

# THE CAPE BRETON HIGHLANDERS ASSOCIATION

SITE 6, COMP.10  
RR#5, SYDNEY, N.S.  
R1P 6G7



PHONE:902-564-9220

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER, 1991



**LT. COL. SYL MACKINNON DSO**  
**THE LAST COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE WAR TIME REGIMENT 1939-45**

Mrs. Jean Hiscock from Whitney Pier was chosen to place the flowers at the monument during the ceremonies on July 20. Her brother, Gordon W. Hefford, died of wounds Sept. 13, 1944 and was interred in Gradara Cemetary, Gradara, Italy. She is shown here with her escort Normie Morris.



#### OBITUARIES

Angus Brown, 73  
Sydney, N.S.

Michael Campbell  
Charlottetown, PEI

Francis (Buddy) Ferguson, 69  
Kitchener, Ont.

John F. James, 69  
Courtland, Ont.

Angus (Chippy) MacGregor, 79  
Glace Bay, N.S.

Sylvester MacKinnon DSO, 72  
Alberta

Angus D. MacLeod MM, 72  
Glace Bay, N.S.

Lloyd Morgan, 71  
Brookfield, N.S.

Osborne (Ozzie) Morrison, 68  
New Minas

Roy O'Meara  
Bloomfield, PEI

John Williams Parsons, 66  
Birch Grove, N.S.

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*Rock of Ages! cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee!  
Let the water and the blood from Thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure, save me from its guilt and power.*

Not the labour of my hands can fulfill Thy law's demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow—  
All for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone.

## A TRIBUTE TO LT. COL. SYLVESTER MCKINNON D.S.O.

by Judge Joe MacIntyre

Syl was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, one of a large family. He was educated in Sydney, and after leaving Sydney Academy, he was employed by the Canadian National Railway for a period of time.

He joined the army in 1941, as an officer candidate and was posted overseas in 1943. He was later assigned to our regiment as a lieutenant. He was with the Battalion through all of its action in Italy and Holland and was promoted a number of times and served in many different capacities.



Syl was with Support Company in charge of the anti-tank platoon and some of the old timers will remember that we were out on a scheme in the late fall of 1943 before we went into action, when a plummy voiced English Brigadier came around to inspect our defence. He came to the Anti-tank Platoon area and spotted an anti-tank gun in what he considered to be an improper location. He approached Syl and in his best sandhurst manner, said "I say there lieutenant, would you put an anti-tank gun there?" and Syl answered, "I just did sir." That ended the conversation. He was also in charge of the mortar platoon for a while and later the scout platoon. He was the leader of many patrols - ambush, reconnaissance, fighting, and he was quite successful in his patrol work.

It will be remembered that on the afternoon of August 30, 1944, shortly before we attacked Hill #120 in the Gothic Line, Syl took a daylight patrol across to the hill and after examining the hill carefully, and finding no Germans in occupation, he returned to the battalion lines without incident. Unfortunately, a fully equipped German infantry company of 185 people, many of whom were paratroopers came onto the hill shortly after 4:00 p.m. and took up defensive positions and when we attacked at 6:00 p.m. we had a rather bad time of it with many casualties, particularly in B Company.

He was promoted to Captain, and shortly after the Coriano Ridge Battle, was promoted to the rank of Major and assumed command of B Company. He continued in that capacity until early May, 1945, in Holland, when he was made second in command of the Battalion. Later when Lieutenant Colonel Sommerville was appointed Acting Brigadier Syl was then appointed to Commander of the

Battalion as a Lieutenant Colonel and he remained with the battalion until it returned home in January, 1946.

Syl's many brave deeds while he was with the Battalion were recognized when he received the Distinguished Service Order for gallantry. He was a take charge guy, with sound judgment, and was always able to get necessary things done quickly and well. He will long be remembered by all of us.

Following the war, Syl entered Dalhousie Law School in 1947 and graduated with an LLB Degree in 1950 and he was then admitted to the Bar of Nova Scotia. After that he moved to Calgary in 1951 and worked in the oil industry for many years and later joined the Mannix Group of Companies and he was serving as Vice President, Corporate Affairs, for Manalta Coal Ltd. at the time of his retirement in August, 1990. He also participated in many community activities and was quite active up to, and after, his retirement.

I was fortunate to know Syl McKinnon reasonably well while he was with the Battalion. After the war we were in the same law class, and graduated in 1950. I met with him in Calgary and Regina a number of times in the 60's 70's and 80's and it was always a pleasure.

Syl was in reasonably good health until early 1991 when he developed some chest problems and after examinations by various specialists, he was admitted to hospital on the 27th of May, 1991. Ever the optimist, he expected to be home within a week. However, he passed away on Friday night, May 31, 1991, after such a brief illness.

He is survived by his beloved wife Helen, and five children - Boyd, Jane, Colin, Shawn and Ann Marie and six grandchildren. He is also survived by three sisters and three brothers, most of whom reside in the Maritimes.

He attended a number of our reunions, and was guest speaker at the 18th Annual in 1987, and he did an excellent job. He was greatly respected by all of our people, not only for his work as a soldier, but also for his great contribution to civilian affairs after the war.

He was held in very high esteem by the members of our Association and it was my privilege to attend his funeral in Calgary on June 5, 1991, as the Association Representative. Father John McKinnon, Syl's brother, and two of his sisters attended the funeral and Father John celebrated the funeral mass at Holy Name Catholic Church.

*(The front page picture was submitted by Fr. John McKinnon. The above picture was submitted by Carl Arnold, taken at the 1987 Reunion.)*

ANGUS MACLEOD MM

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Angus MacLeod MM, Glace Bay (Now deceased) was the speaker at the Banquet Supper, Saturday evening. In his message he spoke of the wonderful companionship that developed between the men under fire, and of their many heroic acts. He spoke of how a new family identity had taken shape within the unit superseding our natural homes and loved ones. He complimented the officers for their care and diligence in providing both the leadership and supplies without which the battle would be lost. He made mention of a few for their selfless acts, and apologized to the members present for his lack of time and information to accommodate all.

He praised the efforts of the members who through the years gave of their time and talents to keep the Association alive. He made special mention of the Monument Committee for the fruits of their labour.



A. L. (CHIPPY) MACGREGOR

Those of us who were close to Chippy have many fond memories of him. Especially we remember his impractical solutions to problems which, whether rehearsed or spontaneous, displayed his special form of wit. Fr. John MacGregor, Chippy's brother, related the following incident to me, and with his permission I am passing it on to you.

When Fr. Johnny was Chaplain at Shilo, Manitoba, he invited Chippy to come and live with him. Once in Shilo, Chippy immediately adapted to the camp life of the Chaplain. He would go around with his hands folded in front of him, and when people mistook him for a priest or even Fr. Johnny, he never made any attempt to correct them. In those days he was still having a drink and things were getting very difficult for Fr. Johnny. The situation came to a head one night when a call was received at the camp from a bar keeper in Brandon, some 30 miles away, that someone would have to come and pick up the Chaplain. Fr. Johnny went and picked up Chippy. Later Fr. Johnny confronted him, "The situation has gone away out of hand - we can't both stay here, one of us will have to leave," to which Chippy replied, "Well, you've got the car."!!!

### ASSOCIATION NOTES

The 22nd Annual Reunion proved to be a most successful event with one of the largest turnouts of members and guests in recent years. The memorial was held at 1000 hrs. on Saturday, July 20, at our recently constructed monument on Kings Road, Sydney. The Colour Party, Sentries, Pipes and Drums were supplied by the 2nd Btn. N. S. Highlanders (C.B.). The Colour party bore the Battle Honours of the 85th Btn. (WWI) and the CBH (WWII). The Pipe Band piped the colour party, and sentries in place, and provided for the Pipers Lament. O'Rown, Merv Stag, of North Sydney, sounded the Last Post. The Roll of Honour was read by Joseph Oldford DCM, and Judge Joseph G. MacIntyre. Earl Bourgeois opened the ceremonies with the singing of O Canada and closed with The Queen. The Ceremonies as well as the Reunion were chaired by the Association President, Henry George.

The Reunion Committee was comprised of three members: Steve Humenick MID, Earl Wilson, and Normie Morris. They deserve a big hand for a job well done. We are also very thankful to Legion President, Clyde Sheppard and his Service officer, Abbie Neville, for all of the support they gave to the executive and reunion committee.

#### Present Executive

Henry George .....President  
Charles (Sharkey) MacDonald.....Vice President  
William (Bunce) Metcalfe.....Secretary Treasurer

#### Area Representatives

Mack MacKenzie.....P. E. I.  
Ed Winstanley.....North Sydney  
Ted Slaney.....Sydney  
Earl Bourgeois.....Glace Bay

#### Reunion Committee

Steve Humeniuk MID.....Chairman  
Earl Wilson.....Assistant  
Normie Morris.....Assistant

Please be advised of the change of address  
for the Association.  
New Address: RR#5, Site 6, Comp. 10, Sydney,  
N.S. B1P 6G7  
This is the home of the Secretary, Treasurer  
- Bunce Metcalfe.

FINANCIAL REPORT

22nd Annual Reunion

Attendance:

No. of members registered.....	104
No. of member's guests.....	85
2nd Btn. members.....	6
Clergy.....	2
Civic.....	1
Mrs. Hiscock and escort.....	2
Total.....	200

Receipts:

80 Doubles @ 40.00.....	3200.00	
29 Singles @ 25.00.....	725.00	3925.00

Disbursements:

Ladies Aux. Br. 128 - Meals.....	3194.00	
2 Registrars @ \$75.00.....	150.00	
Doorman.....	50.00	
Parking Attendant.....	50.00	
Flower Basket.....	85.00	
Programs.....	70.62	
Name Tags.....	39.88	
Tickets.....	47.08	
Gift for speaker.....	82.39	
Sound System.....	75.00	
salmon.....	250.00	
Seaside Cable.....	18.19	4112.23
Remainder.....		187.23 -

It is evident from the above report that a small increase in the registration fee is in order. The existing amounts are \$25.00 for singles and \$40.00 for doubles. We will have the new rates in place for the next newsletter.

1992 Reunion

It was decided at a recent meeting that we would hold the next reunion in September. Branch 128, Whitney Pier, will host us on Friday and Saturday, September 18, 19 respectively. The decision to change from July to September came about as a result of two factors: one was that our members are all pensioners and are not subject to miners vacations, the other was because of the unbearable hot weather in July, especially for the ladies who have such a massive kitchen program. If you have any comments please phone me at 902-564-9220, or mail it to the above address. PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF ADDRESS.

AN UNSUNG HERO

It was about 2300 hrs. on a warm August night in 1941, at Camp Borden. Most of us had retired to our tents while a few stragglers were still roaming about the lines. Suddenly we were aroused by the sharp blast of a bugle sounding the rally, and someone shouting "Fight! Fight! Its the Black Tams!" In seconds the lines were alive with movement as we began to assemble in various degrees of dress toting tent mallets as well as many other items for weapons. Suddenly a fellow appeared running, and shouting "They're over here!!" and we all followed him on the double, only to be led to the woods at the edge of the camp. That quick thinking of Lieut. F. X. MacNiel of Iona had averted what could have been a great tragedy. He was, indeed, an unsung hero on that occasion.

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THE AMGYREEP

Bunny O'Connel would spend hours inventing weapons and other things to put fear into green horn reinforcements (as though the truth was not fearful enough!).

When Iron Dan came to us in the winter of 1944, Bunny cornered him as he sat on the trunk of a tree that had recently been torn from its stump by a piece of shrapnel about the size of a truck fender, which was also laying on the ground close by. After assuring him that he didn't have to worry about bombs, shells, and shrapnel, he told him that our real fear was of the Jerry's "Amgyreep" (Amphibus - autogyro - Jeep). Amgyreeps could move on water, in the air, and over land, and there was no defence against them. If you ever see one, it would be useless to engage it or attempt to hide from it, you would be a goner. The best thing to do would be to stand up in the open and get it over with quickly.

In spite of this new and fearful threat, Iron Dan braved the enemy as a good soldier to the end. Pte. Ian Dan Nicholson laid down his life for his friends, 26 May, 1944. We will remember him.

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If you have anything to contribute to the Newsletter such as the above memorabilia, either of an event or as a tribute, please send them along. Do keep them short and factual.