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NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 1, 2018

NEXT MEETING THURSDAY December 6, 2018 – Alpine Ski Club

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT: GREG GEEN • PAST PRESIDENT: RUBEN ROSEN
SOCIAL: DOUG BROWN & TERRY BILLO • SECRETARY: AL WALLACE
TREASURER: MIKE MARTYNUK • SPEAKERS: RUBEN ROSEN
MEMBERSHIP: JOHN MEGARRY • NEWSLETTER: GORD HALL

CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

►► DECEMBER 6, 2018 – ALPINE ◀◀

We are truly looking forward to our December 6 Christmas Luncheon at the fabulous new facility at the Alpine Ski Club – a spectacular view. Food by “Men With Knives”. Our keynote speaker, Dr. Karin Euler, a Thornbury General Practitioner, will be presenting on her ongoing volunteer work to Tanzania each Fall to help the residents on an island situate in Lake Vitoria. We are excited to have Dr. Euler and believe that her topic and presentation will be of great interest to members, spouses and partners !

Please join your fellow Probus members and their guests as we continue the tradition of launching the Holiday Season.

► Small new stuffed animal toys – such as small teddy bears for our Collingwood & Marine General Hospital annual children’s toy drive will be much appreciated. ◀

We are very pleased with the number of members & guests attending - a very few tickets remain and are immediately available. A waiting list will be started if necessary – we will however attempt to accommodate as many as possible. So come along !

Please note:

- ▶▶ Attendees will be met by our volunteer Greeters
- ▶▶ Members \ Guests may be dropped off at the front door
- ▶▶ Volunteers will be running a shuttle service from the parking lot to the entrance
- ▶▶ There are numerous handicap parking spots adjacent to the entrance
- ▶▶ Interested in coming & on your own ? Please feel free to call 705.446.4281 to chat re: sociable \ friendly table arrangements

OUR REMEMBRANCE DAY MEETING

November 1 was a special meeting for all of our members who attended ! The length of next month's newsletter will revert to normal .

THE OPENING \ GUESTS

- Ian was in excellent form - thank you Ian.
- John Carswell [born & raised in Collingwood] \ Jim Knight [Oshawa - Courtice area – met our Doug Brown at age one] \ Joel O' Quinn [retired Ontario Hydro-Collingwood resident] \ Case Roest [retired electrical engineer – Collingwood resident] were each introduced and given a warm welcome.

JOHN MCRAE'S FLANDERS FIELD John McCrae, 1872 - 1918

A moving reading by President Greg !

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly

Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

UNCLE ABE – A PROFILE IN DETERMINATION

Members in attendance heard a wonderful family story from Reuben regarding the journey of Reuben's wife's Uncle Abe in the American military during WWII.

Young Abe (Abraham) Daniels was one of seven children, born in Caribou, Maine in 1917. He was regarded by his family as “rather meek and unassuming”. Caribou had a population of 5,000 [now 7,500] and was very close to the New Brunswick border.

Following high school Abe stayed in Caribou until 1939 working at his father's butcher shop. Seeking to “expand his horizons” he decided [I can add “obviously the correct decision”] that a brighter future lay outside of Caribou – naturally given that it was 1939 he looked to the military – the U.S. Marines in particular.

However Abe had a problem as far as the military bureaucracy was concerned – he was 1¼ of an inch too short. What did he do about ? He showed gumption & nerve by moving his papers on the recruiting desk from the rejection to the acceptance file while the presiding Sergeant was out of the room ! Further initiative was shown at Boot Camp at Terrace Island, North Carolina – he again overcame a second REJECTION for the same 1¼ of an inch! This time by his powers of persuasion.

Cutting to the chase our Abe moved up the ladder – initially as an office clerk in the Marine Corps \ working and studying diligently (in his spare time) – by 1942 our “average” and “unassuming” Abe was a Marine pilot – then a dive bomber pilot.

February 7, 1943 – Abe & The Destroyer

About 200 miles from our base, we came across 20 Japanese destroyers and quite a few Zeros, which was their top fighter at that time. We were clearly outnumbered.

Outside of flying my plane, I had to keep one eye on the leveller, which was in fact a carpenter's level, and the other eye on the target I was carrying one 500 pound bomb and two one hundred pound bombs.

I dropped my bombs and the three of them hit midship. I dropped my plane, saw that the ship was burning furiously, I put it on full throttle and got the hell out of there.

I was the only pilot who got a direct hit that day

Remember this was the twice rejected “short one” !!! And an “ordinary kid” from “nowhere” on the northern Maine \ New Brunswick border.

What Uncle Abe didn't say was that 450 Japanese naval men were on that destroyer - for many years thereafter he held the U.S. military record for having single-handedly killed the most enemy combatants in U.S. military history. It was clear and a mark of Abraham's character that that destruction affected him deeply – you see for seventy-two years thereafter he fasted each and every February 7th !

Abraham Daniels was subsequently awarded \ received the Distinguished Flying Cross from President Roosevelt \ thereafter the Gold Star.

Uncle Abe retired from the U.S. military as a Lieutenant Colonel and lived to be 97 !

Looking back he would reflect on his career:

...sitting in my military office ..., I would smile and say to myself if my Caribou, Maine and other buddies could only see me now ... here I am ... very little education, barely made the grade in high school, then entered the military as an enlisted man, got my wings as an enlisted pilot, got an enemy destroyer, got my commission and here I am today in charge of the El Centro Aerial Gunnery School [California] with 1500 men under me.

MINISTER OF CULTURE

Our Remembrance Day theme \ recognition of the 100th anniversary of WWI Armistice continued – Wayne arranged for the playing of a video on the plight of the young Australian troops (from the “colonies”) and their slaughter at Silva Bay.

“ I never knew that there were worse things than dying”

The video was followed by the truly moving rendition of And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda by the Irish Tenors.

The troops returned home & came off the ships:

“No one waiting .. nobody cheered ... turned all their faces away”

Link: And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda

<https://ca.video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-Lkry-SF01&hsimp=yhs-SF01&hspart=Lkry&p=and+the+Band+played+Waltzing+Matilda#id=1&vid=d40b5db86a29e30aa4b7e465f574635c&action=click>

Thank you Wayne ! Our Minister has been at his post since Fall of 2013 – he will be hanging up his skates \ boxing gloves following his last gig at the Christmas Luncheon – unless he can be persuaded to share his ministerial duties on a bi-monthly basis ???

OCTOBER SPEAKER – DR. WILMA DEGROOT

Local medical doctor \ Collingwood native, Wilma DeGroot, in the presence of her parents, gave a wonderful presentation of her experiences in living through the famous October 31, 1991 crash of the Canadian military’s C130 Hercules supply aircraft near its destination of Alert \ Ellesmere Island [north and east of the magnetic North Pole. Dr. DeGroot was a young woman who had enrolled in the medical training school at Trenton a few months earlier.

Hercules (130322) was flying from Edmonton, Alberta via Thule Air Base, Greenland on a bi-annual resupply mission to the Canadian Forces Station at Alert. While on final approach to the airstrip the Hercules, carrying 18 passengers and crew struck a rocky slope and crashed on Ellesmere Island, approximately 16 km short of the runway. The rescue was hampered by a blizzard and the rough terrain.

The Herc crashed at 4pm – it was already dark . The crash line extended for a mile – four died initially – the pilot later of exposure. Some survivors initially sat on one of the broken wings \ sang songs \ then huddled in the tail of the plane. Two survivors with spinal injuries were left outside [“best chance of survival”]. “I learned and mused on the concepts of responsibility and guilt”.

A rescue plane [another “Herc”] from Edmonton was heard overhead at 12:20am – having endured a major winter storm – the survivors reached Alert approximately 30 hours following the crash.

Magazine account [not part of the presentation] :

By evening, four were counted dead (one died on impact, and three perished within an hour). Of the 14 survivors, four could walk, eight were badly hurt, and two—including hairdresser Sue Hillier—could not be moved for fear they had spinal injuries. “I’m not going to leave you,” the captain told Hillier. With assistance, he built a protective snow-shield around her with a tarp, kept a warming fire going with bits of burnable debris and talked to her throughout the night. “I’ll never forget his voice,” Hillier says. “He saved my life.” Despite a blinding blizzard that soon struck the survivors, Couch never ceased aiding the injured. He even refused warm clothing, gloves and insulated mukluk boots so that others could have them. “There were no spare jackets, no spare mitts for John,” says Bales. “I don’t know how he did it.”

By Thursday morning, 11 of the survivors lay in sleeping bags in the tail section, huddled together for warmth. They ate candy from survival rations, and Couch made sure they answered periodic roll calls and rotated frequently to the slightly warmer center spot. Since the clothes on the shivering bodies would otherwise freeze to the metal floor, all the victims had to be turned often. Moving those with broken limbs always prompted horrifying moans and shrieks. Some people hallucinated, others had to be roused from dangerous deep sleep that made the survivors more susceptible to freezing.

Meanwhile, overhead, the rescue plane had marked the crash site with flares by homing in on an emergency locator transmitter that the survivors had taken from the wreckage. Since howling, whiteout conditions prevented an immediate recovery jump, other rescuers, in a bulldozer and two tank like, all-weather vehicles called Go-Tracks, set out from Alert. Because a mountain range with peaks up to 8,500 feet lay between the base and the crash site, the convoy had to hug the jagged coast, inching perilously close to hidden ravines, cliffs and frozen-over bays and rivers. After the bulldozer sank through the ice, the 10-man team in Go-Tracks returned to the base for more food, water and fuel.

On the next trip, says rescue leader WO Fred Ritchie, 42, “we had better maps, but we were still navigating by wind direction and one guy walking out front with a flashlight. We had about five or 10 feet of visibility off to the sides. Someone even saw a few arctic wolves off a ways. It was frustrating and very slow, but we never thought of going back. We knew the clock was running and lives were at stake.”

After 22 hours of painstaking progress, Ritchie’s six-man ground team arrived at the crash site early Friday morning, an hour after the paratroopers had jumped. “It was like a scene out of some Stephen King novel,” Ritchie says. “There were lit-up triage tents

and ghostlike figures with headlamps and flashlights. One of our guys was even spooked by an open, blowing parachute that came at him. He thought it was a polar bear.”

Rescuers stabilized the severely injured, who mostly suffered frostbite, frozen extremities, internal wounds and broken bones. Sue Hillier escaped with frostbitten toes and a neck sprain. However, heroic John Couch, a father of two young girls, had come to a slow, tragic end. Several hours before the rescue, he succumbed to the cold. At one point, Bales looked over at the captain’s face. “That’s when you really could tell he was no longer with us,” Bales recalls. He himself was already delirious from the cold, seeing vivid colors and rooms full of people he knew. Then, just as he thought he too was dying, a man in a jumpsuit appeared with a flashlight, and Bales vaguely realized that he’d been rescued. Four men and one woman had died, but 13 had survived.

Within hours the storm had passed, and the dehydrated, tearful, joyful survivors were flown to Alert by helicopter. All are recuperating in hospitals and homes across Canada. Officials are still investigating the crash. Whatever caused the plane to drop so suddenly may never be known, but one thing does seem certain. Says Paul West, flight engineer on the C-130: “There are 13 people alive because of the efforts of John Couch. It’s because of him that we’re here today.”

The experience obviously was an incredible one for Dr. DeGroot which has not diminished with the passage of time. She commented that she was pleased with the

CAF’s handling of the 25th anniversary of the crash which included an “emotional Trenton flypast” and new cairn erected in Trenton.

A film was made in 1993 – “Ordeal in the Arctic” – Wilma was played by Catherine M. Stewart. Wilma: “*It was mostly true*” .

Our speaker was thanked for her riveting presentation and then asked to pick our fifty \ fifty winners.

FIFTY \ FIFTY WINNERS

Congratulations to John Miller & Bob Milthorpe ! Friendly reminder = winners are on the hook to man the 50\50 desk for the December meeting [or to arrange a substitute] .

The meeting adjourned with many of our members enjoying the Legion’s cuisine !

Note: Feedback\ Suggestions ►► gord@halllaw.com