

Remembering a Forgotten War

The Contribution of Oral History to the History of the Canadian Army in the Korean War

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An Essay for

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Historians often present their work in a narrative. Broadly speaking, they write stories which – if they are honest – rely on dependable evidence to form the work. Often we are introduced to characters who remain in the forefront of the narrative until their exit or the conclusion of the work. In history, this is not necessarily undesirable. Often the men who occupy the most space in the narrative are the men who most significantly shaped events. In much of the literature on Canada's role in the Korean war, this is often the case. We read the correspondence and testimony of figures like Brigadier Rockingham or Lieutenant-Colonel Stone, and the information provided is often crucial to our understanding of why things progressed in the way they did. One work in particular; *A War of Patrols* by William Johnston subscribes to this type of narrative. In his thesis, Johnston states that he will “argue here that the officers of the Special Force units exhibited greater professionalism in their approach to operations than the regulars of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalions”<sup>1</sup> There are problems with his assessment of the volunteer and regular formations (as we shall see) but also telling is Johnston's choice to specify 'officers.' He is not the only one to place the greatest emphasis on the officer corps. Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Fairlie Wood does the same in the official history on Korea: *Strange Battleground*. It is not wholly wrong for the two to adopt this 'top down' perspective. The men of the lower ranks are unlikely to have much useful knowledge concerning the strategic elements of a war which form a necessarily large part of any military history. That arena must remain filled by the upper ranks. This said, the problem with this focus, is a tendency to miss, gloss over, and sometimes downright omit critical details which often force us to revise the elegant narrative Johnston and others give us. As we shall see, it is impossible to summarize Canada's role in Korea with statements like “the Special Force unites exhibited greater professionalism,” or “Canada's infantry units were ill prepared for the operations they would subsequently be called on to carry out.”<sup>2</sup> These statements are not entirely incorrect, yet they fail to capture the reality, and the authors who present them seem very reluctant offer qualification for these

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<sup>1</sup>William Johnston, *A War of Patrols: Canadian Army Operations in Korea* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), xix.

<sup>2</sup>Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 31.

positions.

Over the last month, I have had the opportunity to interview three of Canada's veterans of Korea. Major Murray Edwards of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI), Mr. Phil Leigh, a medical assistant of the 25<sup>th</sup> Field Dressing Station attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion PPCLI and Mr. Ed Hadel of Lord Strathcona's Horse Regiment 'C' Squadron. Three subjects can scarcely be called a conclusive sample Korea veterans, yet in my conversations with these men, information arose which caused me to fundamentally question many points of the narratives put forth by most of the authors who have treated on Korea. Perhaps the problem is one of perspective. It would be erroneous to say that since the experience of one soldier was not in line with a later assessment by an author with access to much more information, the assessment must be false. That said, these men sometimes raised questions which resist such dismissal. They also did more than question and attack. All too often, it is forgotten that it is men with individual lives just like our own who fight wars. Reading the official history, it is all too easy to gloss over casualty statistics, yet when 2PPCLI suffered 14 killed in action and 43 wounded in February and early March of 1951, these were 57 individual lives lost or changed forever. More than that, a soldier fighting on the front experiences things which may be missed by officers at HQ or in the rear echelons. If the upper ranks provide the framework of military history, it should be men of all ranks who fill in the rest. Comparing the testimony of these three veterans to the scholarship on Korea, two important things happen. Firstly, oral history provides detail missed or only hinted at which enriches the work of the authors. Secondly, oral history frequently challenges the existing historical narrative. Since they form the nucleus of Korean War scholarship, the two statements from Mr. Johnston and Mr. Watson presented above will often stand to as 'the existing historical narrative.' Their statements are echoed, revised and challenged by nearly every author who has written on Canada's involvement in Korea, and are thus integral to our current understanding of the conflict.

The Korean war came at a strange time for the Canadian Army. Between 1943 and 1947, the defence budget fell from a wartime peak of \$4.2 billion to a scant \$196 million. This meant a reduction

from almost half a million men at arms to about 25,000 in 1950 at the outbreak of the Korean War. Of these 25,000, only about 7,000 were trained for combat.<sup>3</sup> These men were the Active or Permanent Force. Together, they amounted to three infantry battalions (Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, Le Royal 22<sup>e</sup> Régiment, and the Royal Canadian Regiment) and supporting arms. Canada had historically maintained this single brigade defence force in peace time, but after Korea, this became obviously insufficient.

As if budgetary and manpower shortages were not enough, the Canadian Army was in a period of transition. At the time, Defence Planners in Ottawa were perusing a policy of 'Americanization' by which Canada would have swapped her British pattern equipment for American equivalents. Unfortunately for Canada, a post-war shortage of American dollars and a resistance to arms sales in the US congress meant that this process was largely incomplete when war broke out in July 1950.<sup>4</sup> As a result, when Prime Minister St. Laurent announced that Canada would be committing a brigade of ground troops to Korea on August 7<sup>th</sup> 1950, the army was forced to improvise. As a cost saving measure, Canada requested the use of British supply lines. This was readily agreed to by the British, and meant that Canadians would be fielding British small arms like the Lee-Enfield rifle, the Sten sub-machine gun and the Bren Light Machine Gun. At the same time, an agreement was reached with the Americans which resulted in the adoption of American support weapons and vehicles. The old 2 and 3 inch mortars were discarded in favour of their 60 and 81mm American cousins, and the old PIAT launcher was discarded in favor of the American 3.5 inch 'bazooka' rocket launcher. Finally, the Canadians would draw upon their own stocks of personal kit, which were mostly of Second World War vintage and British design. The result was a somewhat tangled chain of supply which left much to be desired. Major Edwards offers an excellent example of the differences in design philosophy between American and British kit. In field cooking, the British method involved a series of simple frames which

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<sup>3</sup>Watson, *Far Eastern Tour*, 4.

<sup>4</sup>Johnston, *War of Patrols*, 14.

locked together with provision to place a fuel canisters beneath the cooking surface. The range could be quickly broken out, used and stowed with a minimum of manpower expenditure. The Americans on the other hand, preferred a large field kitchen requiring much more effort to move and erect than the British range, though its performance was likely superior. This difference in philosophy extended to weapons. The new American mortars were, according to Major Edwards, much more complicated, cumbersome, and required more training and manpower than their British equivalents, but the end result he feels, were superior.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, not every piece of gear issued to Canadians was so superlative. Especially reviled amongst the veterans was the Sten gun. Designed for mass production in the early years of World War Two, the Sten was scarcely a cutting edge weapon. According to Mr. Leigh, a medical assistant of the 25<sup>th</sup> Field Dressing Station embedded with 1PPCLI, the safety catch was highly unreliable. If the weapon was dropped, or handled too roughly, the weapon could discharge resulting in wounds and fatalities.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Hadel echoed this critique. Not only was the Sten a dangerous weapon, it was often highly unreliable. Magazines for firearms are usually manufactured with leaf springs to raise the platform and feed ammunition into the weapon, but Major Edwards remembered that the Canadian manufactured Sten magazines used cheaper coil type springs. These had a tendency to double on themselves and foul, preventing ammunition from reaching the action. In combat, this could have disastrous results. In order to counter this, Major Edwards remembers that the magazines had to be kept unloaded in order to save strain on the weak spring. This meant that they would have to be reloaded in the event of an attack, which would take valuable time. When he became the quartermaster of 2PPCLI, Major Edwards remembers trading bottles of gin to the Americans in exchange for M1 Carbines. Though not without problems of their own, they were at least more reliable than the Stens.<sup>7</sup> In *A War of Patrols* Johnston muses that decisions made by individuals to replace the Sten with the M1

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<sup>5</sup>Major Murray Edwards, Interviewed by Cameron Fish, Victoria BC, 13 March 2013.

<sup>6</sup>Phillip Leigh, Interviewed by Cameron Fish, Victoria BC, 13 March 2013.

<sup>7</sup>Interview with Major Edwards.

“had more to do with fashion or status than actual utility”<sup>8</sup> Perhaps Johnston would not be so quick to discount the weapon if he experienced a failure to fire in the middle of a Chinese attack, or a gunshot wound suffered as a result of the Sten's notoriously dangerous safety catch.

Equipment woes were not limited to weaponry. In *Far Eastern Tour*, Brent Watson offers a whole chapter on what he considers shortfalls in Canada's equipment. Covering everything from helmets to hand grenades, one gets the impression that some of Watson's complaints are more justified than others. For instance, not one of the veterans consulted for this paper expressed distaste for the winter gear issued to Canadians, yet Watson reserves several pages to condemn Canadian stoves, parkas and headgear. Interestingly however, there were several issues raised by the veterans which were not picked up on by Watson. Major Edwards recalls that in one of the first engagements of the Battalion, his company was forced to attack and then coordinate a withdrawal without radios. This was because the Canadian version of the British Type 88 set used a different battery than the ones used by the British whose supply lines the Canadians relied upon.<sup>9</sup> This shows how historians writing after the fact may miss details even in the most thorough studies.

The veterans testimony extended beyond criticism of equipment. Oral history frequently provides detail where historians may not have knowledge, or where there is no place in the narrative to provide it. By far, the vast majority of Canadian literature on Korea focuses on the infantry. The nature of the fighting in Korea seems to require this approach to some extent. The terrain of Korea restricted the role of armour, and other combat units in the fighting, yet they, along with other support units like the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery played a major role in the fighting in Korea. In William Johnston's *War of Patrols* – at present, the most robust study of Canada's role in Korea – the tanks of Lord Strathcona's Horse Regiment are never given more than a sentence or two beyond acknowledging their presence at any given action. Whether this adequately reflects their importance as a unit is beyond the

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<sup>8</sup>Johnston, *War of Patrols*, 148.

<sup>9</sup>Interview with Major Edwards.

scope of this paper to say, but in any case, the result has been a gap in the literature which oral history plays a critical role in filling. The established narrative assures us that the armour was there, but only through discussion with tankers like Mr. Hadel can it be learned what exactly the armour did in Korea, and how they did it. For instance, when describing Operation Janus, an offensive staged by the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion PPCLI and supporting elements, Johnston states only that the Strathcona's provided fire support and that they were hindered by malfunctioning communications equipment.<sup>10</sup> Johnston is by no means incorrect to say this, but in his narrative, there is no place to describe what exactly this support entailed, or how this impediment to communication would have impacted the troopers. In discussions with Mr. Hadel, it was possible to glean details which explained exactly what these fire support missions entailed. Amongst other things, Mr. Hadel described the way in which fire tasks would be relayed to the tanks, the procedure for sighting and operating the gun, and the ways in which the fire was used to support the attack. He explained how sometimes two shots would be fired at the same target, one after another. The sound of the first shot would send the Chinese into cover, and the second shot would catch them as they recovered.<sup>11</sup> This, and countless other small details concerning the life of a tanker in Korea are unavailable in any published work which makes the illuminating and frequently entertaining testimony of Mr. Hadel invaluable.

In the examples presented above, oral history has added more detail to the existing historical narrative, but sometimes, issues were raised which received no treatment at all in the published histories, official or unofficial. Of the 171 medals awarded to Canadians in Korea, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion PPCLI received only seven, despite their being involved in some of the most perilous actions the Canadians would participate in, including the famous Battle of Kapyong. The reason for this disparity is found in the conduct of Lt.-Col. Jim Stone, 2PPCLI's Commanding Officer in Korea. Stone was a highly decorated soldier. He had earned a Distinguished Service Order and bar during World War

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<sup>10</sup>Johnston, *War of Patrols*, 233-35.

<sup>11</sup>Ed Hadel, interviewed by Cameron Fish, Victoria BC, 15 March 2013.

II. According to Major Edwards, he was an extraordinarily brave soldier and an excellent tactician. Despite these characteristics, before the Patricias went into action, he announced to the Battalion that he would not be recommending citations, regardless of what the future would hold. He cited the status of the CASF (Canadian Army Special Force) as paid volunteers as his reason for this unorthodox policy. By all accounts, Stone remained true to his word. The few medals awarded to 2PPCLI during the Korean War were all recommended at the Brigade level, which resulted in complications which will be treated below. It is also worth noting that Stone accepted a third bar to his Distinguished Service Order during Korea despite his own status as a 'paid volunteer.'<sup>12</sup> Perhaps future histories will offer further explanation for this issue, but as it stand, present scholarship offers no answers. *Strange Battleground*, Lt.-Col. Fairlie Wood's official history of the war does not differentiate between units in the list of awards, and none of the unofficial histories discuss awards at all. In this case, oral history reveals a gap in the historical narrative which should be filled.

There was one more issue concerning awards, which does not appear in any histories, official or unofficial, yet still illustrates the importance of oral history in ascertaining 'what really happened' in a given historical event. After the Battle of Kapyong in late April 1951, Captain Mills, the commanding officer of Dog Company 2PPCLI, was awarded a Military Cross for calling down artillery on his own positions in a successful bid to repel the Chinese. This would not be a problem, except for the testimony of Major Edward's. According to Edwards, who was present at the Battalion HQ during the action at Kapyong, the decision to call in the artillery was not made by Captain Mills at all, but by Lieutenant Mike Levy of 10 Platoon. Mills simply relayed the request to Brigade, but as a result, Brigade assumed it was he who had requested the fire. Lt.-Col. Stone would have been entirely aware of this inaccuracy, but given his previously outlined stance on decorations, he unsurprisingly failed to rectify the mistake. As a result, Lt. Levy received no recognition for his heroism at Kapyong. Without

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<sup>12</sup>Lt.-Col. Fairlie Wood, *Strange Battleground: The Operations in Korea and their Effects on the Defence Policy of Canada* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), 295.



Major Edwards advocacy this issue would not have come to light.

Frequently, oral history provides detail which other types of scholarship cannot provide, but on occasion, it goes beyond merely shading an existing drawing. In some cases, oral history challenges the existing historical narrative, sometimes very persuasively. It is also true though, that recollection can deteriorate over the course of time, and what appears one way to a soldier on the ground may be an entirely different way to an officer at Brigade HQ. Oral history has both advantages and disadvantages, and it is the role of the historian using the recollections of others to balance their statements with research. During my interview with Major Edwards, an example of this dichotomy emerged. In both Johnston's *War of Patrols* and David Bercuson's *Blood on the Hills* (but not in *Strange Battleground* or any of the other histories), the authors state that sixty members of 2PPCLI were sent home from their temporary training base in Miryang between December and February 1950-51.<sup>13</sup> Neither Johnston nor Bercuson indicate where they have derived this number from. This seemingly innocuous statement was challenged by Major Edwards. When asked about the high numbers of 'non-battle casualties' sent home by Stone from Miryang, Edwards felt the number could not have been much higher than ten. According to him, most of those who turned out to be unfit for the infantry had been weeded out before deploying. In Lt.-Col. Stone's post war writings, he always maintained that 2PPCLI had started out with "many deadbeats ... and other useless types."<sup>14</sup> His assessment may have deflected the curiosity of those who would check such seemingly uncontroversial facts. Without knowledge of where Johnston and Bercuson have derived their statistics from, Major Edwards testimony should be taken seriously.

The casualty figures from Miryang are an example of an occasion where there is difficulty balancing the two types of historical research. There were other occasions though, where the subjects of interviews provided very convincing testimony, which challenged what has been written on Korea. These challenges will be divided into two sections because they reflect two different dimensions of the

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<sup>13</sup>Johnston, *War of Patrols*, 66 and David Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 76.

<sup>14</sup>J.R. Stone, 'Memoir: Kapyong,' *Infantry Journal* 1992, 11-12.

discussion concerning Canada's performance in Korea. The first set examine the claim put forth, mostly by Watson and Bercuson, that Canadian troops were not prepared in terms of indoctrination, training, and equipment, for their service in Korea. The second set will explore Johnston's thesis which assess the relative performance of the volunteer CASF units and their Active Force cousins.

Brent Watson is scathing of the indoctrination provided to Canadian troops on the country they would be fighting in. By his assessment,

If the soldiers of the 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade [the CASF] were improperly trained and equipped for battle, they were equally unprepared for the non-combat aspects of service in the Far East. Most possessed only a superficial knowledge of Korea before their deployment, and the 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade's shipboard indoctrination program certainly did nothing to improve this.

In the case of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Patricia's, this stance is highly problematic, though it applies at least to the experience of Mr. Leigh, who when asked whether he had received any indoctrination on Korea, reported that he had been told "nothing at all" and knew only that Korea was "an Asian country over there, somewhere." Mr. Leigh's experience was likely common enough among other formations, but for 2PPCLI, this does not seem to have been the case. 2PPCLI was fortunate enough to count two well traveled Chaplains among their ranks: Father Valalee and Roger Nunn. Valalee had spent time in China as a missionary and spoke the language fluently, a fact which would later save his life when his jeep driver accidentally drove him into the Chinese lines. Roger Nunn had been a missionary in North Korea, and was thus very familiar with Korean language, culture and customs. According to Major Edwards, the lectures the two churchmen gave on ship were very enlightening, and very well attended as a consequence of the monotony of the voyage. Edwards maintains that his arrival at Pusan presented no great surprises thanks to the efforts of the two chaplains.<sup>15</sup> Whatever the experience of other units in the CASF, it is clear that Watson has been unfair in his sweeping dismissal of the shipboard indoctrination program. Indeed, Watson's indoctrination critique seems rather petty. Unlike

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<sup>15</sup>Interview with Murray Edwards.

counterinsurgency operations in which such indoctrination would undoubtedly be vital, soldiers in Korea spent much of their time at the front, away from civilians. Their chief enemy was not even Korean. When I asked Mr. Leigh what stood out for him on arriving in Pusan, I expected to hear something about the Korean culture or society. Instead, Mr. Leigh descried two Korea children who had been blown up by a mine that day on the beach. “That sticks out in my mind.” Was his response.<sup>16</sup> Whether the Canadian were given adequate equipment, training and indoctrination is unclear, but it is certain that some things about war cannot be prepared for.

In *A War of Patrols*, Johnston is free with his criticism of Watson and Bercuson's thesis. Unlike the two earlier writers, Johnston maintains that the Canadians, especially the CASF, were well prepared for their service in Korea. In his introduction, he criticizes the other two works which he feels place too much emphasis on “problems...resulted primarily from inadequate weaponry and poor training.”<sup>17</sup> Later in his work, when discussing the merits of the Lee-Enfield, he repeated Lt.-Col. Stone's assessment, which held that the Lee-Enfield was more desirable than the American M1 Garand as a result of its greater reliability.<sup>18</sup> The Lee-Enfield was the subject of much debate amongst the troops. It's simple hand operated action was easy to maintain, but resulted in a woefully inferior rate of fire compared to the Chinese PPSH-41 Sub-machine guns. The difficulty of maintaining the Garand and its rather cumbersome size and weight were given as reasons for this distaste. Major Edwards echoed this assessment of the Garand, especially on the point of its size but he did not necessarily agree with Stone's appraisal of the Lee-Enfield's reliability. Apparently, the rifles Major Edwards unit was equipped with had a receiver with a much lower tolerance than others he had encountered during his service. Any dirt or debris in the action could jam the mechanism and prevent rounds from being extracted and chambered. All three veterans felt that the slow rate of fire of the Lee-Enfield made it inadequate compared to the automatic Chinese sub-machine guns. For 2PPCLI at least, the Lee-Enfield

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<sup>16</sup>Interview with Phil Leigh.

<sup>17</sup>Johnston, *War of Patrols*, xviii.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted in *Ibid.*, 79.

seems to have been the best choice amongst a selection of inadequate weapons. That it was preferred by the troops to other available weapons did not necessarily make it as adequate as Lt.-Col. Stone seems to believe. Indeed, Stone was relying on his experience with the weapon in Italy during World War II and his analysis does not necessarily carry over to Korea. Moreover, Stone's complaint surrounding the difficulty of maintaining the weapon is probably legitimate only for CASF units serving in the first months of the war. The pace of the fighting in the early part of the war before the advance to the Jamestown line left little time for weapon maintenance but as the fighting became static in Korea, one suspects that there would be much more time to keep a more complex semi-automatic or automatic weapon in good working order.

In *War of Patrols*, Johnston is more than anything concerned with righting a wrong he has perceived in histories of the war in Korea. During the formation of the CASF in August of 1950, the Army's recruiting depots were caught completely off guard by the hundreds of prospective recruits they found waiting for them. The depots were prepared only for peacetime enlistment procedures which involved a battery of tests and typically succeeded in processing only a few recruits a day. Brooke Claxton, the Minister of Defence feared that the disparity between the numbers of recruits in line and the actual enlistment tallies would result in embarrassing media coverage. To combat this, he personally toured the No. 6 Recruiting Depot in Toronto, and personally revised the recruiting procedures in place. Selection interviews were cut from half an hour to five minutes, and medical examinations were dispensed with entirely with this responsibility passed on to the individual units making up the CASF. The result was a great deal of what Lt.-Col. Stone called "scruff." Men who were not mentally or physically suited for military service, but had managed to enlist as a result of the relaxed recruiting procedures. A high discharge and desertion rate contributed to the growing image of the CASF as a group of 'adventurers' lacking proper military motivation.<sup>19</sup>

The Active Force in particular seems to have subscribed to this view. Major Edwards chalks

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<sup>19</sup>Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 27-32.

much of their dislike up to a kind of professional jealousy.<sup>20</sup> As Canada's standing army, many Active Force members likely anticipated that they would be first called upon to serve, and felt cheated by the volunteers of the second battalions. Ottawa's decision to send volunteers first was quite reasonable. The trained Active Force soldiers were needed to train incoming troops both for service in Korea, and for Canada's growing NATO commitment. Moreover, the high percentage of World War II veterans who joined the CASF as sergeants and higher ranks made the whole plan feasible by providing a more or less battle ready force. Johnston subscribes wholeheartedly to this view. Additionally, his book frequently compares the various officers who at different times led the Canadians in Korea. He universally declares that the volunteer second battalions were better trained and better led than the regulars of the first and third battalions. For 2PPCLI, this seems to be an accurate statement. Major Edwards, who was present both at No. 6 Personnel Depot and with the Patricias at every stage of their training felt that the men and officers of the battalion were very well prepared for Korea after the unit been rid of undesirables. Watson charges that the men of 2PPCLI were not trained for the terrain in Korea, nor were they adequately given instruction in mounting the patrols which were the most common type of action in Korea. Major Edwards categorically dismissed this charge when questioned, and stated that patrolling was given very adequate attention, since it is considered a basic military skill.<sup>21</sup> Mr. Watson's charge that Canadian training was better suited to the rolling countryside of Western Europe than the sharp ridgelines and valleys of Korea seems somewhat pointless to this author. As evidenced by the training program embarked upon by the Patricias at Miryang, the only thing to counter the terrain of Korea was excellent conditioning. Watson never gives any hint of what he thinks a greater "emphasis on patrolling" may have looked like, nor any suggestion on how the Canadians could have better prepared for the challenging terrain of Korea.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps his assessment is more accurate when directed exclusively at the Active Force, but as far as 2PPCLI is concerned, his

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<sup>20</sup>Interview with Murray Edwards.

<sup>21</sup>Interview with Murray Edwards

<sup>22</sup>Watson, *Far Eastern Tour*, 31.

comments are not helpful.

Despite the excellent performance of the CASF in Korea, not every unit was so well prepared. Mr. Hadel, who served with 'C' Squadron, Lord Strathcona's Horse Regiment, did not feel that he and his fellow tankers had been well prepared for Korea. He remembered his instructors being themselves unqualified, and scarcely masters themselves in the skills they were supposed to transmit to the new recruits. Sometimes the young corporals tasked with training the new tankers could be downright unprofessional. Mr. Hadel remembered his trainers skipping vital training sessions and leaving the troops to their own devices while they went out drinking. The problems extended beyond the character of the trainers. Mr. Hadel remembered that when it came to training on the Lee-Enfield rifle, each recruit fired only a single magazine of six rounds. Mr. Hadel suspected that his tank's rifle had never been properly sighted. It was not only the training which which could be lacking. The conduct of the Battalion's officers was not always very responsible. While moving up to the line after arriving in Korea, Mr. Hadel's tank arrived at a village. A local jumped in front of his tank and signaled it to stop, but the Lieutenant commanding the troop from the tank ordered them to press on. It soon became clear that the local had been attempting to warn them about mines placed in the village. One of the mines destroyed a track on Mr. Hadel's tank, rendering it immobile. Immediately after being struck, the Lieutenant disappeared, leaving the non commissioned officers from the other tanks to sort out the mess. More often, the officers were simply not present. They were never at the front, and seldom interacted with the troops. Mr. Hadel remembers seeing the major in charge of the Strathcona's only once during his entire tour. Johnston emphasizes the superior quality of the CASF's officers, but given the testimony of Mr. Hadel, a distinctly different impression is conveyed.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps on the whole the CASF was better prepared for Korea than the Active Force, but Johnston does not give adequate, or in fact any, treatment to units outside the infantry, which weakens his thesis significantly.

History is much too complex to rely on any one source or perspective in studying an event.

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<sup>23</sup>Interview with Ed Hadel.

There are problems relying exclusively on memory when trying to ascertain the historical truth. A person present at an event cannot examine it with the same 'birds eye' perspective a historian writing after the fact may have. The view of those present must necessarily be limited to what they experienced during their participation. Additionally, memories and beliefs may change over time, and distort the information before it reaches the historian. These issues are serious ones, and should be treated with respect, but they are not nearly enough to discount the value of oral history. Oral history frequently provides detail to the events written about by historians. It is one thing to give an account of a battle. It is quite another thing to express how individuals felt and behaved during it. Both are needed to give the event adequate attention. Oral history provides detail where otherwise it may be lost. Without recording the recollections of those who were there, the specifics of the event lose their definition and become abstracts. The war ceases to be fought by individuals. Instead it becomes a clash between units struggling over geography at the behest of great men. This is the most frequent function of oral history, but it is not its only function. As we have seen, sometimes memory challenges or contradicts the recorded version of events. When this happens, there is a call for more exacting scholarship and a careful weighing of traditional techniques against the techniques oral history. In a sense, this is the story of Korea. Canada's third largest conflict has been treated in precious few pages. The scholarship which exists is often divided and problematic and always insufficient. Without Mr. Leigh's expositions, this author would have no idea what the actual role of a medical assistant may have been in Korea. The same goes for Mr. Hadel and the armoured corps. These men were present and played important roles in Korea, but the contributions of their units are wholly ignored in the existing literature. As many who are reading this may know, Korea is frequently called the Forgotten War. It is the opinion of this author that oral history should be of the highest priority if we are to remember it as it actually was.

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