

CANADIAN WOMEN'S CLUB PRESENTATION
ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION
11 APR 2018

Good Afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to tell you a little about the San Francisco Bay Royal Canadian Legion. A wee disclaimer – I am not now, nor have I ever been a Canadian! Back in 1980 I almost moved to BC and stayed “in-country,” but alas it didn’t happen. Even got a book on **How to Be a Canadian...**

By the way, I hope you do not mind that I didn’t put a power point slide presentation together. In the military we call it: “Death by Power point” and it is something I am always concerned about.

So, you may be wondering how this Yank became president of one of the few remaining branches in the US. Let me get to that a bit later...

First a wee bit of history:

Before the First World War, those who served in the military tended to join their regimental associations. Their activities were largely devoted to talking about old times and assisting needy comrades in distress. Pensions, if there were any, were pretty low. The sheer number of soldiers and sailors who served in the Great War (WW I) created a vast number suffering as medically unfit, wounded and such. In Canada 15 national veterans’ groups sprang up, but there was no united voice to be heard. Unity was the only hope.

In the UK the **Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League (RCEL)** represents the interests of **Commonwealth** citizens who have served with either the British or Commonwealth Forces. It was founded in 1921 (as the **British Empire Service League**) by Field Marshals Earl Haig and Jan Smuts to link together the various ex-service organizations throughout the Commonwealth. The Ex-Service groups in Canada met

in Winnipeg in 1925 creating the **Canadian Legion as part of the BESL. On one side of the hand out are emblems of note: the first design and the current.**

That is the organizational history. Not for something completely local:

Thousands of Canadians moved to the States in the 1920s and 30s. And many Americans who joined the Canadian military before the US got into WW I came home, so that with that group of veterans, later joined by the WW II mob, the

United States had, by the 1970s over forty active "posts" as there were then called. Here the branches were referred to as posts, presidents as commanders, adjutant instead of secretary, in the same manner as the American Legion. This changed in the 1990s when the terminology was standardized here to be in line with Canada.

1980 the location of the posts in California (pre-Florida Snowbirds???) were as follows:

Posts were in Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Texas, Utah and Washington State.

Sixteen in California alone: Culver City, Fresno, Gardena, Glendale, Palm Springs, Sacramento, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Van Nuys, and West Covina,

And here in the bay area (5) Berkeley, Oakland, Petaluma, Redwood City, and San Francisco. Alas, today just one branch is here in the Bay Area. One of the neat things about our Western Command as it was known in the 70s and 80s was that we adopted the policy of promoting the cause of peace and amity among all nations and in every community, and endeavor to propagate the principles of justice and personal liberty.

UN Mission in Haiti and twice at Peacekeeping School in NS.

Today: Our mission is to serve veterans and their dependents, promote Remembrance and act in the service of Canada, the United States and of our NATO allies, and their communities.

In all things we follow the motto: Comradeship and the memory of those who gave their lives in the service - Lest We Forget

Membership in the United States

Membership is open to any person of good character who served honorably in the Canadian Forces, the American military, one of Her Majesty's Commonwealth services, a NATO member, or a United Nations Peacekeeping force. This would allow you to be an ordinary member. Associate membership is open to non-service members. We do not have the Ladies Auxiliaries any longer in the States. Members and Associates now. And we maintain the purposes and principles of the RCL consistent with the allegiance owed to the country of adoption/citizenship.

An outstanding Legion Magazine (hold up)

Veterans Benefits

The RCL cooperates with Canadian and US veterans' administrations for the maintenance and extension of acquired legitimate interests of needful comrades and of spouses, orphans and dependents of those who served. Disability pensions. Assistance with Veterans Affairs issues provide help here with medical/hospice/home care if possible.

The Last Post Fund

This fund exists, in part, to ensure that no former member of the Canadian Forces/spouse who died: Greenlawn Cemetery in Colma and Liberty Cemetery in Petaluma. Those members who are buried

elsewhere have a wee plaque placed on the cenotaph at Greenlawn as a memorial.

In Southern California our next higher command The Western Zone, maintains their own fund. The newest branch, in Chapala, Mexico, is covered by the zone.

Support of Youth Programs

Back in the 1980s the “younger” members of #25 formed a Colour Party to honour the memory of the Veterans and wore the uniform of the Black Watch (RHR) of Canada. Parades, memorial services, Remembrance Day and so on. We were blessed with permission to wear the WW II vintage uniforms of the BW by the Regimental commander LTC Cartier. In fact, he invited a team of us to Montreal in 1987 for the 125th Anniversary of the Regiment. We marched in the parades and the presentation of New Colours at Molson Stadium/McGill University. I had the honor/privilege of speaking with and shaking the Honorary Colonel/the Queen Mum’s hand!

Well, families and jobs started to get in the way. So the branch looked at other options.

(Throughout Canada, branches support cadet and youth sports programs. Our branch decided we should do the same here. Sponsor US Sea Cadets – Arkansas Division 1995

The RCL Cadet Medal of Excellence, Scholarship help –

Sent the Arkansas Division to Esquimalt in 2015 for a joint Canadian-US Sea Cadet summer camp

They act as escorts at WCR, Colour Parties at Greenlawn/Liberty Grace

Remembrance Activities and Scottish Games

Memorial Day – Greenlawn in Colma **GAMES Pleasanton - recruiting**

Remembrance Day – Petaluma/Veterans Day Parade

Remembrance Day Sunday at Grace Cathedral Commemorations

Battles: Vimy handout 7APR

Burning of York in the War of 1812 (Americans don't know they did this before the Brits torched Washington). Dieppe and many more.

I mention the Games as it has been a place to meet/recruit folks, and, over the years I helped coordinate the visit of Canadian military bands with the DND. This has included the Calgary Highlanders, The Canadian-Scottish (drafted to pipe in CAN uniform), the Seaforths, the Cameron Highlanders, and the Toronto Scottish (Scots Guards too).

We hold monthly meetings at the Englander Pub in San Leandro

It is centrally located, but recently we found out there is a Canadian pub in Berkeley that serves Poutine. Maybe a move down the road...

At each meeting as part of the Lest We Forget we recite a portion of an ode "For the Fallen:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, not the years condemn

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them.

This was written by the English poet Laurence Binyon, and published in the *Winnowing Fan: Poems of the Great War*. It is recited by veterans groups around the globe – from the Returned Services League in Australia to the various Legions of the Commonwealth.

We exist, and have existed for over 90 years, now to “remember them.”

Thank you.

Any questions?

100 years ago today. Backs to the wall speech.

SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY
By FIELD-MARSHAL SIR DOUGLAS HAIG
K.T., G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.I.E.
Commander-in-Chief, British Armies in France

To ALL RANKS OF THE BRITISH ARMY IN FRANCE AND FLANDERS

Three weeks ago to-day the enemy began his terrific attacks against us on a fifty-mile front. His objects are to separate us from the French, to take the Channel Ports and destroy the British Army.

In spite of throwing already 106 Divisions into the battle and enduring the most reckless sacrifice of human life, he has as yet made little progress towards his goals.

We owe this to the determined fighting and self-sacrifice of our troops. Words fail me to express the admiration which I feel for the splendid resistance offered by all ranks of our Army under the most trying circumstances.

Many amongst us now are tired. To those I would say that Victory will belong to the side which holds out the longest. The French Army is moving rapidly and in great force to our support.

There is no other course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man: there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause each one of us must fight on to the end. The safety of our homes and the Freedom of mankind alike depend upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment.

(Signed) D. Haig F.M.
Commander-in-Chief
British Armies in France

General Headquarters
Tuesday, April 11th, 1918

Sir Douglas Haig was Honorary Colonel of the London Scottish after the war.