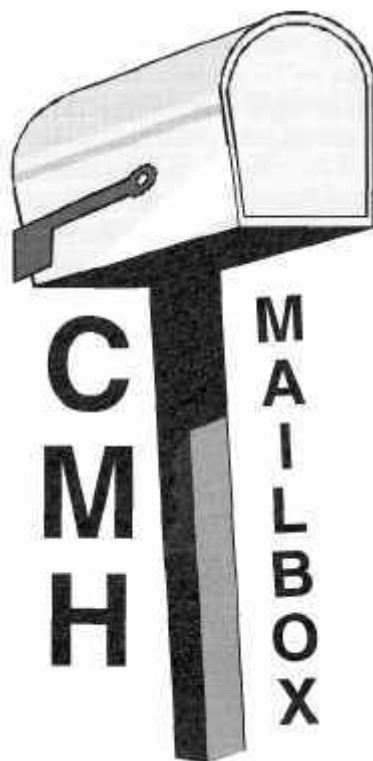


I became aware of the existence of Canadian Military History as the result of a reference to it in a recent copy of the newsletter of the Toronto Scottish Regiment Association and in it the mention of the article about the 5th Brigade at Verrieres ridge. I soon obtained a copy of your publication at the library of the RCMI [Royal Canadian Military Institute], of which I am a long time (life) member. I perused the article there and immediately sent the \$12 cheque, ascribing myself as "survivor 25 07 44," (and I was surprised at the speed with which my copy arrived in the mail).

From the time of the landing of Second Division on 6 July 44 in Normandy and indeed until the middle of February, I commanded 10 Platoon "C" Company Toronto Scottish Regiment cwt, 1 Norton, 4 Vickers .303 MGs (belt-fed, water-cooled, tripod-mounted, maximum range 4500 yards, Mark 8Z ammo), 1 Bren and assorted rifles and stens.

"C" Company was assigned initially to 5 Brigade and, as a former sometime Montrealer and McGill grad, I was put in support of the Regiment de Maisonneuve for Operations Atlantic and Spring.

On the afternoon of the 25th my company commander advised me, mournfully, that he "had" to send me up with the Maisonneuves as they were attacking that evening from or at St. Andre. We moved up as part of the Maisie support company late in the afternoon or early evening under a smoke screen, as I remember the orders but not the



fact - anyway, one moving up followed the valley road east of the Orne through Basse and Etavaux which were not exposed to 180 degrees of German observation - just trying to move south from Fleury directly to St. Andre - there wasn't enough cover to hide a six-week old baby and the exposure was sensational from the front and right flank - anyway my platoon was directed to harbour in a small orchard a hundred yards or so northwest of the main cross roads in St. Andre.

There was a fair amount of mortaring and/or shelling going on but we managed to get underground with only one casualty - my batman, slightly wounded in the neck - who was excavating a few yards from me; however, when our barrage to support the Maisie attack started my platoon was heavily shelled, causing one fatality plus one

wounded plus one exhaustion case' things quieted down and I fell asleep in my pitiful hole in the ground.

It must have been three or four O'clock in the morning that someone woke me and took me forward a short distance to the R de M's CO - in his hole in the ground. The colonel told me that they had taken the place - I assumed he meant St. Andre - and he wanted me to get my platoon into defensive positions. I started walking south up the road - I don't remember if I had anyone with me - and perhaps a hundred yards south of the crossroads I became involved with running figures - commands in French - rifle shots - it was not yet even half light. Deciding that the prospects for siting my platoon's medium machine guns were nil, I guess I retired. What I did from then until full light I don't remember - maybe the dawn came up like thunder - but, knowing that the ground on the west side of the road, sloping down to the Orne, was close and unsuitable, my thoughts turned to the area east of St. Martin and the open ground under the ridge. I began to walk up a side road south a few yards of the main crossroad, to the east. The houses on either side were partly demolished - a little way along - for some reason, I went into a beat-up garage, shed, workshop, barn, whatever, and on the floor two Canadian soldiers were sleeping, one of whom I woke up. It was Major Ostiguy. I asked him where his company was and he said that the other soldier, a private, was his company.

I left Major Ostiguy and his one-man company and continued along the street to the southeast. I must emphasize that apart from a few words from the CO of the Maisies I had no idea of the tactical situation - no concept of the disaster that had overtaken the Black Watch. I assumed in my ignorance, innocence and inexperience that the Black Watch were in St. Martin ahead of me. I don't know how far I went - a hundred yards? - I would stop and call out "Black Watch." A little further and there was an answering shout "Black Watch." The road curved slightly to the left - on the left was a typical high brick wall. There came into my sight a figure standing in a doorway - wearing a red cross armband, waving me on, wearing a dark green uniform and coal scuttle helmet. As I jumped to my left to the protection of the curve of the wall someone fired an automatic weapon at me - he must have been the worst shot in the German army for he missed me standing in the middle of the road - at a range of perhaps 30 feet - clean. I retired, crying out like some schoolboy, "Major Ostiguy there are Germans up there." The last I saw of Major Ostiguy he was firing rifle shots up the road.

That afternoon my own Platoon commanders carrier was totally destroyed by a direct hit from a Moaning Minnie bomb. Apart from that we suffered no further losses that day and were withdrawn that night back to our company HQ. I have always been so thankful that I was not in an infantry battalion.

On the night of 7/8 August we did an extensive shoot from a position a few hundred yards northeast of St. Andre-St.Martin in support of Operation Totalize. We fired at H-hour, which I think was about 11 p.m. Our target was one of

the villages, Rocquancourt or more likely Fontenay. The next morning back to St. Andre - The Fusiliers Mont-Royal were supposed to have taken May the previous evening. It was only later in the afternoon that Crocodiles flamed the remains of May. My platoon spent the night, I guess of the 10th, dug-in in a graveyard - I don't remember a church - but it shows on the 1944 map. The next morning the war seemed to have gone far away. I went wandering (foolishly) by myself up the slope to the east and south of May. There were bodies of the Black Watch - I did not count them or measure the area. In a few minutes I collected enough working Bren guns to equip everyone of my vehicles. I must have been the first Canadian - live - on the spot since the 25th of July.

I revisited the battlefield in the summer of 1989. Ifs, Fleury, St. Andre, St. Martin and May - everything was rebuilt and housing developments covered, particularly at May, what had been bare ground. I found it difficult to identify the same areas. There is a "Bar des Canadians" in a large house in May. I went in and had a beer. The only thing Canadian in the place was a beat-up Quebec licence plate on the wall. The statement that one was "ancien combattant" evoked little interest.

Major G.H. McGowan, CD
Supp. Reserve RCIC (Retired).

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Je vous felicite pour cette heureuse! naissance Je pense qu'ici, en Normandie, votre revue "Canadian Military History" sera accueillie tres favorablement par tous les amoureux du Canada, et ils sont nombreux!

Permettez-moi de vous presenter le musee Memorial et le service des Archives et de la Documentation dont je suis responsable.

Le Memorial de Caen est un jeune musee, cree en 1988; il se propose de montrer la guerre... pour faire la paix. Le projet est ambitieux! Un tiers de nos visiteurs sont des enfants des ecoles, nous souhaitons avoir une vocation pedagogique devant les fascismes et rascismes de toutes sortes.

Autre volet du musee: un centre d'etudes sur le Seconde Guerre mondiale et plus particulierement la bataille de Normandie.

L'annee 92 a vu l'etablissement de relations franco-canadiennes. Un comite de soutien canadien, des echanges universitaires en projet et surtout en juin 92, nous avons inaugure en presence de M. Maas notre exposition (dont j'ai ete documentaliste) "les Canadiens au secours de T'Europe."

Des contacts tout a fait satisfaisants s'engagent actuellement aupres de M. Douglas, Directeur du service historique canadien et les Archives Nationales du Canada, via Mine Litalien, representante de M. Wallot en France.

Tout cela pour vous dire combien votre revue nous interesse.

C'est M. Eddy Florentin, un historien de la bataille de Normandie, qui m'a prete votre revue. Pouvez-vous m'envoyer le 1er numero pour notre bibliotheque? Je ne manquerai pas de m'abonner et de faire connaitre votre revue aupres des services de presse, de librairie et de tous les fideles du Canada.

Vous trouverez ci-joint un petit apercu de notre exposition a travers les dossiers de presse des services de communication.

L'historien du musee a publie a l'occasion de l'exposition un livre sur les Canadiens dans les guerres mondiales.

Pour ma part, le service des Archives engage cette année une importante politique d'acquisition de micro films sur l'histoire du Canada pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, en Normandie bien sur, mais aussi plus largement sur tous les terrains militaires.

Je suis évidemment très intéressée par toutes vos publications.

Je souhaite que nous puissions travailler ensemble et vous prie de croire, Monsieur, à l'expression de mes respectueuses salutations.

F. Passera, Chef de Service
Memorial de Caen

Through the kindness of a friend, a military history researcher and writer of Canadian Army activities particularly related to armoured warfare, Mr. John F. Wallace, I was loaned a copy of your Spring 1993 edition.

In addition to thanking you for photo credits given in the article "Victims of Circumstance," I would like to compliment you on the very attractive presentation of very interesting military subjects by capable authors. Because of my experience and involvement in events as an official war photographer, 1942-45, and later as a senior officer in army public relations, 1945-63, your magazine presented many memorable views.

Thus, if possible I would like to purchase my own copy of Volume 2 Number 1 and in addition subscribe to Number 2, 1993 and editions for 1994. This year's Fall edition should be of particular interest because of my experiences in coverage of the Italian campaign from the invasion at Regio di Calabria 1943 to the finale in 1945.

I enclose herewith a cheque in the amount of \$22.00 in the hope that you can meet my request.

Alex M. Stirton
Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired).

J. L. Granatstein's "The American Influence on the Canadian Military, 1939-1963" (*CMH* Volume 2 Number 1) brought back personal memories and a couple of little known events for Canadian military historians. He referred to Roosevelt's pledge at Kingston in August 1938 followed "a few days later by a reciprocal promise from Mackenzie King." King's statement was made at Camp Borden, Ontario on August 20, 1938 where, as reported in the August 22nd issue of the *Toronto Star* "a Canadian Premier reviewed his country's troops . . ." That reporter was probably unaware of the incongruity of his observations as he described the march past: ". . . an impressive sight . . . [as] a large contingent of steel helmeted dragoons, sitting like ramrods in their saddles" as they led the parade ahead of the big tanks which lowered their guns in salute to Mr. King. The "whippet tanks just whizzed by," their drivers' eyes glued to the road. (The dragoons were the RCD; the big tanks were two 5-ton Mark VIB Light Tanks and the whippet tanks were the twelve Carden Lloyd machine gun carriers.)

The other episode expands on Granatstein's comments regarding the Ogdensburg Meeting in mid-August 1940. An earlier meeting in Georgia on April 28th, 1940 saw King persuade Roosevelt to ease the restrictions of the U.S. Neutrality Act so that greater assistance could be provided to Canada's allies. Arising out of that meeting military staff talks started and on July 19 the Chief of the General Staff advised his Minister that a large number of tanks were available. Within three months 200 Model 6T two-man tanks (Renault) arrived in Camp Borden to augment Canada's existing force

of armoured fighting vehicles (14 light tanks and 12 machine gun carriers) to assist in the training of the new Canadian Armoured Corps.

John F. Wallace

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May I throw a small stone at my friend Donald E. Graves' excellent article, "William Drummond and the Battle of Fort Erie"? In it, he asserts that, ". . . Gaines, and the historians who took their cue from him, were clearly unaware of the "niceties" of civilized warfare in Europe regarding assaults on fortified positions. . . ."

Quite to the contrary, the Americans had been given harsh lessons in such matters by such English/British experts as Patrick Ferguson, "No-Flint" Grey, and Banastre [sic] Tarleton - "Tarleton's quarter" becoming an American byword. Probably the bloodiest example of all was taught by Benedict Arnold, turned renegade, at Fort Griswold in 1781 where the small garrison was literally butchered.

However, "quarter" was normally given by British commanders. And Americans - as at Stony Point and the smaller actions at Paulus Hook and Brookhaven - always did so.

Looking at the general European application of the theory that ". . . defenders of a fortress stormed have no claim to quarter," I have no luck in finding any example of importance throughout the Napoleonic Wars, Wellington's after-years maunderings can be dismissed - like William T. Sherman, the Duke sometimes talked a lot more savagely than he ever acted. (The point here is that he granted quarter after Badajoz to other desperately resisting garrisons.)

American officers followed the news of European campaigns, and so were reasonably well informed of current European practice.

John R. Elting
Colonel, (USA - Retired)

In terms of military history, I am a rank layman. As for my past military experience, it is both so minimal and so ancient as to be insignificant. So it is as a layman that I wish to address Lieutenant-Colonel Roman Jarymowycz's article in your last issue. ["Der Gegenangriff vor Verrieres: German Counterattacks during Operation 'Spring': 25-26 July 1944."] Fortunately, a minimum of common sense and some very rudimentary grade school arithmetic are the only requirements to attack and demolish Lieutenant-Colonel Jarymowycz's key conclusion, which appears in the text but clearly does not flow from it.

Lieutenant-Colonel Jarymowycz concludes, in his last paragraph, that "If 'Spring' was indeed a holding attack, it appears to have failed. Before 25 July there were seven panzer divisions and three heavy tank battalions deployed within the II Corps sphere of influence. After 'Spring' there was only one . . ." Footnote 48 which follows then proceeds to show how, indeed, the various German formations moved away, **between July 27 and as late as August 8**, mostly to the west, to contain the American outpour that followed the St. Lo breakthrough. But when did the St. Lo breakthrough occur? Precisely on July 25-26.

I don't really see how the fact that the German forces were, **well after 'Spring'** was over, moved west to oppose the considerably larger U.S. forces which had just broken through rather light resistance is in any way a factor in assessing the success of the holding attack. On

the contrary, it clearly shows that the Germans **were held** south of Caen at the critical moment, and were not available in the western sector until it was too late.

It is characteristic of this kind of history writing, that pronouncements by Germans are taken at face value while Canadian witnesses' views are scrutinized with suspicion, and interpreted as critically and negatively as possible. Thus, von Kluge's statement, which is given the place of honour at the start of the article, is not even challenged for its slight and casual omission of the fact that the Herr General had lost the war on the western portion of his front on the very same day on which he claims victory in one defensive battle against the Canadians. But when Simonds' turn comes, every word he has said or written is made suspect as to its veracity.

Possibly, Canadian military historians looking to stand out from the crowd with startling revelations and damning disclosures would better spend their time pondering the inconsistency inherent in the apparent timidity of Operation 'Spring'. Simonds' analysis, quoted by Jarymowycz, shows how well he understood the German doctrine of defence in depth, which rested on a thin forward line, on massive counterattacks by sizeable mobile reserves, and on well protected artillery firing huge concentrations on pressure points. From such an analysis, the layman would be led to expect that a massive attack on the whole of the front could best have dispersed counter-attack efforts and diluted artillery concentrations by creating an overload of demand for defensive shoots. Yet Simonds seems to have chosen spot attacks by two or three battalions at two points of a front several miles wide, with few if any feints elsewhere, which appears to the layman as playing into the hands of the Germans.

Isn't there room for a lot of constructive research on the apparent incongruity of Simonds' perfect understanding of his opponents' doctrine on one hand and, on the other, of his apparent disregard of what would seem to be the obvious counter-strategy? Was Simonds, who gave numerous examples of his brilliant expertise in Italy well before Normandy, and elsewhere subsequently, poorly informed on enemy dispositions at the time, or were there some other factors that have disappeared in the fog of time, such as a fortuitous and unforeseeable simultaneous counter-attack by the Germans during the Black Watch assault on Fontenay-le-Marmion, as suggested by Lieutenant-Colonel John English in his appearance before the Senate Sub-Committee on Veterans Affairs in the summer of 1992?

Maybe, if such research was to be approached by aspiring young Canadian military historians with the humility to accept that Simonds and other Canadian generals were not automatically imbeciles, that the Canadians did not necessarily screw up everything they touched, that the Germans weren't always right or truthful, that our own side sometimes told the truth, etc, maybe then could some startling and yet undiscovered **facts** be unearthed, for a change, and maybe Canadians could be given yet more reason to be proud of the marvellous job that our boys did in Normandy, as in Sicily, in Italy, in Belgium, in Holland . . .

Jean Baby

Jean Baby is a retired telecommunications engineer. He served in the Regular Force in 1951-54, and fought in Korea as a Signals lieutenant with the 3rd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment in 1953-54. A year ago he took the job of General Manager of the Canadian Battle of Normandy Foundation. He insists on stating that his submission is strictly a personal one, in no way involving the Foundation.