

From: Brigadier-General D.C. (Craig) Hilton, OMM, MSM, CD (Retired)



Colonel of the Regiment

29 January 2020

Fellow Strathcona's,

As we enter into this new decade, allow me to pass on my best wishes for a successful New Year 2020. In my role as Colonel of the Regiment, I have come to appreciate the special nature of our Regimental Family and how its component parts interconnect to support this Regiment that we have served, and continue to serve. We are a family of people of several generations, dispersed across a large country, both currently serving and retired, but tied together by a common bond: *Once a Strathcona – Always a Strathcona*. It's a powerful reality, shared equally on the tank park, at Association gatherings, or simply between friends over a cup of coffee. And good communication makes us stronger – which explains the purpose of my letter. The great advantage of my role is the wide view I have over the hard work and many activities constantly at play within our Regimental Family - understandably, not all of which is known or widely shared, but much of which is, or should be, of interest to us all. My aim, therefore, is to periodically provide the members of our family those details and background which might have escaped attention, or which are in need of greater explanation or clarification. While I don't intend to replicate the website, Enews, the Newsletter, our several social media accounts, or even the rumour-mill, it is my hope to add a little perspective and perhaps some benefit, from this unique seat in our house.

You will be aware from recent Regimental Enews that this year has launched on a very positive note with our Strathcona's – led NATO Battle Group, *Task Force Steele*, successfully assuming command authority in Latvia on 15 January. Now that the Commanding Officer and Regimental Sergeant Major have matters in hand along NATO's northern flank, and our deployed training teams in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq continue their important work, it's evident that the Regiment begins another year in the thick of world affairs. This is not to overlook the essential work at home where the Regimental 2IC and SSM A SQN, with a sizeable cohort of our soldiers, continue to provide the Army MBT support on demand, and of course the many Strathcona's on ERE who carry our regimental spirit into all corners of our country. It's a great thing to see

that 120 years on, The Strathcona's are still at the forefront of getting those things done that need doing well.

Along with the Serving Regiment, the wider Regimental Family is facing a very active calendar in 2020. This spring marks the *75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Holland* and the Dutch city of Harderwijk, liberated by the Regiment in April 1945, has contacted the Society to invite our participation in their celebrations. Details are still being worked, but true to their character, the Dutch people are sure to make this a memorable and moving occasion. More to follow on Enews when this event plan takes shape. Also scheduled for April is a singular honour that the Mayor of Edmonton will bestow upon our Strathcona's Mounted Troop, awarding them the title and position of *The City of Edmonton Honour Guard*. This will be a unique privilege indeed, and speaks loudly of the high regard in which the Troop is held within our Home Station community. Keeping the Army in the public eye, in such a professional and well-disciplined manner, is essential given the times in which we live. Many kudos to our Troopers and an extra ration of hay all 'round!

A little farther down the road, in the July/August timeframe, we can anticipate a Change of Command Parade. Following return from *TF Steele* command in Latvia, and capping what will have been an active and challenging two years as Commanding Officer, LCol Eric Angell will hand over to LCol Mike Mallette, (the CO Designate). Once more, details to follow nearer the date, but be assured that horses will canter, track will turn and by the CO's decree – the Regimental Pipes and Drums will blaze forth in glory as our Guidon changes capable hands once again.

The word is out regarding *Reunion 2020, 11 – 12 September in Edmonton*, and I encourage each of us to mark the date. This first Reunion in a decade is being generated thanks to the outstanding response by our Regimental Association Branches and Chapters across Canada, providing a unified expression of interest to our Association National President, Brad Norman. Consequently, the Reunion 2020 organizing team, in conjunction with RHQ, has now locked into place a great programme of events for the weekend. So encourage your friends and seize this opportunity to gather, reminisce, and celebrate our achievements together – we have definitely earned it!

Behind the scenes, the Regimental Society and Ceremonial Mounted Troop Foundation Boards, and their Committees, are working hard along several roads that lead to *Celebration 2025 – The 125th Anniversary of the Raising of Strathcona's Horse*. With five years to run until H-Hour, it might seem that we risk getting a little ahead of ourselves. However, we all know that time flies and this historic milestone demands our special attention. Without doubt, Reunion 2025 will be the centerpiece of the

Celebration, while other initiatives and events may unfold to heighten the occasion. The time to start this particular conversation is now and all views are most welcome.

Two important *Celebration* projects have already been proposed and approved by the Society Board, each intended to capture and update our proud story. A professional assessment is currently underway to determine the improvements required to our Regimental Museum and Archives, necessary to engage and interact with the visitors of today and tomorrow. A full report with recommendations for Board consideration is expected in March, with a decision on the way ahead to follow in the summer. Changes are planned to be in place by *Celebration 2025* and the project details will be described in the Fall Newsletter edition.

Likewise, a selection panel of the Society Heritage and Education Committee has recommended an author, and the Board has accepted to commission the writing of the latest volume of our Regimental History, to cover the years 1946 – 2011. This will be an authoritative history, referencing the archives of DND, the National Archives, the National War Museum and our own Regimental Museum Archives. It will tell the Regiment's story during the post-Second World War period, the Korean War, the deployment of NATO Forces in West Germany, Cyprus and other peacekeeping deployments, the post-Cold War period, the Balkan War (Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo), and of course, the Afghanistan War. It's certainly a great sweep of history – but more to the point, this is the history of present generations of Strathcona's. It will be the story of the Regiment in *our* lifetime, and I would therefore encourage all of us to take an interest in this worthy endeavour. So if called upon for input or an interview, or if you have a point or tale that needs telling, make it your mission to do so. This volume of our history will be completed and available for order at the *Celebration 2025 Reunion*. Further background to the project will be coming in the Spring Newsletter.

I was told long ago that “a day in the Regiment is like a day on Leave” and I'm pleased to report that this much is still true! Although there is much more going on within the Regimental Family than I have touched upon here, we still make it all appear effortless. Smoke and mirrors, perhaps – but we have always managed to enjoy that reputation. The truth is less mysterious and comes back to those ‘component parts’ of the family connecting to achieve results; the serving Regiment and our Strathcona's at large, the Regimental Society and CMT Foundation Boards and Committees, our Regimental Association Branches and Chapters, and countless individuals whose willingness to step up and play a role is inspiring. No single part of the family can do it all, but covering each other off and ‘keeping one foot on the ground’ will always get it done. What works in armoured warfare tends also to be true in life.

In closing, I should tell you that I've so far visited the Regiment in Edmonton three times, attended the RCAC Conference with the CO and RSM, been present when a small Nova Scotia community bid farewell to one of our own, spoken with many senior leaders of our Armed Forces and with Canadians of all walks in many places in our country – and in every instance the same message is received – a message of admiration and respect for our Regiment and all those who wear, support and sustain the badge, both serving and retired. It's a truly humbling experience and I count myself privileged to accept these sentiments on your behalf. I commend you all for upholding our reputation as a matter of trust, for all to recognize and appreciate.

Look out for each other; lend a hand where you can, be proud, and continued good luck in the months ahead.

Perseverance

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "R. Stein".