

12 Canadian Light Field Ambulance after World War II

The 12th Canadian Light Field Ambulance reverted to a Reserve Unit after the war. The Light was dropped from the name and it was called the 12 Canadian Field Ambulance. It was commanded by the former wartime Commanding Officer, **Lieutenant-Colonel Caverhill** with a strength of 12 all ranks. The Commanding Officer was one of the original 12 CLFA members who had served as a Stretcher-Bearer Officer. The **RSM** at the time was **WO1 Del Fraine**, who was also an original member of the unit, starting in the Orderly Room when he was a Sergeant. The unit began in 1946.

Where it was housed is a little unclear as my two references conflict. The summary of **Cec Robinson**, who was there, is probably the more correct one and that is that the unit was based in the Shaughnessy Armouries on West 27th Avenue near Oak Street. This former church building also housed a unit of the Dental Corps and the Intelligence Corps. In Colonel Bowmer's account, the unit was housed in the dirty little 'H' Hut in the back of the Seaforth Armouries. I suspect those dirty little 'H' hut were the Shaughnessy Barracks, a collection of temporary buildings erected during the Second World War referred to in the Irish Fusiliers history. At any rate, in 1947, the Unit was moved from their dirty little hut to three small rooms in Headquarters, British Columbia Militia Area at the Jericho Garrison. The parades were once a week but for some reason, the unit did not catch fire, and the evenings were spent playing darts and having a good time.

Command of the unit passed to Lieutenant-Colonel MacLaren. The St. Mary's Priory site was remade into one of the best equipped medical armouries in Canada. With the move to the new armoury (Bessborough Armoury), the Number 66 General Hospital, commanded by **Lieutenant-Colonel Ray Huggard**, was retired and all members transferred to the 12 Canadian Field Ambulance. This brought the unit some much needed life and the unit began to train hard. They quickly won the Ryerson Trophy as the best Medical Unit in Canada. The unit was renamed 12 Medical Company, RCAMC at about this time.

Unfortunately, the history by then LCol Ernie Bowmer that I have taken much of this from ends here

12 Medical Company, Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps

In 1969, the medical unit became attached to the 12 (Vancouver) Service Battalion. As part of an austerity program in 1970, the unit was disbanded along with all militia medical units across Canada and there only existed a medical station within 12 Service Battalion. They were part of the Service Battalion when it occupied the RCAF hangar at the Vancouver Airport. In 1979, the Reserve Medical Companies were re-established. The unit was raised as 12 (Vancouver) Medical Company in 1979 move to its present location at Jericho Garrison later that year.

The unit has grown over the years to a strength of between 80 and 90 members. It includes members who do not live in the Vancouver area but who are members of the unit and train in their home areas and participate with the unit on weekend exercises and on major exercises such as Cougar Salvo with 39 Brigade. The unit is a demanding life to add to one's civilian life. There is at least one night a week that most members are required to attend (Thursday night which gives them plenty of room in the building as 39 Brigade parades on Wednesday night). However, there is at least one weekend exercise per month during the training year plus requalification programs for military and medical qualifications. There are also courses to be taken for promotion and command. To keep the system going, the Canadian Forces Health Services require instructors at the School in Borden to be able to handle the large number of reservists needing training and so people are required for training purposes. Personnel also have to qualify attain their basic military skills before taking any military medical training. There are never enough basic courses available so instructors are required for this training as well. All in all, it leads to a very full life but a hectic life.

The unit has been involved in support to the firefighters in the Okanagan in 2003, to the G8 Security conference in 2002 and to Op Podium, the Canadian Forces Health Services contribution to the 2010 Olympics. Members of the unit have served in the former Yugoslavia and in Afghanistan. They have also served on several United Nations operations and in the First Gulf War.

UNITED NATIONS / NATO TOURS

Master-Corporal Wayne Wohlgemuth served in Afghanistan (see previous page) and with the United Nations (UNPROFOR) and NATO forces in the former Yugoslavia.

CWO Nan Lu also served with the United Nations (UNPROFOR) and NATO forces in the former Yugoslavia.

Sergeant Alex Borthwick, CD served with the United Nations in Cyprus.

Sergeant Pierre Ouellet, CD, served in the United Nations Observation Mission in Iraq & Kuwait after the First Gulf War and in the NATO mission in the former Yugoslavia (as well as in Afghanistan)

Sergeant Richard Sanders, CD served in the United Nations mission in Cyprus and the NATO mission in the former Yugoslavia (as well as Afghanistan)

Sergeant Robert Garceau, CD served in the United Nations mission in Cyprus and in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights (as well as in the First Gulf War).

Sergeant Daniel Suboski, CD served with the NATO forces in the former Yugoslavia

Captain Dennis Haynes, CD, current Deputy Commanding Officer, completed a United Nations peacekeeping tour in Cyprus with the RCR. Dennis was then posted as Operations Officer, Canadian Contingent, United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, Golan Heights in 1987. In 1991 he was detached to 1 Canadian Field Hospital and deployed to Saudi Arabia during the First Gulf War.¹

Lieutenant-Colonel Ben Roth received the United Nations Special Service Medal for his tour with the Cambodian Mine Clearing Mission.

Chief Warrant Officer Scott Stewart served a 6 month tour in Bosnia as a Civilian Military Liaison Officer for the PPCLI earning the NATO medal with bar Former Yugoslavia.



¹ Left to Right: Corporal (now M/Cpl) Wayne Wohlgemuth, Chief Warrant Officer (now Captain) Nan Lu, Sergeant Borthwick, Sergeant (now LS) Pierre Ouellet, Sergeant Richard Sanders and Sergeant Robert Garceau – Bottom row: Sergeant Ouellet, RCAF + remustered RCN LS Ouellette – Captain Dennis Haynes – CWO Scott Stewart - LCol Ben Roth and his Janette (who wears the Special Service Medal bar NATO + CD)

This is not a complete list of those who served on UN Tours and NATO missions.

OP PODIUM

Canadian Forces Medical Services Contribution to the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver

Lieutenant-Colonel Rod Needham, then Commanding Officer of 12 (Vancouver) Field Ambulance, took a sabbatical from teaching in Surrey and became the Deputy Commanding Officer of the CFHS contribution to Op Podium. The Commanding Officer was a navy medical officer based in Victoria so for the first four months of the operation (September 2009 to January 2010), Rod was the on site person in charge of the operation. He and his small staff had to get all the equipment in place, all of the accommodations for the medical staff, attend all the meetings, send briefing notes to the CO in Victoria and to the Commander of 1 Canadian Forces Health Services HQ in Edmonton and to the Surgeon General.



As more troops arrived for security, particularly at remote sites, the need to ensure that they had medical care when needed was paramount. The military was a backup to the full security team lead by the RCMP and municipal policing units but still had a large contingent on hand spread over a large geographic area. The Olympic and Para-lympic games went off well and the Canadian Forces Health Services acquitted themselves admirably.

28% of 12 Field Ambulance staff served full-time or part-time on the exercise. The Members were:

Needham, Rodney ('Rod') Earl	LCol	Deputy CO for the CFHS Op Podium ²
Pinard, Jacques M.	Captain	Staff Officer
Delling, Karl-Torben Lloyd	Lieutenant	
Quinlan, Lesley K.D.	Lieutenant	
Gray, Trevor Richard	Sergeant	
Suboski, Daniel P.	Sergeant	
Andersen, David Edward	Master Corporal	
Chu, Norman Lok-Wen	Master Corporal	
Doty, Jennifer ('Jenni') Barbara	Master Corporal	
Klimas, Ashley C.	Master Corporal	
Yu, Joyce	Master Corporal	
Chan, Joyce Ka Yan	Corporal	
Kwok, Peter Yun Lam	Corporal	
Lefevre, Timothy Alfred	Corporal	
Sun, Si Qi	Corporal	
Tieu, Martin Huang	Corporal	
Vilardi, Dominique Toni	Corporal ³	
Wang, Q.	Corporal	
Wu, Matthew Ka-Ming	Corporal	
Wohlgemuth, Wayne Allen	Corporal	
Soncek, Annie Victoria	Corporal	
Dagg, K.P.	Private	
Hung, Jachin Hao Min	Private	
Jang, Suk Won	Private	

Sanderson, Michael HLCOL ⁴



² Lieutenant-Colonel Rod Needham with his wife Leah.

³ Corporal Dominique Vilardi and Master-Corporal Jenni Doty

⁴ Michael Sanderson was the Executive Director of the Lower Mainland Ambulance Service and provided all the Olympic ambulance services to the 2010 Olympics.

FREEDOM of the CITY of VANCOUVER
14 April 2007



Honorary Colonel Ernie Bowmer, MC, CD wanted the unit to receive the Freedom of the City of Vancouver. This is the highest honour that a city can bestow on a unit. When I became the Honorary Colonel, I knew how to get that done as I worked for the City as their Medical Health Officer. I went to the **Mayor, Sam Sullivan**, and explained what I wanted to happen. They had not done a Freedom of the City for a unit for some time but I had been a member of HMCS Discovery when they received the Freedom of the City and so knew the drill. Sam agreed and took it up in camera to ensure there was support. I then wrote a request to **Counsellor Peter Ladner** to make a formal request to the City Council in Camera.

The process went quite smoothly with the City co-operating fully. On the day of the event, it was sunny and just a little chilly. The unit formed up in the covered public parking lot (it was a Saturday) with three Companies on parade. The music was provided by the Band of the 15th Field Artillery. The Canadian Forces Health Services colours had been sent from Ottawa to Vancouver for the parade. A mounted contingent of five Vancouver City Police Officers and the senior police officer that day met the 12 (Vancouver) Field Ambulance parade lead by **Lieutenant-Colonel Dave Lowe, CD**. The Police Commander and LCol Lowe marched from the front of the city hall where the parade was held up by the horses. Using the heel of his sword, Dave knocked three times on the huge city hall doors. The door was opened by the Chief Constable who inquired what was desired. He then escorted Dave inside the city hall where the Mayor and eight of his City counsellors were waiting for them (and me too!). Dave asked for permission to receive the Freedom of the City which the Mayor granted; City Council having already voted on it. Dave and the Police Chief then proceeded outside. Because Mayor Sullivan was in a wheel chair, he and I had to take a bit of a circuitous route to get outside to the back of the city hall. LCol Lowe, having received permission, had been escorted back to his unit and marched them around to the back of City Hall with the six mounted police officers leading. They had been formed up for inspection. LCol Lowe, the Mayor, members of City Council and the Honorary Colonel, then inspected the parade.

What does it mean in real terms – it gives the unit the *right* “to march through the streets of Vancouver with their bayonets fixed, drums playing and their colours flying.”

FREEDOM of the CITY of VANCOUVER
14 April 2007 ⁵



⁵ Top: Mayor Sam Sullivan, LCol Dave Lowe and HCol John Blatherwick talk with spectators. Mayor Sullivan with members of the Unit.
Below: Corporal Alex Hargott, Lieutenant Lesley Quinlan, Lieutenant Jeff Pope, Lieutenant-Colonel Dave Lowe (Commanding Officer), CWO (now Captain) Peter Van Rienen, RSM march past with "Drums playing, Bayonets Fixed and Colours Flying".

12 (Vancouver) Field Ambulance in AFGHANISTAN

The following Members of 12 (Vancouver) Field Ambulance have served with the Canadian Forces Health Services in Afghanistan. That means that almost 20% of the unit have served at least one tour in Afghanistan and some have served multiple tours.

Captain Tylere Couture
Captain Louise Kurtze
Captain Peter Van Rienen, CD
Captain Jacques Picard, CD *
Sergeant Douglas Fraser, CD
Sergeant Elizabeth Newman, CD *
Sergeant Kevin Wade, CD *
Sergeant Pierre Ouellette, CD *
Sergeant Richard Sanders, CD *
Sergeant Daniel Suboski, CD
Master Corporal Jenni Doty, CD
Master Corporal Ashley Klimas (2 tours)
Master Corporal Justin Johnson
Master Corporal Colin Terry
Master Corporal Wayne Wohlgemuth, CD
Corporal David Edward Andersen
Corporal Chris Buckley
Corporal Alexander ('Alex') John Hargott *
Corporal Christopher ('Chris') Thomas Picard
Captain James Dunwoody (PRL Physician / Lions Gate Hospital Trauma)



AFGHANISTAN in PHOTOS ⁶



Master-Corporal Colin Terry working on a young Afghan boy's foot. This photo was taken while on foot patrol a few km N of the Dand District Centre. Our patrol had been conducting random vehicle check points along a main road leading to Kandahar City. These local boys had been riding their bicycle and had fallen off accidentally and the little one had abrasions on his ankle. I cleaned and dressed the injury with help from our language assistant (translator). The patrol commander, through the language assistant, told the boys to inform their parents that they had been treated by an "ISAF Doctor". I received no increase in pay for this promotion.

⁶ * Not a member of unit when deployed

Medal shown is that of Captain Tylere Couture. The bar to the General Campaign Star (GCS) was abolished on 17 March 2010. The General Campaign Star and General Service Medal were modified so that the existing bars were abolished and replaced with theatre or service-specific ribbons thus allowing the use of bars to recognize multiple rotations where appropriate. The Red – thin white – Green – thin white – Red ribbon continues to be used for Afghanistan.

AFGHANISTAN IN PHOTOS



Corporal David Andersen



Master Corporal Justin Johnson



Chris Picard photos

Counter clockwise from the top left: Chris in front of the blast crater that detonated in front of my Bison; Chris with an interpreter; my rear unloading an injured Canadian Forces Member; and Chris in a gaggle loading the same injured Canadian Forces member onto a helicopter. (**Corporal Chris Picard**)

AFGHANISTAN in PHOTOS



Photo taken in a Coyote Armoured Recce Vehicle in Kandahar City, when Wayne was Patrolling from FoB Frontinac, near the Arghandab Dam, to the PRT in Kandahar City.

Above left, Wayne promoted to Master-Corporal December 2011

(Master-Corporal Wayne Wohlgemuth)



Chris Buckley was in the HLTA relief ambulance that travelled and operated in all CDN AOR's relieving in place the other crews that went on leave. Most excellent opportunity to work with all deployed Canadian units. Never a dull moment. (Corporal Chris Buckley, Task Force 3-09, Oct 2009 - April 2010, OP HYDRA, Kandahar, Afghanistan)

LIFE IN AFGHANISTAN

One Nurse's Story – Captain Sandra ('Sandy') Robinson

This story came to me via e-mail that went through five people and the fifth thought I might like to hear what it was like in Kandahar. This is Captain Sandra Robinson's e-mail home. I went back through the chain to ask if I could use her e-mail in a book I was doing (on Environmental Health Officers) and her message came back saying that I could. In April 2010, Michael Sanderson, Rod Needham and I were at the 1 Canadian Forces Health Service meeting and mess dinner in Edmonton and this beautiful young Captain came up to me and asked if I knew who she was. I said I didn't and she said she was Sandy Robinson. Nope – still didn't click. And then she said, you used my e-mail in a book and sent me a copy of the book. Sandy, a nurse, is now based at CFB Comox. This is how she saw Afghanistan.

Wow, I actually have a full day off, how relieving! I didn't get up until 1130 this morning, and it wasn't a stretch to sleep in that long, yippee.....of course I did laundry until about 0100 and then read a book until 0200 so 1130 really isn't that long! Why was I doing laundry until that late you ask? Well, there are some laundry facilities for people if you don't want to send your laundry to be done (and to all turn a dusty grey colour) and they are usually very busy until later at night, so I now have clean laundry that smells like Lavender Vanilla thanks to the Downy sheets that Heather sent! All of the girls want to use them, cause they smell so nice! It is amazing that we are excited about Downy sheets!!!!

OK, so Kandahar in the last week.....well, let me tell you that what you hear on the news about what we do only comprises about 25% of our workload! The news never mentions the Afghan patients from any of the following groups...Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, Locals, and Bad Guys, we get them all.

Monday was horrific. The cement factory on the other side of the base had an explosion when they were mixing gasoline with asphalt....so we had 11 burn (really burned) patients just show up unannounced at our back door. Usually we have warning that casualties are coming as they have to come through the gate, so usually we have time to prepare, this time they just showed up and there were only 3 nurses at work as it was 2130. So, we all got our 911 page which means Mass Casualties, and turned up at the hospital. This was the first time for us that a mass cas had been called when the casualty were already there, it was different. I could smell them from outside and when I went inside it was crazy. People were arriving, patients and their friends were screaming, and it was like a scene from a wax museum where someone had turned up the heat.

The charge nurse on the evening shift looked at me and said, Sandy - go to trauma bay 4 -he's got an IV and has had 100 of Fentanyl....so it was just me with this patient who had 90% body surface area burns, airway \ inhalation injuries.....was quite awake and alert (until we sedated him)....for about 8 minutes, until a doctor came to my bay....I don't think I've ever been happier to see a Doctor (a Danish orthopedic surgeon actually named Anne-Marie). We carried on together putting in various tubes, lines, etc, and making him comfortable until an anesthetist arrived and we intubated. He died the next day.

The next day also saw a Canadian soldier die in my trauma bay. That day I was never so happy to see a Padre, for what else can you do but grab the Padre to do something when you can't do anymore yourself. We had 5 patients (3 Canucks and 2 US) come in the morning, one of them died (as above) and then three more Canadians came in the afternoon, but they were all fairly healthy, just a few superficial shrapnel wounds. The next day we had 4 Afghans show up in the trauma bays with gun shot wounds for two of them (they were bad guys) and two locals whose house had fallen on them when the Taliban fired a rocket at it. They were fine, one of the bad guys died, and one is still around. By this time the hospital was full and we were running like crazy to keep up. Now things have slowed down a bit, but that was the third second Monday in a row that we have had a mass cal. Now every second Monday we hold our breath and wait for the pagers to go off. Crazy.

Enough sad stuff, our team is great, and life is moving on. The team members have started to go on leave and come back with great stories. Tony and I will be heading for New Zealand within a months time and will be staying for 18 days. I have a few days off on either end of our trip to relax in a different location and will totally, incredibly enjoy a nice glass of Merlot.....it will be the most earned glass of wine in my life!

I'm even considering going to the Roman Catholic service on Sundays as they have real wine in their communion offerings! Just joking, my mom's dad (Dack) would roll over in his grave if I went to a Catholic service, being the Orangeman that he was! Besides, I always work on Sundays.

So, our trip is going to be great. We have rented a camper in New Zealand and will be doing a self-drive "Lord of the Rings" tour which takes in all of the amazing scenery in NZ. If you have seen the movies you know what I'm talking about. We will stay in a hotel (and I will definitely go to a spa) for the first two days and the last day, and the in-between part we will be camping all over the place. I can't wait to cook my own healthy food and sit on the beach with Tony and a glass of wine (am I fixated on wine right now or what). The only thing missing from our camping trip will be Hamish...apparently, Tony put me on speaker phone the other day and I spoke to Hamish, he licked the phone cause he knew it was me....I think he might have even gone looking for me when he heard my voice...how cute!

The CDS was here last week, what an amazing man. He gave each of the hospital staff one of his coins, which you don't just "get". They are only given out to people whom he believes do amazing work. He was telling us that he meets every Canadian soldier who comes home when they have been injured and that barring none, they rave about the care they have received in our little plywood hospital and rave again about the care they receive in Landstuhl, Germany. He says they don't say much about the care they receive at home. I think this is because they are special to us, and we sort of understand what they have been through. It must be difficult for them to be in a regular hospital where they are just one of the patients surrounded by other patients who (unless they are vets) have no comprehension of what these guys have been through. What a learning curve that must be for everyone involved. Last night I went to Canada House to call Mom and Dad, and Peter Newman from Global news was sitting there on the deck, he was filming the news from there, how cool is that? He said that North Korea had test fired its first nuclear missile underground, wow, that is the first current piece of news I have heard about the rest of the world, besides celebrity gossip, which really isn't news...but does increase morale and keep us laughing!

Yesterday was Thanksgiving. As we are on an American camp it was actually Columbus Day, so the mess had Turkey and stuffing and real (vice their usual out of the box powdered) mashed potatoes....nothing like moms at all. We brought our own Happy Thanksgiving napkins (thanks to Judy Muir for those!) and a paper turkey (thanks to Heather) to sit on the table....we passed the turkey to other tables of Canucks as we left, it was fun, we had our own little celebration, the food sucked, but we still had fun.

Our last Maxillofacial Surgeon painted a mural on the concrete barricades (for protection from shrapnel \ blasts) of a lake surrounded by mountains and palm trees at night, with a full moon....and in front of the moon he painted a witch on a broom. He was from Wales and was talking about Welsh women being very sixth sense. We call our patio "the Witch Way Home" which is appropriate. There are corn brooms hanging from the ceiling and it is just fun. Someone actually found a little cactus plant to sit on the table. It is a perfect place for a Halloween party, so I think well just have to have one!

So, what's next? Well, the bazaar is on Saturday again, maybe I'll go to that. Last week Jen and I bought some antique oil lamps that look like the kind you rub on the side to make the Geni (I don't know how to spell that word) come out. They were very inexpensive and looked old and authentic...however, these Afghans are tricky, they know how to dye tones and make them look real just to get some cash. They have some neat things there though and it is a change of pace to go shopping. I have enough Halloween decorations and candy (thanks to many people) now to plan our very own Halloween party which will be fun. We have a patio outside of our barracks that has been made with desert cam nets, wooden pallets, an old patio table, a massive cable spool for a table, and some camp chairs.

That's about all of the excitement I can think of for now. I hope everyone is doing well. Take care and I will try to write again soon.