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Royal Canadian Army Cadet Summer Training Centre VERNON



ROYAL CANADIAN ARMY CADETS IS A NATIONAL YOUTH PROGRAM SPONSORED BY THE CANADIAN FORCES
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CIVILIAN ARMY CADET LEAGUE OF CANADA

BACKGROUND

DOCUMENTATION

October 2002

PASSING ON THE TRADITION

Last August, fifty years after he commanded the third summer concentration of army cadets in Vernon, Colonel David Kinloch watched as Lieutenant Colonel Terry Kopan led nearly 1,000 officers and cadets past the Reviewing Officer, RCMP Deputy Commissioner Beverley A. Busson. In fifty years, Col Kinloch had seen many changes at the largest army cadet summer training centre in western Canada that straddles Highway 97 only three kilometers from his home near Kalamalka Lake.

In a letter to Lt. Col Kopan, who took command of Vernon Army Cadet Summer Training Centre last year, Col Kinloch said that it was, "More than just an exceptionally good Parade. To me it was like the culmination of fifty years of striving for perfection and finally coming as close as it could ever be." He added, "The Spirit of all the thousands who have marched below those background hills was abroad that night on your Parade."

A week after the officers, cadets and staff had returned to their homes across western Canada, the two commanding officers spent some time talking about the changing nature of training and the camp itself. Col Kinloch had served with the British Columbia Dragoons in World War II, losing a leg in Italy during the Battle for Rimini. On his return to Canada, he joined the Reserve Regiment of the B.C. Dragoons and commanded the Regiment from 1947 until 1952.

When Col Kinloch took command of Camp Vernon in 1951, he had no experience with cadets and the summer was "quite an adventure." Six hundred male cadets enrolled in trades courses, training to be driver-mechanics, wireless operators or undertook general military training. "That was the last summer we had cooks from the Army Service Corps and they did a wonderful job," Col Kinloch commented, also recalling being assisted by a very good regular force adjutant, Captain Ian Wilson of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry. The New Commanding Officer was faced with cadets who carried out raids on local gardens and orchards, treating the late night adventures as a joke. However, some of the instructors, who were regular force non-commissioned officers, were also involved, and those who were caught were sent home.

Cadets could hold rank up to Cadet Major, and Col Kinloch recalls some of them "strutting around like peacocks," until he communicated the message that such behavior was unacceptable.

There were also conflicts with other branches of the military. In 1951, 24 Mil Group held a ten-day concentration in Vernon at the same time as the pre-camp courses were underway and the British commander tried to change everything. During a fire movement demonstration at Glen Emma, a training site



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north of Vernon, Col Kinloch took the militia, who were members of the B.C. Dragoons, out to watch the demonstration of 75 mm Sherman tanks and anti-tank guns. However, the lunch, which was prepared at the camp and transported to the site, turned up only to serve the one platoon from the Princess Patricia's; the demonstration was canceled and everyone had to return to the camp.

Transportation was also a source of problems. "At that time, we used trains extensively for transporting cadets. At the end of the summer, everyone left Vernon on one Saturday. However, the problem arose when we discovered that our timings were based on Daylight Savings Times, and the railway operated on Standard Times. Brigadier Bob Lyman, the western division traffic manager, accused me of fouling up the entire schedule from Vancouver to Winnipeg." said Kinloch.

Food also presented problems in 1952 when the camp switched to civilian contractors. "I spent 90 percent of my time battling cooks, who were not trained. We were always short of rations for training exercises, meals were always late." When the Vernon Chamber of Commerce hosted a big party for the officers at the beginning of camp, Col Kinloch hosted the first party for camp staff and guests from the City of Vernon who had helped the camp. "We were expecting about 70 guests and I asked the caterer to prepare the very best: whole turkeys, pork loins, roast beef and salads. The chef turned up in a dirty apron and hat and cut the beef into impossible thick slabs. When I chastised him, he quit on the spot and handed me his tools. To top it off, the next day he complained about being fired."

For LCol Kopan, the stories are an important link to the past, to the history of a very special place. "It's a different place now. Many of the old buildings are gone; the training is led by Cadet Instructors Cadre Officers, and female cadets make up a third of the centre. The focus has evolved from military training to leadership skills and adventure training exercises. But, David Kinloch represents the tradition of excellence that we all strive to live up to and he spans fifty of the fifty-three years that this centre has served the youth of Canada. It's been an honour to be associated with him and to follow his example."