned 2016 John McDermott Remembrance Day Veterans' Tribute will prove. The Band has also helped to expand our Regimental Community by engaging with and integrating our affiliated Army and Air Cadet Corps into our greater Family. I certainly trust they and the Cadets got as much enjoyment blocking traffic as I did during our annual Regimental Family march down Yonge Street on Remembrance Sunday; and
  - The 200 Years of Firepower event at Old Fort York was an outstanding 'connect with Canadians' event likely to become an annual affair. Together with Old Fort York's staff, 2 RCHA soldiers, the Limber Gunners, and the Unit itself, over 200 years of Toronto Artillery tradition was publicly displayed to well over 1000 people.

There will be opportunities for individual recognition as the Change of Command approaches at end-November; however, I want to take special and singular opportunity to recognise both Honorary Colonel Brigadier-General (retired) Ernie Beno, and Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel Tom Bitove for their stalwart support and confidence in me as we activated our Regimental Senate, and drove many other Family initiatives, together with Capt (retired) David Burnett and Major (retired) Ron Patterson of the Toronto and Limber Gunner Associations.

Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel Bitove — who shall soon depart from us as Honorary ‘light’ — has been a pivotal heavyweight and catalyst of support behind the many fundraising and public-event initiatives noted above, and was very much vital to the resurgence of our 7th Toronto Regiment ‘Black Hand’ brand. We know he will continue to work his magic behind the scenes on behalf of the Regiment for years to come, while General Beno remains a steady influence at the helm of our Regimental Community.

As my 11½ years of service with 7th Toronto Regiment come to its close, I’d like to recognise that your individual and collective achievements mentioned above were also possible because of the loving families who bear the brunt of our service, both in peace and in war. I am immensely grateful to the families who all too often make silent sacrifices of their time and love of us as they share—often disproportionately—in our obligation of service to Her Majesty.

In closing, I am thankful to be associated with some of the hardest working and best trained soldiers and citizens in this Brigade, Division and Army, and Country. Remember where we began, and how high you *yourselves* pushed the bar. Again, my gratitude can be matched only by the pride I hope and trust you feel in all you have done.

Good Shooting, End of Mission.

P.A. (Paul) Szabunio  
Lieutenant-Colonel  
Commanding Officer



*Hudson Edgar Szabunio (left), son of a Gunner, who is a son of a Gunner, gets his first whiff of Gunpowder!*

## 2015 Ironman

MBdr Jackson



*MBdr Jackson transitions to the portage in the early morning fog*

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015 six members of 7 Tor RCA headed to CFB Petawawa to prepare for the 32 CMBG ‘Iron Man’ competition. Two of the crew were there for logistics and support, the other four stepped off on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 0400, for their Iron Man challenge.

The Iron Man is an annual event that sees teams from across Canada (although primarily from southern Ontario) descend on CFB Petawawa to test their personal limits of fitness and endurance. Carrying a ruck weighing 40lbs, the course consists of a 32km ruckmarch/ruck-run, followed immediately by a 4km portage, then an 8km canoe paddle, finishing with another 6km ruckmarch/run.

The team consisted of Lt. Lum, Sgt Kase, MBdr Fleet, MBdr Noh, MBdr Jackson and Bdr Breker. The former two the support, the latter four the competitors. Lt. Lum, with formal education and training regarding nutrition, fitness and athletic preparation, ensured that the team was stepping off with their best foot forward (enforcing a period of proper rest and eating in the days prior). Sgt Kase completed the Iron Man in 2014, and provided invaluable insight that would see the team avoiding pitfalls common to more inexperienced, unprepared crews.



*Left: Bdr Breker begins the 4 Km portage*



*MBdr Fleet finishes the 8 km canoe and begins the final 6 km forced march to the finish*



“It’s primarily a psychological test.” Sgt Kase explained to the team on the drive up to Petawawa. As soon as she joined the group on the 20<sup>th</sup>, Sgt Kase distributed water to the four competitors “We’re going to do this properly and to the best of our ability.”

For the four troops competing, the mood was one of anticipation. MBdr Noh, who had done a practice half ‘Iron Man’ the month prior, was eager to enjoy the full experience now that he had the context of such practice. MBdrs Fleet and Jackson had both participated in the ‘Ultra Niagara’ ruck-run competition in July, and were eager to test their mettle against a substantially more difficult challenge.

Bdr Breker, who had done the Iron Man last year with Sgt Kase, was determined to exceed her accomplishments from 2014. In addition to wanting to finish quicker, Bdr Breker sought to finish the portage portion without slowing down or resting at any point; an ambitious goal, as even the fittest competitors would agree that a 60lb canoe (plus ruck) is a difficult carry for four kilometers immediately after finishing 32km with a ruck.

By the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the team was ready. Lt Lum and Sgt Kase rose with the team to meet the 0400 step-off time. The bark of a C3 (crewed by troops of 2RCHA) acted as the starting-gun. Lt Lum, keeping morale high, sent the team off at a run with a shout of “*Mount!*” As the team advanced into the early Petawawa morning, the trail so dark that one couldn’t see the troop in front of them save for an illuminated glow-stick attached to every ruck, a crowd cheered them and the dozens of other competitors on. As the troops went through the course, observers could trace their progress on a digital guide that monitored each soldier via a band around their ankle.



*Gnr Krushnisky (left) and MBdr Jackson (Right) support MBdr Noh (Centre) as he runs the final stretch to the finish line*

Just over eight hours later, the team began crossing the finish line. MBdr Fleet, followed by MBdr Jackson, Bdr Breker and MBdr Noh finished strong, running and not walking across the final boundary. Sgt Kase, who greeted each team member individually as they completed the



course, later noted proudly “Each member of the team, independent of one another and within moments of finished the course, declared that next year they would finish the course in even shorter time.”

7 Tor RCA has had an excellent showing two years running in the CFB Petawawa Iron Man. It is shaping to be an informal regimental tradition that, by all indicators, will only grow stronger in upcoming years.



*The Ironman competitors right before stepping off:  
Bdr Breker, MBdr Noh, MBdr Fleet, MBdr Jackson*

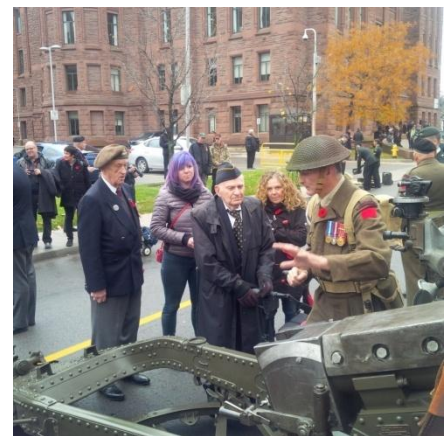
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## **Remembrance Day, 2015 – Queen’s Park**

Written by Maj John Dean, CD, AdeC – BC 9 Battery

The Bugle fell silent after having sounded the Last Post, the clock tower started to toll in the distance....It was 1100 O’clock. The crack of the 25 Pounder caused the crowd to fall silent as all those present bowed their heads for 2 minutes of silence.

The GPO ordered FIRE as LCol Paul Szabunio watched with pride and honour as members of the greater Toronto community gathered around to remember those who had fought and fallen for the freedom of Canada. This was a special salute for LCol Szabunio who will turn over the reins of Command to LCol Ryan Smid on 29 November 2015.



The Regiment was augmented by two 25 Pounders from the Limber Gunners, all dressed in period combat uniforms. Lance Bombardier Thompson and his wife Judy were present from the United States, as they never miss this ceremony.

BGen Ernest Beno and HLCol Tom Bitove could be seen on the Gunline chatting with soldiers and more specifically two World War 2 veterans: Maj Jack Commerford, 2<sup>nd</sup> Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment and Larry Helfamd an Artillery Instructor of Gunnery back in his day. Both veterans beamed with pride as they fired the 25 Pounder during the salute. Mr. Mark Clearihue, a

great supporter of the Regiment fired a round down-range in memory of his father who served in the RCAF Bomber Command in World War 2.

Captain David Clark, our Regimental Padre narrated and gave a lovely service in remembrance of those who have fallen.

The 7th Toronto Regiment soldiers were well turned out and looked sharp – as always. Many spectators commented on the professionalism of the Gunners and the pride they could sense as they watched the Regiment fire. The 7th Toronto Regiment Band could be heard playing a number of fine arrangements throughout the ceremony.



*Mr. Mark Clearihue remembers his dad, Bomber Command, WWII*

**At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them!**

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## Remembrance in Mississauga



*Her Worship, Bonny Crombie, Mayor of Mississauga with MBdr Bhatti, Bdr Merrick, and Bdr Gee (credit: Maj Grewal)*



**Celebrating Sikh soldiers on Remembrance Day**

The Sikh Heritage Museum of Canada in Mississauga explores and honours the history of Sikh soldiers.

*Bombardier Mani Bhatti conducts a demonstration to a group of children at the Sikh Heritage Museum*

## **Major (Retired) Jack Commerford, 2<sup>nd</sup> Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment**

7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment had the great pleasure to have Jack Commerford join us on Remembrance Day. Jack is a Gunner Veteran of World War II, and he got to fire a 25 Pounder for the first time in his life at Queen's Park. In his early years he was an Anti-Aircraft Gunner, with 3.7 inch Ack Ack guns.



Here is his story:

*"I started as a boy soldier on reaching the age of 17 in June 1941. At age 18, I became a machine gun instructor and received training*



*as an anti-aircraft gunner. During the summer of 43, I proceeded overseas and was posted to the 8th Battery of the 2nd Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, RCA.*



*I served as an anti-aircraft gunner on the English coast (Dover, Folkstone, Hove and Brighton) until the summer of 44. It was then we landed on Juno Beach in Normandy, France.*

*After the landing, my battery was mostly in a field role at Caen and Falaise during the Battle of Normandy. After Normandy we proceeded up the coast of France, engaging the enemy at Boulogne, Calais, Cap-Gris-Nez, (exchanging fire with the cross channel guns) and Dunkirk. From Caen to Dunkirk our battery fired over 20,000 50 lb. shells. From there we advanced through Belgium, the Netherlands and into Germany.*

*On VE Day (May 8, 1945) I was somewhere in Northern Germany. We had been given the order to cease fire on May 5, 1945 and Germany's surrender became official on the 8th. I had an overwhelming sense of freedom which I expressed by walking away from my battery position into unknown German territory. I was extremely grateful that the war was finally over and I was still in one piece. From that point on I simply looked forward to going back home.*

*The men of my battery were mostly farmers, fishermen, and miners from the Maritimes. Their courage and friendship was outstanding and I will never forget them."*

Well, there is much more to Jack than that. He can sure sing – for example, at the National Club he gave a resounding rendition of “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary” and a couple of more tunes. And, he enjoys flirting and having a sip or two. You can see why he went up and down in rank during the war!!

Jack – it was a pleasure and honour to have you join us Field Gunners for a day – you made our day! Good Shooting!





## 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment Orderly Room Running a Tight Ship

by: Sgt McNutt & Sgt Tallud



*MCpl Antonov seeking guidance from the OR 2IC, MCpl Shvetsov and the Chief Clerk, Sgt Rana McNutt*

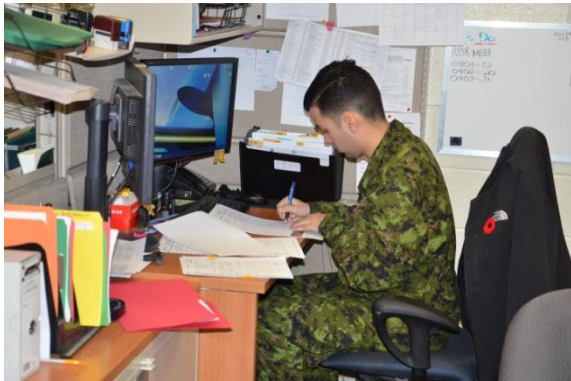
The 7th Toronto Artillery Regiment's Orderly Room (OR) is the eyes and ears of the organization. We help make sure everything runs smoothly and that all administration and financial aspects are completed correctly in accordance with the military's publications and regulations. We are pulled in many directions to help their Chain of Command, the Battery Chain of Commands and all of the Non-Commissioned members while maintaining our set standards and professionalism.

The unit has five full time clerks and two part time clerks. Our full time staff consists of: 3 Cell Clerks, 1 Finance Clerk and the Chief Clerk. Our cell clerks look after completing all administration for our members such as entering pay, completing claims, class B employment documents and annual readiness reviews. They divide their work load by letter group, A-H - MBdr Moniz, I-Q - MCpl Antonov and R-Z - MCpl Shvetsov. MCpl Antonov is responsible for all of our release files and MCpl Shvetsov is the OR's Second In Command. Our Class A clerks are assigned tasks as needed. Currently, we have Cpl Chen working with us on a full time basis to help with the work load and is responsible for answering members' "quick questions" during parade nights.

Our Chief Clerk, Sgt McNutt, oversees the daily operations of the OR, and is responsible for such things as promotion files, manning reports, security clearances, medal requests, Personal Evaluation Report tracking and tracking mandated training. The CClk is responsible to act as the go between for the OR and the Chain, as well as she is the liaison between 32 CBG and the unit

with regards to administration. The Finance Supervisor, Sgt Tallud, oversees the public funds and monitors the units' budget on a daily basis. She ensures that we are spending our funds in accordance with set regulations. She also oversees all CLDA claims, invoices and Delegation of Authority forms. Sgt Tallud acts as the liaison between 32 CBG and the unit with regards to financial matters. All of the OR staff act as the first point of contact for our members. We make the initial contact for enrolment and are often sought out to provide advice and guidance on administrative and financial processes.

Our OR staff are always very professional and willing to help out wherever needed no matter what work they have pressing at their desks. Every day there is a different challenge and new experience where we consistently need to balance our daily workload with the incoming fastballs and last minute taskings. Our ability to prioritize our duties is a must in order to ensure everything is completed accurately and by their deadlines.



*MBdr Moniz diligently at work*

where they have to be very organized, able to work under high pressure and at an extremely fast pace. We do all of this with pride.

The OR does have challenges that we deal with on a daily basis. As our members are not always here, we are consistently trying to track down members to complete their readiness files, update their phone numbers and sign various documents. As well, members are often not aware of their entitlements and of their own administrative responsibilities such as submitting memos for exempt drill and training so they are not placed on non-effective strength. This results in administrative delays for the members and administrative burdens for the OR. The OR hopes to give a presentation on these topics at least once a year in order to remind old members and educate new members of the Regiment.

The OR can sometimes be seen as the backbone of the Regiment and plays an important part in why 7th Toronto Regiment is as successful as they are.

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## 7th Toronto Regiment Wins Bronze at Indoor Soccer Tournament

On the week of 26-30 October, 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment participated in the Annual Unit Soccer Challenge (AUSC) put on by Personnel Support Program (PSP) staff at Denison Armoury. While this event allows our soldiers to have fun participating in a team sport, it also raises money for one of the biggest charity campaigns within the military community, the United Way.

There is a saying in the military: “A soldier who doesn’t dream of becoming a General is a bad one”. Having never participated in the tournament before, this year the unit decided to register a team which would not only represent the 7 Guns with enthusiasm and pride, but to achieve the highest result possible. This kind of philosophy has always been the key to success in every mission our unit has been assigned to, whether it’s a military exercise, a career course, overseas deployment or a sport’s event such as this one. From full time day staff to part-time class A soldiers, we all put forth our best effort in order to succeed. As a result – the unit took home the bronze medal.



*From left to right are:*

*Bdr Noh, Bdr McCulloch, MBdr Isip, MBdr Moniz, MBdr Roodzant.*

*Not pictured but having taken part in previous games were Bdr Rosa, MBdr Noh, MCpl Shvetsov, Bdr Perez.*

This year, the following individuals represented the 7 Toronto Regiment: MBdrIsip, MBdr Moniz, Bdr McCulloch, MBdr K. Noh, Bdr A. Noh, Bdr Perez, MBdr Roodzant, Bdr Rosa and MCpl Shvetsov (Team Captain). All games were played indoors with five players (including goalie) on the floor at one time. There were six teams in total participating with two groups of three starting out the round robin. Our team had a pretty rough start against the former champions DRDC as it was the first time our team had played together. This game gave the team a better picture at who was capable of what, individual skill level, and chemistry between each other. Starting with the second game and onward, the team made up two consistent lines, where one was in charge of offence and keeping the high pressure on the opponent, and the other one had a mission at slowing down the pace of the game and keeping the net safe.

Bdr McCulloch was the goalie throughout the entire tournament making numerous vital saves that kept his net locked. The team was very impressed as this was his first time playing as a goalie. All of these factors combined together produced good results, and advancement to the semi-finals and finals. In the semi-finals, 7 Toronto faced the team with a colourful name “Atomic Fireballs”. It was the fourth day of the tournament, and most of our players were exhausted from the round robin games.

Our team showed their best effort and desire in order to advance to the gold medal game, which unfortunately was not enough. Our players produced numerous chances and opportunities to find the net, but the ball just didn’t want to go in. The old soccer rule stays true even today – if you don’t score, your opponent will, and unfortunately for 7 Toronto, they did. 7 Toronto did go on to play for the bronze medal on the final day of the tournament against the Royal Cadets Support Unit. All the missed opportunities in the semi-final game capitalized in the consolation final. 7 Toronto scored two unanswered goals by Bdr Noh, who became the unit’s top scorer in the tournament.

A Bronze medal is not a bad result for 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto in the USC tournament, especially as first time participants and never having played together before. The team is young, ambitious, and skillful. It surely has a lot of potential. We can and should expect a better result next year. Whether it’s going to happen – we’ll see next year.

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## **818 Toronto Falcon Squadron Visits the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum**

by: WO2 Tabatha Alder

On Friday November 13, 2015, members of 818 Toronto Falcon Air Cadet Squadron attended “Aviation Day” at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton, Ontario.





The day started with a quick safety and welcome briefing. For demonstration purposes and a bit of fun, FCpl Sinnathurai N. and Cadet Nicodemus R. dressed up as a Spitfire pilot and Rosie the Riveter, the US propaganda icon of World War 2.

The day was spent touring the museum and learning about the various vintage aircraft housed in the museum's collection.



On static display was an F-5 fighter jet, which was used as the fictional Mig-28 in the 1986 film, "Top Gun" starring Tom Cruise.



*Above: FCpl Sinnathurai, N. (left) as a Second World War pilot and Cdt Nicodemus R (right) as Rosie the Riveter*

There were also interactive stations set up where the cadets learned how riveting was done and how to communicate using different methods of Morse code.

Some squadron history was also learned regarding 818. Of particular interest was that 818 squadron was a Royal Naval Fleet Arm Squadron and its involvement key involvement with the sinking of the German Battleship the Bismark. A Swordfish piloted by Sub-Lt John Moffat, dropped the torpedo that struck Bismark's rudder disabling it, allowing the ships of Force H to catch up and eventually sink the Bismark.

At the end of this rewarding educational day, the cadets of 818 Squadron returned to Moss Park Armory.



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## **It takes a Regimental Family to raise our Cadets 105 Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps**



In terms of the Canadian Cadet Organization there are many people involved throughout the country. Most people are aware of this national program for young Canadians aged 12 to 18 who are interested in participating in a variety of fun, challenging and rewarding activities while learning about the Sea, Army and Air activities of the Canadian Armed Forces.

The CCO is a very unique organization as it is based collaboration between DND and the Navy League, the Army Cadet League and the Air Cadet League A.K.A. “The Leagues”. This collaboration is required as the uniformed staff, program design and main operational budget are DND, but volunteers, cadets and local funds are civilian.

The Leagues help set policy, lobby, look after cadet liability (insurance, that is not covered by DND), and help account for the non-public funds. They are an essential part of every local cadet corps across the country.

Locally, local Sponsors/Support Committees essentially look after the local cadet unit outside of anything DND. This includes providing suitable accommodation for the Corps, including offices, lecture rooms and a secure area in which to keep Cadet Corps stores, assist with the recruiting of Cadets and CIC Officers for the Corps and to publicize the activities for the Corps in the community. As well as assisting the Corps in carrying out Corps projects that will be of benefit to the community, i.e. cleanup campaigns, ushering at community events, traffic control at local events, etc.

The local Support Committee is made up of volunteers that are screened by their respective leagues to work various positions in the committee such as: Chairperson, Vice-chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Fundraising Committee and Public Relations Committee.

In most cases all mandatory authorized training and weekend exercise expenses are covered by DND - as long as it is on DND facility. An example would be a weekend Bushcraft/Fieldcraft exercise at CFB Borden.

The challenge to a cadet unit comes when mandatory authorized training happens outside of a DND Facility, such as a conservation area or Scout Camp. DND will eventually pay for the Exercise, but only after the expenses are paid for from NPF from the support committee. The CO can then file a General Allowance claim to claim back any authorized expense from the exercise. Since Officers are not authorized to handle funds directly, the Support Committee plays a very important roll as custodians to the corps funds. They can pay for expenses directly or advance funds to officers to cover expenses as needed. All must be reconciled with receipts before a DND claim can be processed.

Any cadet units that are not in DND armouries also need to pay rent for their weekly training, if they can not find free accommodations. The Support Committee plays an important part in finding and paying for these accommodations.

Without the behind the scenes hard work of these volunteers most cadet units would have a hard time operating.

105 have a dedicated support committee working hard behind the scenes to make operating our cadet program. Recent elections haven't changed the organization too dramatically. After five years Major Duane Sharp, (.ret) has stepped down as Chairperson and will stay on as a consultant for the foreseeable future. We welcome Mrs. Viola Amoroso as our new Chairperson to guide the Support Committee as well as Vice-chair (Roy D'Souza), Treasurer, (Andrew Dobrowolski), Secretary (Mary Campbell).

In addition to the support we get from our support committee, the Cadets and staff of 105 would also like that thank LCol Paul Szabunio, Commanding Officer, the officers, NCOs, Band and the men and women of the 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment RCA, for all their support throughout the years.

It takes the whole Regimental Family to help raise our cadets.



*105 – 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment RCA – Royal Canadian Army Cadets at their 2015 Annual Inspection*



*105 Cadets visiting 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment RCA at Moss Park.  
(The best Gang in town!)*





*105 Cadets learn all about the 105 mm Howitzer  
The “Colours” of the Royal Canadian Artillery*

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## **Remembrance Day 2015 at the Weston Golf and Country Club**

Lt Jeremy Lum

This Remembrance Day I was invited to attend the Weston Golf and Country Club Remembrance Day Tournament. Three other members of the Regiment also attended, Sgt Amber Kase, MBdr Matt Jackson, and MBdr Phil Gawley. This annual event has been raising money and supporting the Juno Beach Centre for the past 12 years. Along with the four of us serving members there were some former members in attendance as well, including one World War II veteran, Jack Commerford who served in an anti-aircraft battery during the War.



*Gunner/Major Jack Commerford (WWII), Sergeant Amber Kase, Master Bombardier Matt Jackson, Master Bombardier Phil Gawley, Lt Jeremy Lum and Hon Col Beno*

This event brings in significant support for the Juno Beach Centre in Normandy over the last few years and this year was no different. Money raised from the event continues to go towards the purchase of Bricks to go on the Wall of Remembrance at the Juno Beach Centre. This event also provides the opportunity for the members of the club to connect with serving soldiers, which allows them to gain a better understanding of what our men and women in uniform do and who they are.

This year the event took time to recognize that 2015 was the 70th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands. The members of the 7th Toronto Regiment who attended the tournament, including myself, had the opportunity to accompany our Honorary Colonel Retired BGen Ernest Beno to the Netherlands this past spring in order to participate in the commemoration of the anniversary.

We all had a chance to speak to the members of the club and share the experiences of our trip and the insight that we all gained into how cherished Canadian soldiers are in the history of the Netherlands due to Canada's participation in their liberation. In Canada we are used to the idea of Canadians remembering the deeds and sacrifices of our Canadian veterans but we easily overlook that citizens of other countries also remember and are tremendously grateful for the actions of Canadian veterans as well. The Netherlands is a prime example of that and it was a truly eye-opening experience to participate in their celebrations and see how even generations later they still show thanks to Canadians.

It was a pleasure joining the members of the club in their Remembrance Day event. Not only does it raise support for the Juno Beach Centre but it maintains awareness of our places of Remembrance that are dedicated to our veterans overseas and provides an opportunity for members of society to connect with current and former serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces.



*The Weston Golf and Country Club Remembrance Day Tournament, 2015*

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## **Reflections of a Gunner – by Captain (Retired) Jeannette Chau**



I joined the 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment when I was 17 years old and served for over ten years through the 1980's. I joined for the lure of the chance to have adventure, travel, and a chance to do something different. I began in the rank of Gunner and advanced to the rank of Master Bombardier before becoming an officer and eventually retiring in the rank of Captain.

I was one of two women who became the first female officers of 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment. We both left after reaching the proverbial glass ceiling, since female officers during that period were not allowed to advance beyond the rank of Captain in a combat regiment. Shannon Regan transferred to 709 Communications and eventually became their Commanding Officer. I chose to concentrate on my busy career as an electrical engineer and start a family.



It was a different time from the way it is now, and yet it is still the same in many respects. What I found over the years is that the saying ‘Once a gunner, always a gunner’ is so very true, and that when you leave the regiment you still carry with you all the memories and friendships that you made.

My time in the Regiment was during my formative teenage and early adult years. It truly shaped the person that I have become. I learned leadership skills, I learned that I could go for days without sleep and still function, I learned teamwork, working under pressure, physical endurance, how to play liar’s dice in the mess, and so much more. Most of all you learn about yourself - what you are capable of that you did not think you could do before; overcoming fear; and the building of confidence in your abilities.



*Officer Cadets Joanne Doyle and Jeannette Chau, Petawawa, 1983*

It is now almost three decades since I was in the Regiment, and yet some of the friends I made then are friends that I still have today. Looking back over the years, I recall it as one of the happiest periods of my life. You don’t quite realize it when you are going through it. It is only through the lens of time when you have multiple other experiences to compare it with, that you realize how being a member of the gunner family is a special experience.



To those of you still serving, enjoy! **“Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner!”**

UBIQUE - Jeannette Chau, Capt (retired)

# THE TORONTO ARTILLERY FOUNDATION

(Established 1978)



Just a few short notes this issue.

## **Membership Update - Benefactors**

Lt Murray G. Galloway. The Foundation is both pleased and proud to announce the elevation of Lt Murray G. Galloway to the level of Benefactor. Murray first became a Permanent Member of the Foundation on 30 December 1980.

Murray served with the 29th Field Regiment, RCA (M) in the late 50's and early 60's prior to its amalgamation with the 42nd Medium Regiment, RCA (M) and the 1st Locating Regiment, RCA (M) to form today's 7th Toronto Regiment, RCA. He has also been a long time supporter of the Gunner Family in Toronto through the Toronto Artillery Foundation, the Toronto Artillery Officers' Association, the Toronto Artillery Association, the Limber Gunners and now the Toronto Gunners.

With his vast experience in the investment field, Murray currently serves as Chairman of the Foundation's Investment Committee.

For those Permanent Members who feel that they may be closing in on the Benefactor level, please do not hesitate to contact the Treasurer to verify your status of donations and consider becoming a Benefactor of the Foundation. And for those wishing to become a Permanent Member do not hesitate to do so. The Foundation is open to all ranks and small donations will be accumulated until you reach the \$1,000.00 mark, at which time your name will appear on the Foundation Plaque located permanently in the 7th Toronto Regiment RCA, Officers' Mess as a Permanent Member.

## **Fund Raising**

Unfortunately, due to unforeseen difficulties, John McDermott's Veterans concert appropriately scheduled for Remembrance Day this year had to be cancelled. But, rest assured it is being re-scheduled for next year and should be quite an event. Funds raised through this event will go to the Regimental Band for the purchasing and refurbishment of band uniforms, instruments, accoutrements, etc.

Further details will be forthcoming as they become available as it gets closer to the event.

## **Foundation Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting of the Foundation was held at Moss Park Armoury on Monday 9 November 2015. Details will follow when available.

## **The Future**

Thanks to our Chairman and HCol, BGen Ernest Beno, the Foundation is embarking on a number of changes and new initiatives to ensure it will remain relevant for the future, build on its past performance and enhance and improve it. Please consider joining us as a volunteer in such areas as business development, networking, asset management, recruiting and fundraising.

**Ubique! Paul Kernohan, Treasurer, The Toronto Artillery Foundation**

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## **Limber Gunners Artyfacts for November 2015**

By: Ron Paterson, Chair, Limber Gunners

The Limber Gunners members had a very busy November. I would like to thank all the members for their participation which has contributed to the success of the numerous 2015 events.

On Sunday, November 8, 2015, the Limber Gunners were honored to take part in the Remembrance Day Church Parade with the 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment to St Clements Church. I would like to thank Frank Moore and Gord Kowalishen for taking part in the parade with the Quad, Limber and 25 Pounder.



## **Wednesday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

The Limber Gunners' two 25 Pounders were honoured to be part of the saluting troop with the guns of the 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment for the Remembrance Day Salute at Queen's Park on November 11<sup>th</sup>. The following members were part of the Gun Detachments on the 25Pdr's; Dave Anderson, Larry Goucher, Ian Farquarson, Gord Kowalishen, Frank Lloyd, Joe McCormack, Dave Rea, Frank Moore, Dave Thompson, Jame Kupresik, Brian Higgins, Peter Tiddo, Paul Kernohan and Ron Paterson. The following guests fired the 25Pdr. on #1 Gun; Jack Commerford a WWII Veteran, John Commerford, Keirsten Commerford, Mr. Mark Chearihue, and Larry Helfamd a WWII Veteran. The 7th Toronto Regiment Band played the Last Post, Reveille and a piper played the Lament. The public were allowed to mingle with the Regimental and LG personnel and the Guns after firing of the Remembrance Day Salute.

### **Upcoming Events**

- The Limber Gunners will be carrying out training starting in January.
- The LG will be holding short administration meetings on the first Monday of each month followed by training.
- On January 4<sup>th</sup> The LG training will be loading the 25Pdr. Casing with primer and black powder taught by Frank Moore and Mike Mercer,
- On February 1<sup>st</sup>, the training will be Gun Drill by Dave Anderson.
- The Limber Gunners intends to run an intense Driver Training Course from March to April on Saturdays. Driving will be on the Quad on days permitted by weather.

### **Recruiting**

To the members of the Regiment that have retired, and you if you and your friends like the smell of the gun powder, driving a WWII Field Artillery Tractor and firing salutes with WWII Equipment and taking part in an active Aquino Day with tanks from WWII to Desert Storm.

**Join the Limber Gunners!**

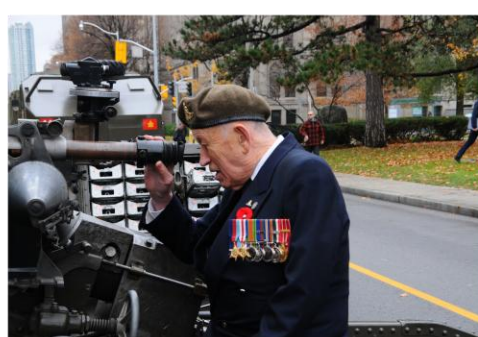
**The LG is still looking for a Limber and a second Field Artillery Tractor and a Limber**

**UBIQUE! Ron Paterson [sevenartygunner@rogers.com](mailto:sevenartygunner@rogers.com)**





# Limber Gunners



# Limber Gunners





## **7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment, RCA Band**

By LT Nick Arrigo

*Pictured here is Sgt. Darrin Hicks; Drum major of the 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto RCA Band at Remembrance Day at Old City Hall Toronto on November 11<sup>th</sup> 2015. In the back ground on Tuba, WO Ray Woodhams, Musician Ellen Lichman and back right Cpl. John Smith. The picture was captured from CP 24's coverage of the event.*



The 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Band participated in many Remembrance Ceremonies this year including our Regimental Church Parade. We marched up Yonge Street starting at Eglinton and ended at St Clement's Church. At the service we performed in conjunction with the St Clements Choir in the Peter van der Horden moving arrangement of "In Flanders Fields."



Many of our trumpeters performed Last Post at several ceremonies around the GTA. Trumpeters included Cpl Steve Abra and Sgt Darrin Hicks. On Remembrance Day, the brass quintet branched out and performed with the Regiment at the Gun Salute at Queen's Park. Musicians included WO (retired) Phillip Trow, WO (retired) Don Mincoff and George McCormick, Cpl Amy Sandford, and Musician Andrew Nowry. Meanwhile the band participated at Old City Hall for the City of Toronto.

Upcoming events include

- St Barbara's Day Dinner 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2015
- Change of Command Parade 29<sup>th</sup> November
- Band Christmas Party Monday December 7<sup>th</sup> 1800 for 1900 dinner
- All ranks Christmas Dinner Saturday December 12, 2015
- Children's Christmas party Saturday December 19<sup>th</sup>



The RCA Band of 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto continues to be the most visible face of the Regimental Family and takes great pride in representing the 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment, RCA.



**RCA Band, 7th Toronto Regiment**

## **5<sup>th</sup> Battery's Stand at Sanctuary Wood** **By Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) Colin Mouatt, CD**

Most gunners are aware of the heroic stand of "L" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery against advancing German troops during the retreat from Mons, Belgium on 1 September 1914. The action was captured by artist Fortunino Matania in his work titled "L Battery R.H.A. How our Gunners Won the V.C. and Silenced the Fire of the German Guns in the Face of Overwhelming Odds. Retreat from Mons 1st September 1914". A single gun of "L" Battery successfully kept up a steady fire for two and a half hours against a full battery of German artillery. Three men of L Battery were awarded the Victoria for their part in the battle, and the battery itself was later awarded the honour title of "Néry", the only British Army unit to have this as a battle honour.



**But did you know that a Canadian Battery made the same type of heroic stand?**

On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1916 during the Battle of Sanctuary Wood, the 5<sup>th</sup> Battery, Canadian Field Artillery had a section of two 18-pounder guns in an advanced position on the western edge of the wood under the command of Lieutenant Charles Penner Cotton. Following an intense four hour artillery bombardment, the German Infantry of the 13th Wurttemberg Corps launched their attack. Cotton's orders were to destroy the guns in the event of a successful enemy advance. Instead, he dragged his guns into the open and fired furiously at almost point-blank range.

Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook gave this account of the action in his book *Canada in Flanders*:

*“It was during the general retirement from east of Sanctuary Wood that two of our guns were lost. Those were 18-pounders, and had been brought up to within 400 yards of the front line and established in gun-pits. They were to be used only in case of emergency, as their fire would be sure to disclose their position to the enemy. Owing to their position and purpose they were known as “sacrifice guns.” Lieut C.P Cotton, of the 1<sup>st</sup> Divisional Artillery, was in command of them.*

*A German aeroplane found these guns on Friday morning (June 2<sup>nd</sup>) and particular attention was immediately paid to them in the midst of the general bombardment of our trenches and positions. Lieut Cotton’s gun-crews suffered, and he reinforced them with Sappers James E. Hood and Chambers, who were in charge of an emergency wireless station within yards of the gun-pits.*

*Cotton opened fire at 1.45 in the afternoon, and, assisted by his three surviving gunners and the two sappers, continued to fire until the enemy came over Observatory Ridge to within a few yards of the gun-pit. He then ordered a retirement. Sapper Hood rushed into his wireless dug-out, destroyed his instrument, and then escaped with a bullet through the bone of his arm. Lieut Cotton and the others of the gun-crews were not so fortunate, they died near the gun-pits – they and their guns having served their desperate purpose to the end – and so they too made the great sacrifice.”*

In the Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War “CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE 1914-1919” Colonel G. W. L. Nicholson, CD noted:

*“Of this incident a German regimental historian was to write: “It is fitting to stress that here too the Canadians did not surrender, but at their guns defended themselves with revolvers to the last man.”*

The June 17<sup>th</sup> entry in the War Diary of 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Divisional Artillery reads as follows:

*“Reconnaissance of the section of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battery CFA which was in action at SANCTUARY WOOD on June 2<sup>nd</sup> reveals the fact that they must have been gallantly fought under Lt COTTON; some hundreds of empty cartridge cases testify to the splendid way in which the detachments must have stuck to their guns until overwhelmed by the German advance.*

*A German prisoner states that the guns were firing up to the time that the first wave in the infantry assault reached them.*

*An operator of the wireless station in SANCTUARY WOOD confirms the story. He himself having assisted at the guns, he was subsequently wounded and after lying out till night got away.*

*The gallant part played by this section of guns should be recorded as one of the finest deeds performed by the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Div Arty.”*

While “L” Battery’s action netted three Victoria Crosses, The Canadian action received no awards.



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## 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment RCA Celebrates 150 Years – 1916-2016

As the days grow long and 2015 draws to a close, the Regiment looks forward to the New Year. Beginning with the annual New Year's Day Levee, 2016 promises to be a year to celebrate. The Regiment will recognize the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formal founding of the Regiment. We can expect additional fanfare at all of the Regiment's normal social functions. Also, we are planning to have another Family Day in September in which all will be invited to witness the Regiment in its present form performing core gunner tasks, which has been the most important theme from 1866 to today.



We can expect the Regiment to continue to build a relationship with Fort York Historical Site, the original home of The Guns in Toronto with another Open Doors Toronto event and to build on the 200 Years of Firepower event that was a great public success. Readers can expect to be invited to a private social event at Fort York with special recognition to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We are always looking to bring back retired gunners from the 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment as well as any former gunners into the family fold. The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Guns in Toronto should be a worth enough cause to do so. If you know anyone that is interested in reconnecting with The Guns, please turn them to our Honorary Colonel BGen (ret'd) Ernest Beno or our Regimental Major John Stewart.

While debates of origin will rage on amongst the Regiment's historians we can also expect to see several souvenirs available recognizing the founding of the Regiment. Expect, wine, spirits and beer brewed with 1866 methods and ingredients available in messes and expect some swag available for purchase from the kit shop.  
Until 2016!



## **BORN IN THE SHADOW OF WAR – WHY I REMEMBER**

By LCol Paul A. Szabunio

*My father's past profoundly influenced my choice to become an Artillery officer and to learn the same craft he did as a Gunner many years before. His story is one of individual survival, and of a nation's courage to survive. When he died in 2010, John McCrae's famous words, "To you from failing hands we throw The torch; be yours to hold it high," fell heavy upon me, as it became my duty to perpetuate his generation's legacy, lest I break faith as the poem admonishes.*



*My dad was born 'Witold Szabunia' in 1923, in a small village of 400 people in Poland's Eastern Borderlands, in what is now Belarus. Like me, he too was the son of a soldier, his father having fought under Polish Marshal Piłsudski against the Bolsheviks in the aftermath of the First World War. When World War II broke out, my dad was just 16 and starting high school.*

*On September 17, 1939, under terms of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact to partition Poland, the Red Army entered the East Borderlands under pretence to help Poland fight against Germany. Overnight, an independent Polish nation ceased to exist as its people were forced to become Soviet citizens. The NKWD (precursor to the KGB) immediately arrested my father for having been a Boy Scout; his father was likewise arrested for his role in the 1920 Polish-Soviet War and sentenced to 10 years hard labour in Siberia (much like 1.5 million other Poles), taking with him only the fur coat that his wife brought to him in prison. My dad never thought he would see his father again, and had no chance to say good-bye.*

*In the dark night of February 10, 1940, the NKWD banged heavily on the door of my father's house, and ordered him, his mother, and his two brothers to pack for immediate displacement to the Soviet Far North.*

*They were given just one hour to grab what provisions they could, and were loaded into Siberian-bound railway cattle cars—a three-week trip in minus 40C.*



**Soviet Gulags.** (source: caesartort.blogspot.com/2010/07/gulag-archipelago-redpill-is-for.html)

*The train had about 60 cattle trucks, each bolted from outside and holding about 50 people: young, old, or handicapped, it did not matter. He was*





were forced under torture to accept Soviet passports. My dad's village was still Soviet. Unknown to my dad, his mother and brothers met their father (all released under amnesty) travelling south to Kazakhstan—they had been separated for over two years with no word if anyone was dead or alive.

*In a month, my father travelled 3000 km to Uzbekistan to enrol near Tashkent, close to the borders of China and Afghanistan, still under constant harassment of the NKWD and threat of starvation—sometimes dog was all there was to eat . . . if they were lucky.*

*In February 1942, my 18 year-old father became a Polish soldier under General Władysław Anders. He was assigned to the 10<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Regiment communication platoon as a signaller. After a few weeks of preparation, they left Uzbekistan via the Caspian Sea for Persia (now Iran). The ship was very small and it was a miracle that it did not sink. Having almost no drinking water and very little food, many people drank seawater and got sick with diarrhoea. Those who died were simply thrown overboard. When they arrived to Pahlavi in March 1942, many more died in hospital after being unable to simply digest healthy food, having been so long on a starvation diet.*



**Victor's colleagues from the 10<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Regiment rehearse in South Italy.** (source: LCol Szabunio)

*In April 1942, he arrived in Palestine by way of Iraq and Jordan for 6-months of basic training. The hardship of that journey was made clear when my dad recalled they sometimes had to drink camel urine in order to stay alive. He learned how to build and repair field telephone lines, Morse code, signal mirrors, and how to call artillery fire. For the first time in three years, having arrived to the shelter of a camp, he enjoyed oranges, grapefruits, bananas and fresh vegetables.*

*In February 1944, he and his colleagues were dispatched to Taranto Italy, encountering a German submarine along the way (which was subsequently sunk by an escort ship). They were given a month to train in anticipation of movement to the front lines of Cassino for late April.*

The battle for Monte Cassino was the fifth largest battle of WWII. The mountain upon which the fortress-like Abbey stood was very strongly held by German paratroopers bunkered on the hill or in the Abbey's ruins. There could be no Allied breakthrough north to Rome along the Liri Valley without



**Polish soldiers at Monte Cassino** (source: [www.myspace.com/aniazolttek](http://www.myspace.com/aniazolttek))

capturing the hill upon which the Abbey stood, and without breaking through innumerable German lines of defence throughout the region. After the third unsuccessful allied offensive against the mountain, General Leese (the British Army commander) turned to General Anders (commander of Polish II Corps' 48,000 soldiers), offering him the chance to capture the hill. Surprisingly to the British, General Anders accepted the challenge without hesitation.

The long-awaited assault on Monte Cassino began on the night of May 11-12, 1944. Hardened by Siberia, the deserts of the Middle East and Africa, and determined to regain their homeland, fighting was fierce and often hand-to-hand. My father recalls crawling on his knees and stomach up the hill trying to defeat the Germans, while staying beneath a steady spray of shrapnel and machine gun fire. Throughout, he called artillery fire onto the German positions, or onto his own as case need-be. Under the heaviest rain of artillery and mortar shells, he repaired continuously broken telephone lines, often crawling over or hiding behind the dead to do so.



**Polish soldiers at Monte Cassino.** (source: polishgreatness.blogspot.com)

The Germans repulsed the first Polish attack of May 11-12. While the Poles suffered many casualties, their offensive helped the British (including Canadians) to break German defences elsewhere in the valleys below. The Polish offensive renewed on May 17, capturing a range of hills and the monastery during the night. Along with capturing Monte Cassino—a critical victory in the war—the German Gustav Line of defence was broken on May 19th.

For his actions at Monte Cassino and elsewhere, my father received Poland's second-highest military honour—the Cross of Valour, or equivalent to the British Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM), or today's Canadian Cross of Valour (CV). He was later awarded the Bronze Cross of Merit with Swords for bravery and other meritorious service—the British equivalent of the Military Cross (MC) or Canada's Star of Military Valour (SMV) today. His



**Rocca Janula and Montecassino.** (source: www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotos-g194714-Cassino-Lazio.html#17933661)



Battery Commander, whom Victor fought alongside, received Poland's highest honour—the *Virtuti Militari*, or equivalent of the Victoria Cross (VC). My father continued onward to Rome and fought in the Gothic Line and elsewhere, ending the war near Bologna on Italy's East Coast.



**View of Abbey from Polish Cemetery.** (source: [www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotos-g194714-w2-Cassino\\_Lazio.html#29344028](http://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotos-g194714-w2-Cassino_Lazio.html#29344028))

His citation reads:

**KANONIER WITOLD SZABUNIO**  
**1 Battery, 10th Medium Artillery Regiment;**  
**Polish II Corps; British VIII Army**

*From 12 to 18 May 1944, during operations in CASSINO, the artillery observation team, which included radiotelephone operator Kanonier Szabunio, found itself under heavy enemy fire. On HILL 706, he showed much bravery and resourcefulness: Under virtually impossible conditions, while under the strongest concentration of artillery and mortar fires, he promptly repaired communication lines that were constantly being damaged. At the same time, he continually risked his life in extremely dangerous circumstances to supply his comrades with food and water. His efforts contributed to the effective fulfillment of the observer's duties.*



*During operations at OSSIMO, Kanonier Witold Szabunio continually repaired over 2 km of radiotelephone lines that were constantly being damaged or severed by enemy artillery. He demonstrated great devotion and courage throughout the whole campaign and did not even want to hear about being transferred to a safer position of action, [thus ensuring communications were maintained with the allied artillery throughout].*

*On the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, during offensive action on HILL 18 by river CESANO, Kanonier Szabunio was bombarded by a German [88 mm] Anti-Tank cannon in defilade. During that attack, a radio-telegrapher from the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment was seriously wounded in the opening salvo.*

*Kanonier Szabunio, paying no attention to the danger and ongoing fire from the antitank gun, singlehandedly attended to his comrade, dressed his wounds and carried him away to*



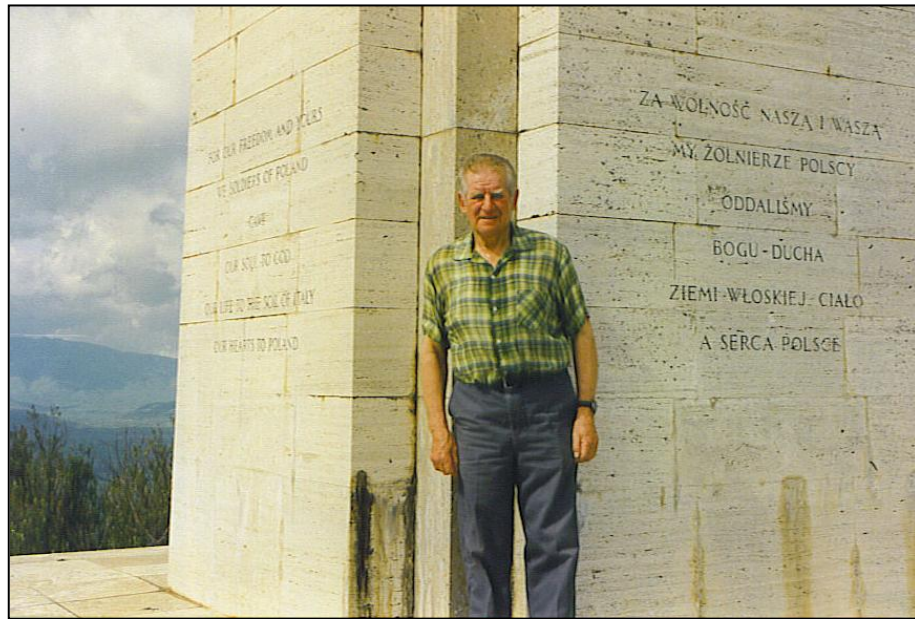
*a safer location. With this heroic deed, he proved his personal courage, selflessness and comradeship*

**Victor (right) with section mates, Italy 1944.** (source: LCol Szabunio)

I first-visited Monte Cassino about a 17 years ago with my then-76 year old father, mother, and older brother. From the massive cemetery, Dad and I both saw an obelisk on the hill a half-mile away and several hundred feet above. A groundskeeper tried to stop this senior citizen and 30-year old kid from scaling the fence surrounding the grounds, and was duly ignored. I will never forget the spring in his step as he literally raced to beat me to the top of the hill, or the look of pride and pain on his face as he surveyed a landscape as familiar to him then as it was 50 years before. When I later crossed that same ground in 2009 as part of a Canadian and American Battlefield study team, I had privilege to walk the same footsteps and mountain paths as he did over a half-century before—where my father once crawled to survive, I stood in freedom in peace in 65 years later.

The haunting epithet on the Obelisk reads:

*For our freedom and yours  
We Polish soldiers  
Have given our souls to God  
Our bodies to the soil of Italy  
And our hearts to Poland*



**Victor aside Obelisk above Polish Cemetery at Monte Cassino.** (source: LCol Szabunio)

In 2002, I had opportunity to visit Minsk in (still authoritarian) Belarus, the city where my grandfather, Antoni, was born. By pure chance and the kindness of strangers, dodging police checkpoints surrounding the city curious as to why a foreigner would want to visit the countryside, I was able to return to the familial home.



**The home, and field it once stood upon.** (source: LCol Szabunio)



Victor’s “uncle” was then still alive, and from the moment I saw him, his bright blue eyes, blonde/grey hair, and deeply-wrinkled sad, yet smiling face and ever-present Polish-nose, told me there was no doubt we were family—he was the spitting image of my father.

I stood where my father’s family home once stood, and touched the walls that still stand, now-abandoned, nearby. From that trip, within my father’s grave lies a small piece of wood from his childhood home, along with soil and grains of wheat from the field where that home once stood.

In the 75 years since he left, I am the *only* Szabunio to have made it back to the place my father once knew as home.

*Niech żyje wolna polska* – Long live free Poland. For our freedom and yours.

Lest we forget.



Victor’s “Uncle”.



Dad, Christmas 2009.

*Toronto Garrison  
Officers Ball 2016*

*Saturday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016  
Hosted by 32 Signal Regiment*



*AllStream Centre*

*Exhibition Place, Toronto*

*[www.torontogarrisonball.ca](http://www.torontogarrisonball.ca)*

*Tickets on sale now!*



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See: [www.cflc.ca](http://www.cflc.ca)



## 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment







# 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment



105 Army Cadet Corps



818 RCAF Air Cadet Squadron



# 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment



# 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment



# 7<sup>th</sup> Toronto Regiment





**Good Shooting!**

**UBIQUE!**