

THE DUFFLEBAG

COLLINGWOOD LEGION BRANCH #63

May 2022

President's Message



At the General Meeting in April all executive were returned to their positions. We are losing Julie Benson from the board as she is moving to Owen Sound. We thank her for her work and support and wish her the best.

We are hoping to hold an Honors and Awards luncheon in late June and catch up on the past 3 years. Keep watch for a date.

As well, if all keeps well we are looking to bring back the Canada Day BBQ, so keep some time free on Friday July 1st and drop by the Branch.

All the best and continue to stay safe.

Rob



PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Ladies Auxiliary



Nothing to Report

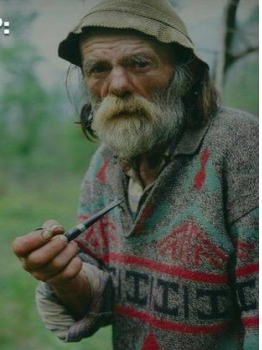
Yours in comradeship

Sue

LA President

SURVIVAL TIP:

If you get lost
in the woods
start talking
about politics
and someone
will show up
to argue with
you.



Three women die together in an accident and go to heaven. When they get there, St. Peter says, "We only have one rule here in heaven...don't step on the ducks." So they enter heaven, and sure enough, there are ducks all over the place.

It is almost impossible not to step on a duck, and they try their best to avoid them.

The first woman accidentally steps on one. Along comes St. Peter with the ugliest man she ever saw. St. Peter chains them together and says. "Your punishment for stepping on a duck is to spend eternity chained to this ugly man!"

The next day, the second woman steps accidentally on a duck, and along comes St. Peter, who doesn't miss a thing, and with him is another extremely ugly man. He chains them together with the same admonishment as for the first woman.

The third woman has observed all this and not wanting to be chained for all eternity to an ugly man, is very, VERY careful where she steps. She manages to go months without stepping on any ducks. But one day St. Peter comes up to her with the most handsome man she has ever laid eyes on ... very tall, tanned, muscular, and thin. St. Peter chains them together without saying a word.

The woman remarks, "I wonder what I did to deserve being chained to you for all of eternity?"

The guy says, "I don't know about you, but I stepped on a duck.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION
BRANCH 63
2019 - 2022



Branch Officers

President	Rob Graham		794-9975
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2nd Vice	Nancy Phillips	Youth Education	445-2489
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Treasurer	Pat Graham	Membership	444-8043

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(Standing Committee Chairs appointed by Executive Officers/President)

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Larry Baulke	Ways & Means	445-6204
Ruby Klinck	Sick and Visiting	445-5153
Ken Templeman	Sgt at Arms/Veteran's Service Officer	444-1307
Julie Steeves-Benson	L.A. Liaison	607-7190

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(not actually part of the Executive Committee but appointed by Executive Officers/President)

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Bert Brennan	Sports	445-4116
Cedric D'Souza	Cadet Liason Honours & Awards Committee	
Marie Stephenson	Honours & Awards Committee	
Susan Payne	Editor, <i>The Dufflebag</i>	429-8033

website: www.collingwoodlegion.ca

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION
Ladies Auxiliary
BRANCH 63
2019 - 2022



Officers

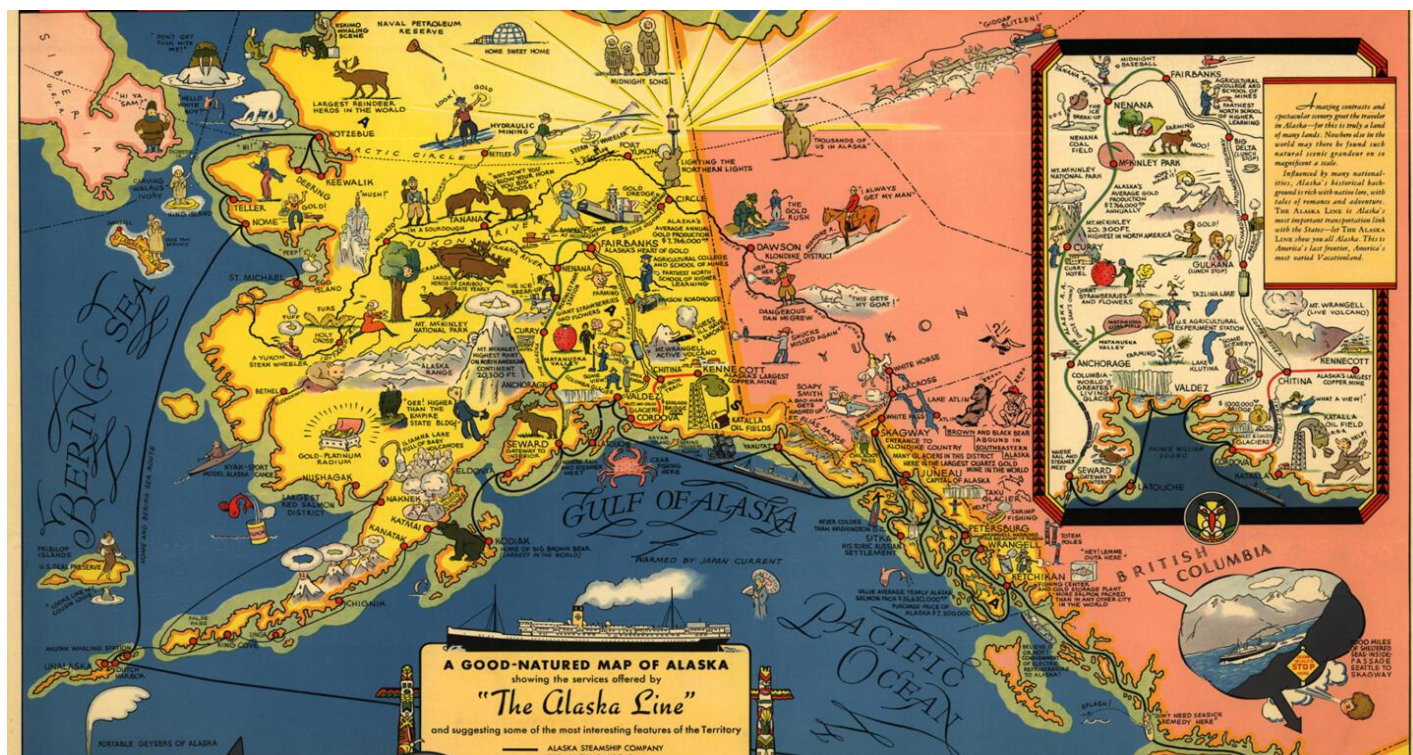
President	Sue Muller	Bookings/Buyer	445-6771
Past President	Helen Jamieson	Staffing	445-2368
1st Vice	Cathy Kusiar	Membership	445-8187
2nd Vice	Sharon Helmer	Sick & Visiting	445-6785
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Executive Committee

Lynda Cain	Sgt at Arms	445-2090
Bev Heron	Sports	445-0579
Sharon Helmer	Sick & Visiting	445-6785
Debbie Gruter		429-1983

Standing Committees

EDITOR'S DESK



This is an article on Dutch Harbour I found when researching how the U.S. purchased Alaska, In light of the Cold War and now the war in Ukraine I am happy that Alaska is in U.S. hands rather than Russia's. I do think it would have been better for Canada to have owned this land after all it is attached to US!. Unfortunately, at the time of purchase, we were not even a country yet

Raids on Dutch Harbor Remain Little-Known Part of World War II : History: Veterans say they were prepared for the attack by Japanese forces, but the result was a gruesome comedy of errors.



Catalina flying boat, heading out of the harbor for a mail run to Kodiak, was attacked by Japanese fighters.

ANCHORAGE, Alaska

Everyone remembers the first time the Japanese attacked American territory. But Art Bauman is among the select who remember the second time.

Bauman was a Navy photographer, stationed at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands. He watched as a PBY

“That thing was just taking off and a Zero came down and blasted it,” said Bauman, 75, who lives near Kalamazoo, Mich. “It landed on a spit there and burst into flames. It was a gruesome thing.”

The attack on Dutch Harbor was part of a little-known chapter of World War II, and it indeed was gruesome: 35 people died and another 28 were wounded in two separate raids on June 3 and 4, 1942.

But it also was a comedy of errors, say the people who were there and the historians who have studied this overlooked installment of the war--an episode that would end with an enemy force holding U.S. territory for the first time since the War of 1812.

“Dutch was well-prepared,” said John Cloe, historian for the 11th Air Force at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage.



“Our intelligence had broken their radio codes and they (the U.S. Navy) knew it was coming almost to the hour. Most of the people who got killed had just gotten off ships the night before. Nobody had told them what to do.

“The Japanese showed up, they piled out of the barracks and got hit,” Cloe said. “Twenty-five were killed and 25 wounded by one string of bombs. The others were killed in ones and twos.”

Why did the Japanese attack this forlorn American outpost?

The seeds were sown in April, when 16 B-25 bombers, launched from the aircraft carrier Hornet and commanded by Jimmy Doolittle, bombed Tokyo. The raid did little real damage but shook the Japanese high command.

Planning was begun to enlarge the empire eastward, in an arc knifing across the Pacific from Fiji, Western Samoa and Midway Island to the Aleutians--a thousand-mile chain that bends like a longbow from Alaska toward Japan. Attu, the westernmost island, is only 380 miles from the Russian coast.

The Japanese intended to bomb Dutch Harbor a day before an attack on Midway to draw what remained of the U.S. Pacific Fleet out of position.

But all this strategy was known to American military leaders, thanks to radio intercepts. The Battle of Midway would rage June 4-5, and end with the first major defeat of the Japanese war machine.

Dutch Harbor would be a very different story. Lowell Thorsness was a 24-year-old Caterpillar driver there a half a century ago. He was a civilian helping the military blaze new roads and level spongy ground for barracks and warehouses.

“My foreman told us that they’d gotten word the Japanese had sent carriers from Tokyo Bay with orders to bomb Dutch Harbor, so we were to get ready for it,” said Thorsness, who lives in Anchorage. “He told us to dig a foxhole ‘cause they were coming.

“Typical of construction stiffs, someone said, ‘Let’s get up a pool,’ and we made bets on the day of the attack. Little did I know I’d be helping dig out bodies a few days later.”

Retired Adm. James S. Russell, 89, of Tacoma, Wash., was a PBY squadron leader at Dutch Harbor. He can explain some of the foul-ups.

“On the first day of the raids, communications failed between Dutch Harbor and Umnak, 60 nautical miles to the west. The Army planes on Umnak were sitting there fat, dumb and happy while the first raid took place on Dutch Harbor,” Russell said. “They didn’t even try for an intercept.”

At Dutch Harbor, heroism mixed with slapstick. “On the second day, I was in a bomb shelter with about eight other guys,” Thorsness said. “Most were infantry, firing .30-06 Springfields.

“One guy, I’ll never forget it, fired two rounds and had his rifle jam. In the middle of the bombing, here he sits, talking to his rifle.



Archives. University of Alaska. Fairbanks

“He said, ‘I had you in Ft. Ord (Calif.) and you never failed me. I had you in the desert on maneuvers and you never failed me.’”

The first (enemy) I see you fail me, you dirty . . . ’ ”

Johnnie Jenkins was a Navy mess steward who, with scores of Army troops, arrived at Dutch Harbor the day before the first air raid.

“We sat around drinking that first night, and the next morning, when everything happened, everyone took off and left me because I hadn’t been assigned duty,” said Jenkins, now 75.

“I tried to get in a foxhole but the guy who was in there told me I couldn’t get in because he was from Alabama. I’m black, you see.

“Well, the Zeros were strafing the area and I wasn’t about to go anywhere and I told him so. We got along fine after that and he invited me back the next day, but I told him I’d made other arrangements.”

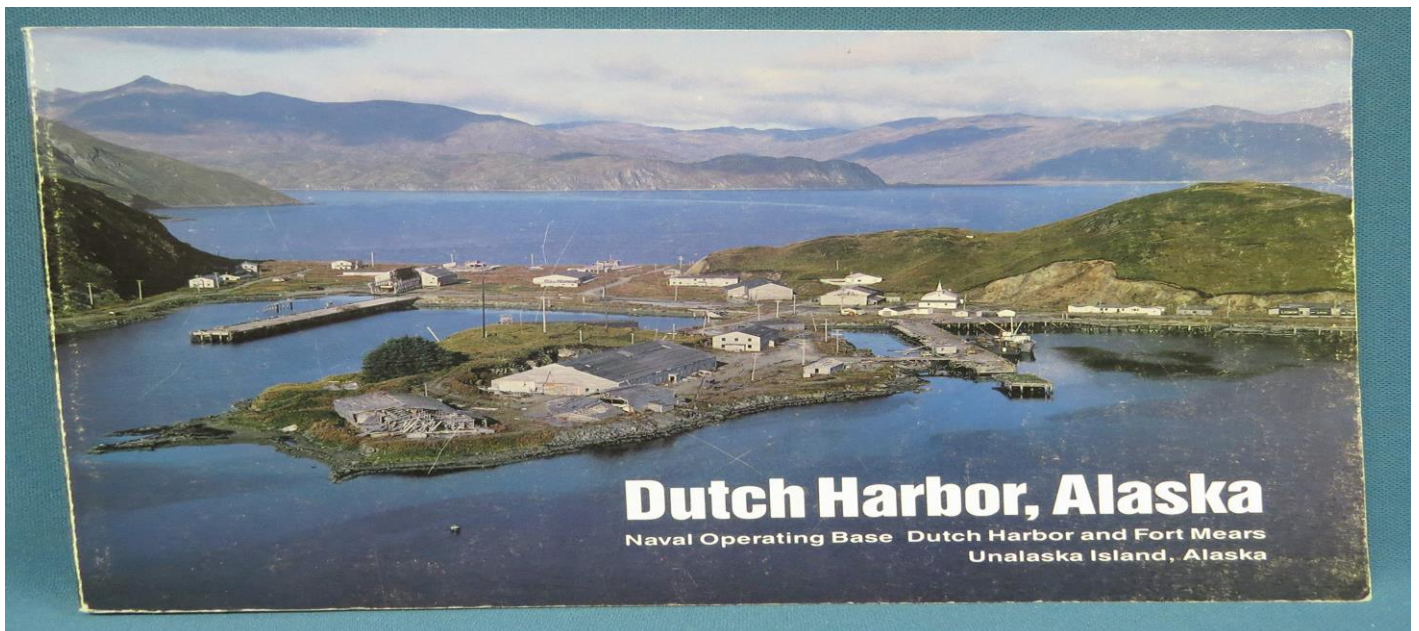
The miscues were not solely American, Russell said.

“On the second day, the Japanese squadron decided to rendezvous off the western end of Unalaska Island to gather up stragglers,” he said. “Unbeknownst to them, that was just across the channel from our fighter field.

“Our P-40s knocked down four Vals (dive bombers). As the P-40s were finishing up that job, in came the Zeros and knocked down two P-40s.”

And there were instances of bravery. Ted Johnson, 83, of Pensacola, Fla., was one of several PBY pilots patrolling southwest of Dutch Harbor, looking for the Japanese carrier force.

“I was letting down through the soup and I broke out at 900 feet,” Johnson said. “On my right side was a carrier going away from us at right angles. Not an airplane was in sight, so I reached up and rammed the throttles full bore on both engines. We were trying to duck back into the clouds.”



It wasn’t long after that that one of the PBY’s engines began heating up and had to be shut down. Johnson said he jettisoned the torpedoes to maintain altitude, and then set course toward Dutch Harbor.

“I flew it 180 miles home. I was very, very busy flying that airplane--too busy to get scared. One lousy . . . bullet had cut the oil line.”

PBYs were two-engine patrol bombers that were slow, lightly armed and armored, but had high endurance and range.

“That was what you were there for. Find the enemy, tell the folks back home and then take your lumps,” he said. “We didn’t have any escorts.”

Their Dutch Harbor mission completed, the Japanese carrier group headed for the western Aleutians. On June 5, they landed troops unopposed at Attu; two days later, they occupied Kiska.

It would be 13 months before the Japanese were dislodged, and then at a terrible price.

What had they gained?

Many of the islands are volcanic, all are treeless and wind-swept, and most plunge from mountains as high as 9,000 feet directly into a churning sea.

“Look at them on a map and they look like a natural invasion route to Japan or to the United States,” Cloe said. “Get on the ground and it’s something altogether different.

“They’re completely unsuitable for large-scale military warfare. There are few places to build airfields and only a half-dozen anchorages. Few occur in combination. The weather is lousy.”

The region is called the “cradle of storms” because warm waters of the Japanese current collide with polar air from the north. That produces an unhealthy mix of fog, rain and winds.

Neither side fully appreciated the Aleutian climate as the campaign began. Both later would record more weather-related casualties than casualties caused by fighting.

The Dutch Harbor raids did little physical damage, said retired Brig. Gen. Ben Talley, 89, who was responsible for military construction in Alaska.

“While they attacked at Dutch Harbor, their battle at Midway was a great loss--the turning point in the war. Japan was never the same after that,” said Talley, who lives at Anchor Point.

“But the raids did have a tremendous morale effect on the civilian population in Alaska,” he said. “There were a lot of invasion jitters at the time and, eventually, politics from that led to the big military buildup here and finally the decision to throw the Japanese out of the Aleutians.”

Purchase of Alaska, 1867

The purchase of Alaska in 1867 marked the end of Russian efforts to expand trade and settlements to the Pacific coast of North America, and became an important step in the United States rise as a great power in the Asia-Pacific region. Beginning in 1725, when Russian Czar Peter the Great dispatched Vitus Bering to explore the Alaskan coast, Russia had a keen interest in this region, which was rich in natural resources and lightly inhabited. As the United States expanded westward in the early 1800s, Americans soon found themselves in competition with Russian explorers and traders. St. Petersburg, however, lacked the financial resources to support major settlements or a military presence along the Pacific coast of North America and permanent Russian settlers in Alaska never numbered more than four hundred. Defeat in the Crimean War further reduced Russian interest in this region.

Signing of the Alaska Treaty, 1867

Russia offered to sell Alaska to the United States in 1859, believing the United States would off-set the designs of Russia's greatest rival in the Pacific, Great Britain. The looming U.S. Civil War delayed the sale, but after the war, Secretary of State [William Seward](#) quickly took up a renewed Russian offer and on March 30, 1867, agreed to a proposal from Russian Minister in Washington, Edouard de Stoeckl, to purchase Alaska for \$7.2 million. The Senate



approved the treaty of purchase on April 9; President Andrew Johnson signed the treaty on May 28, and Alaska was formally transferred to the United States on October 18, 1867. This purchase ended Russia's presence in North America and ensured U.S. access to the Pacific northern rim.

For three decades after its purchase the United States paid little attention to Alaska, which was governed under military, naval, or Treasury rule or, at times, no visible rule at all. Seeking a way to impose U.S. mining laws, the United States constituted a civil government in 1884. Skeptics had dubbed the purchase of Alaska "Seward's Folly," but the former Secretary of State was vindicated when a major gold deposit was discovered in the Yukon in 1896, and Alaska became the gateway to the Klondike gold fields. The strategic importance of Alaska was finally recognized in World War II. Alaska became a state on January 3, 1959.



In comradeship
Sue

YOUTH EDUCATION

The zone winners for this year's Poster, Poems and Essays Program is:

Tessa Lloyd
 Matthew Meiningel
 Savannah Loopstra-Dyegoke

First Place Primary Colour
 Second Place Intermediate Colour
 Senior Second Place

Nottawa Elementary
 Our lady of the Bay
 Our Lady of the Bay

Jamie Burton Primary
 Ada Menard Junior
 Maddison Little-Johns
 Hannah Rawn

First Place Black/White Poster
 Third Place Black/White Poster
 First Place Intermediate Black/White
 First Place Senior Black/White

Admiral School
 Pretty River Academy
 Nottawa Elementary
 Our lady of the Bay

The Homeschool House captured the Essay category with a Second Place Junior Essay by Owen Long and Intermediate Essay Second Place Violet Pugsley.

Out of our 12 first place winners Collingwood Branch received 9 awards for First to Third Place in the Zone. Hannah Rawn from Our Lady of the Bay revealed her poster to a Senior District Third Place. Congratulations Hannah and the best placing for Collingwood Branch 63.

Thank you for showing us how you remember the fallen soldiers, those who are still serving and the veterans.

Thank you for supporting the Poster, Poems and Essay program.

Hear from me next year. Have a good Summer.

Royal Canadian Legion - Youth Education Programs



Youth Education chair
 Yours in Comradship
 Nancy Phillips 705-445-2489

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Please welcome the following new members to Branch 63. Brad White, an Associate, Maddie Berman, an Associate, Paul Forbes, an Associate, Tom Sudak, an Associate, John Millar, an Associate, David Ellis, an Affiliate voting and Tomas Sipos as an Associate. The following have transferred their membership to Collingwood. Antonio DeFabrizio, an Associate from Branch 553, London, William Steward, an Associate from Branch 34 Orillia and James Nobes, an Associate, from Dominion Command.



past years service. You will also receive a new card to reflect the year joined. Please note that there will be a delay in getting your new membership card to you or your 2022 sticker.

You don't have to be a Veteran to join the Legion!



When you join the Legion, you support the many services we offer to Veterans, serving military, RCMP members, and their families.

(Previously a member of Branch 63) and Stephen Cook, an Associate from Branch 459, Stouffville.

Just an interesting note. Currently, our youngest member is Maddie Berman at 18 and our oldest member is Norm Barker at 100 years young. In between are a wonderful group of members who make Branch 63 a strong and vibrant legion. Thank you to all of you.

Members who are behind in paying their membership can pay past years. This will not impact your years service with the Legion. A renewal sticker for 2022 will be ordered for your card. If you do not wish to pay back past years but still wish to remain a member, you can pay for the current year and you will be reinstated as a member. Just note that you will lose any

On line enrollment and renewals are also becoming increasingly popular. This allows you to pay online and you can also set up automatic renewal for future years or you can prepay future years. Also coming soon, the Legion is introducing a Virtual Card....stay tuned for more details. As always, I can be reached at membership@collingwoodlegion.ca or you can leave a message at the bar. I will get back to you as soon as possible.

Yours in Comradeship,
Pat Graham

John, who lived in the north of England, decided to go golfing in Scotland with his buddy, Shawn.

So they loaded up John's minivan and headed north.

After driving for a few hours, they got caught in a terrible blizzard. So they pulled into a nearby farm and asked the attractive lady who answered the door if they could spend the night. 'I realise it's terrible weather out there and I have this huge house all to myself, but I'm recently widowed,' she explained, 'and I'm afraid the neighbours will talk if I let you stay in my house.'

Don't worry,' John said. 'We'll be happy to sleep in the barn. And if the weather breaks, we'll be gone at first light.'

'The lady agreed, and the two men found their way to the barn and settled in for the night. Come morning, the weather had cleared, and they got on their way. They enjoyed a great weekend of golf.'

But about nine months later, John got an unexpected letter from an attorney. It took him a few minutes to figure it out, but he finally determined that it was from the attorney of that attractive widow he had met on the golf weekend.

He dropped in on his friend Shawn and asked, "Shawn, do you remember that good-looking widow from the farm we stayed at on our golf holiday in Scotland about 9 months ago?"

Yes, I do,' said Shawn 'Did you, er, happen to get up in the middle of the night, go up to the house and pay her a visit?"

Well, um, yes!,' Shawn said, a little embarrassed about being found out, 'I have to admit that I did.'

And did you happen to give her my name instead of telling her your name?"

Shawn's face turned beet red and he said, 'Yeah, look, I'm sorry, buddy. I'm afraid I did.'

Why do you ask?"

She just died and left me everything.'

TRIVIA**Basic Russian Knowledge Quiz**

1. In what year did Lenin die?
a. 1924 b. 1887 c. 1904 d. 1938
2. Which country did Russia invade in 1979?
a. Nepal b. Afghanistan c. South Korea d. Poland
3. What colors are currently (2013) displayed on the Russian flag?
a. Blue, yellow and white b. Red, yellow and white c. Red, white and blue d. Red and yellow
4. What is the capital of Russia?
a. St. Petersburg b. Leningrad c. Stalingrad d. Moscow
5. What is the approximate size of Russia (2013)?
a. 21,500,000 km² b. 12,070,000 km² c. 15,930,000 km² d. 17,098,000 km²
6. When do Russians celebrate Defender of the Fatherland Day?
a. March 11 b. October 19 c. August 7 d. February 23
7. What is the national animal of Russia?
a. Russian Bear b. Musk ox c. Wolf d. Snow Leopard
8. When did Russia hold the Summer Olympic Games?
a. 1980 b. 1972 c. 1996 d. 1988
9. How many time zones does Russia span?
a. Eleven b. One c. Nine d. Five
10. As of 2008, how many "federal Subjects" does Russia have?
a. 83 b. 48 c. 97 d. 56
11. What is the national flower of Russia?
a. Daffodil b. Chamomile c. White Rose d. Chrysanthemum
12. Which ruler was the first to wear the Great Imperial Crown?
a. Ivan the Terrible b. Catherine the Great c. Alexander the Great d. Peter the Great
13. What is the Orlov?
a. A church b. A theatre c. A breed of horse d. A diamond
14. When did Ivan the Terrible begin his rule?
a. 1672 b. 1786 c. 1547 d. 1309
15. What is the longest river in Russia?
a. The Vilyuy b. The Kolyma c. The Lower Tunguska d. The Volga
16. What is the highest mountain in Russia?
a. Gora Uilpata b. Pik Pushkina c. Mount Elbrus d. Gora Gistola
17. What is the name of Russia's largest island?
a. Sakhalin b. De Long c. Iony d. Ayon

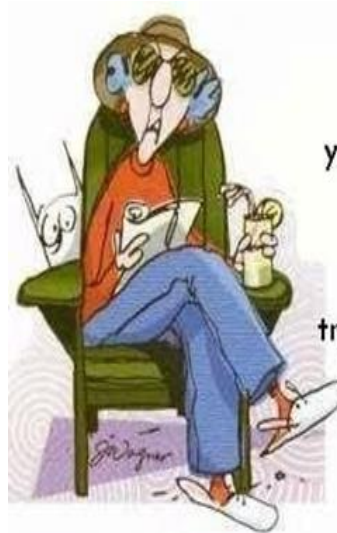


TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. **1924** - Lenin was the leader of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.
2. **Afghanistan** - The Russian war with Afghanistan lasted nine years.
3. **Red, white and blue** - The red, white and blue flag was adopted in 1993.
4. **Moscow** - Moscow is the largest city in Russia.
5. **17,098,000 km²** - Russia is 17,098,242 km² or 6,592,800 square miles.
6. **February 23** - This day was first celebrated in 1919.
7. **Russian Bear** - The Russian Bear was a symbol of the Olympic Games.
8. **1980** - These games were boycotted by many western nations.
9. **Nine** - Russia is the largest country in the world.
10. **83** - These subjects include republics, krais and oblasts etc.
11. **Chamomile** - The chamomile resembles a daisy.
12. **Catherine the Great** - Ekraat and Jeremia Pauzie designed the crown for Catherine's coronation in 1762.
13. **A diamond** - The Orlov Diamond is set in the royal sceptre, which is part of the crown jewels.
14. **1547** - Ivan ruled from January 16, 1547 to March 28, 1584.
15. **The Volga** - The Volga is 2,290 miles long. It empties into the Caspian Sea.
16. **Mount Elbrus** - Mount Elbrus is 5,642 meters high.
17. **Sakhalin** - Sakhalin is 72,492 km².

RIDDLES

1. What has lots of eyes, but can't see?
2. What has one eye, but can't see?
3. What has many needles, but doesn't sew?
4. What has hands, but can't clap?
5. What has legs, but doesn't walk?
6. What has one head, one foot and four legs?
7. What can you catch, but not throw?
8. What kind of band never plays music?
9. What has many teeth, but can't bite?
10. What is cut on a table, but is never eaten?
11. What has words, but never speaks?
12. What runs all around a backyard, yet never moves?
13. What can travel all around the world without leaving its corner?
14. What has a thumb and four fingers, but is not a hand?
15. What has a head and a tail but no body?



Life is all about ass:
 you're either covering it,
 laughing it off,
 kicking it,
 busting it,
 trying to get a piece of it,
 behaving like one,
 or you live with one!!!

RIDDLE ANSWERS

1. A potato
2. A needle
3. A Christmas tree
4. A clock
5. A table
6. A bed
7. A cold
8. A rubber band
9. A comb
10. A deck of cards
11. A book
12. A fence
13. A stamp
14. A glove
15. A coin



"I hope it tastes good. It's for the cat."

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I agree it is dangerous to leave children alone with pit bulls...kids are scary



Wouldn't it be great if we could put ourselves in the dryer for a short time and come out wrinkle free and two sizes smaller



and come out wrinkle free and two sizes smaller

MUSEUM and PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORT

It is not hard to tell that things are getting back to somewhat normal as I am dealing with others regarding books and medals for the museum and we have had a General Meeting (the second in some two years) that dealt with an election and the returning of Rob as President.



Over the past months the Branch has made donations at the District E Spring Convention, Collingwood United Soccer Youth Team among others I am sure you will read about in others spots of the Duffelbag.

With things getting better in my household with regards to medical events I will be available to spend more time at the Branch and in the museum.

I am working with a teacher and class at the Pretty River Academy. They have been studying WW II and would like to visit the Branch as part of their class. We hope this has happened by the time you read this. It is always great when young people are educated about Canada's military history.

Until next time Remember to Remember and keep on supporting the Branch.

Lest we Forget.
Comrade Don Wilcox
PRO/Museum Chair

SICK AND VISITING LADIES AUXILIARY

Nothing to Report

Yours in Comradeship
Sharon Helmer
Chair





"VISION VOICE VALUE"

GEORGIAN BAY CHAPTER 14

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WEB PAGE REPORT

Our web page is still out there. (collingwoodlegion.ca) . The current issue of *The Dufflebag* and the past issues are on the site along with some Branch history and pictures. We are planning to have up to 6 past *Dufflebags* on the web page so you will be able to enjoy past issues that you may have missed. As always, any ideas or contributions are always welcomed.

Pat Graham

Web Page Coordinator

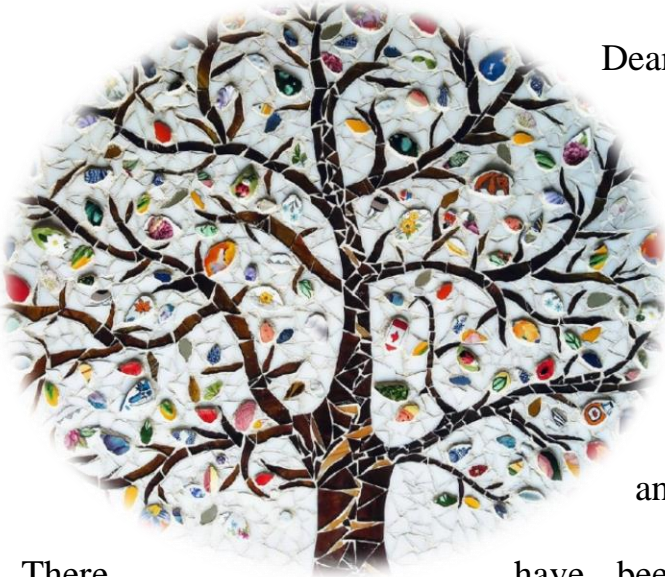


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Ladies Auxiliary Liaison



Dear Comrades,

Announcement:

As I am moving mid May to another region, I would like to take this time to acknowledge and thank Rob for his leadership as he creates a cohesive and supportive Executive team.

Thank you to Pat, Hans, Nancy, Ruby, Don, Ken and Larry for their comradeship.

There have been many initiatives that have supported the community, which I am humbled to have been a part of.

Would also like to express thanks to the Ladies Auxiliary, as the experience as Branch liaison was very meaningful.

Until we meet again; "carry compassion in your hearts, and always be kind to each other"

Most sincerely,
In comradeship
Julie Steeves Benson
Ladies Auxiliary Liaison Chair

SPORTS REPORT

I would like to thank Bert Brennen and Doug Ramsey for bringing the tournaments back after COVID. A great job and the participants really enjoyed the red patch and green patch coming back.

Thank you
Nancy Phillips

Two old ladies Dolly and Ruby were talking about their grandchildren.

Dolly said, "Each year I send each of my grandchildren a card with a generous check inside. I never hear from them... never receive a thank you message."

Ruby replies, "I too send my grandchildren a very generous check. I hear from them within a week after they receive it. In fact, they each pay me a personal visit."

"Wow! How come ?" remarked Dolly.

"Very simple solution... I don't sign the check!"





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SICK AND VISITING

Nothing to Report

Yours In Good Health and Comradeship

Ruby Klinck

Sick and Visiting Chair



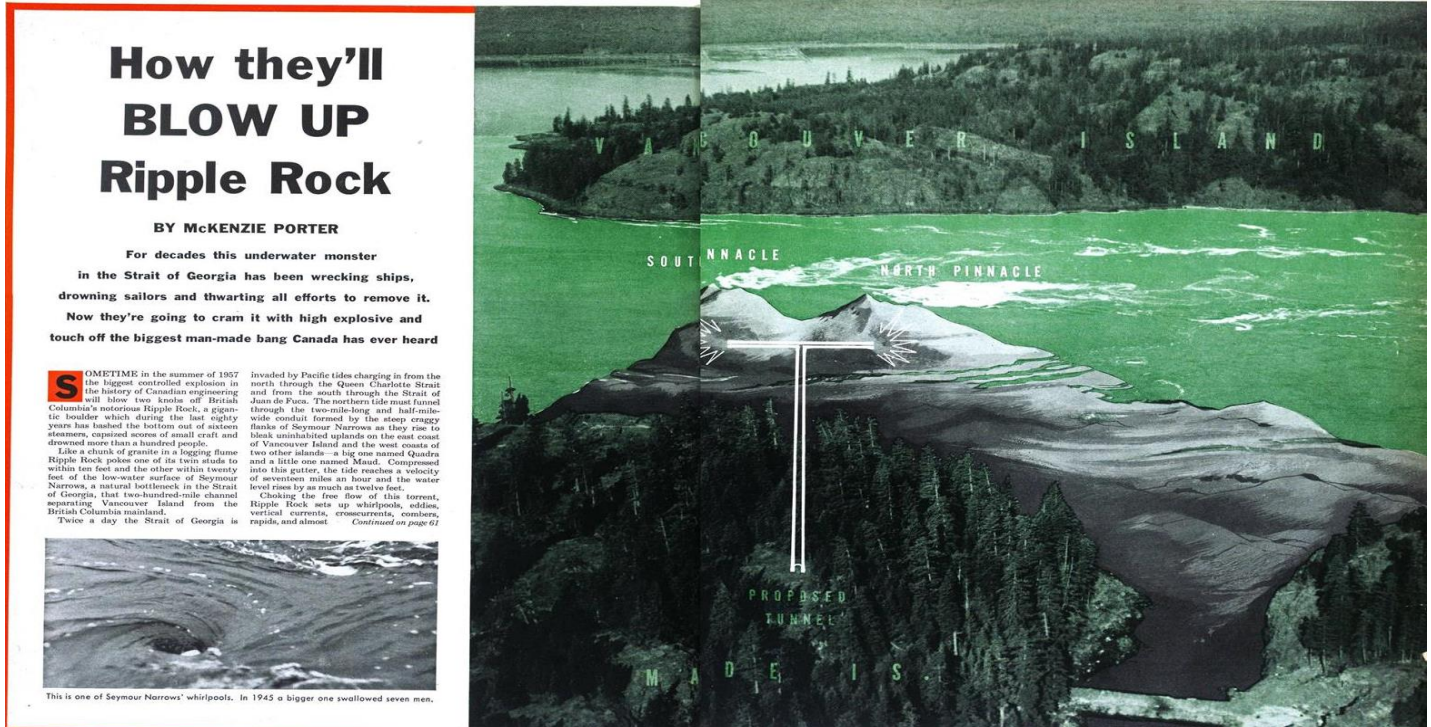


227 Hurontario Street
Collingwood, Ontario L9Y 2M8
(705) 444-0389

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

April 5, 1958

60 years later, a major underwater explosion in B.C. still fascinates



1958 Ripple Rock explosion was a major feat of engineering

[Maryse Zeidler](#) · CBC News · Posted: Apr 02, 2018 4:00 AM PT | Last Updated: April 6, 2018

B.C.'s deadly Ripple Rock, an underwater mountain, was destroyed on April 5, 1958. (CBC)

From the comfort of her office at the Museum at Campbell River, Sandra Parish looks over a span of ocean that leads to what was once called "one of the vilest stretches of water in the world."

The stretch in question is British Columbia's Seymour Narrows — the former home of Ripple Rock, an underwater mountain that was blown to smithereens 60 years ago this week.

"[Ripple Rock] was a major marine navigational hazard in a pretty important waterway on the Inside Coast," said Parish, the museum's executive director.

Claimed lives

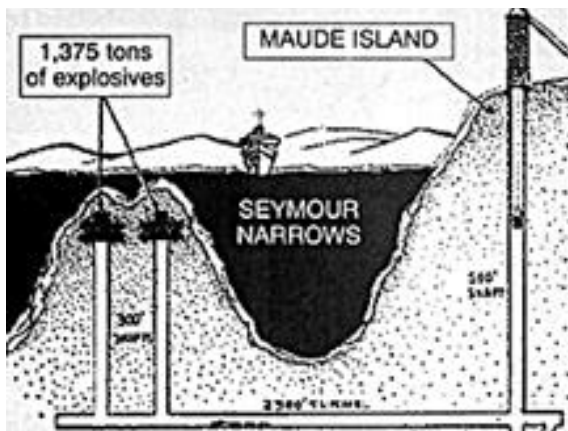
The twin peaks of Ripple Rock lurked just below the water in the narrow waterway, leaving only three metres of clearance at low tide. The peaks also created giant whirlpools that sucked smaller boats below and threw larger ones off-course.

Ripple Rock claimed the lives of at least 114 people on as many boats, which ranged from

pleasure crafts to large barges full of supplies heading north to Alaska and Haida Gwaii. The explosion on April 5, 1958, that blew Ripple Rock to bits was a major engineering feat years in the making. It was also one of the first events to be broadcast live across the country, forever etched in the minds of the nation's citizens huddled around their new televisions.

Despite presenting itself as a major marine hazard, many in B.C. opposed Ripple Rock's destruction, according to the museum. They hoped the underwater mountain could help connect a bridge from Vancouver Island to the mainland.

But the federal government decided that making the waterway safer was a bigger priority, because it provided a channel linking the northern part of the continent to the rest of Canada and the U.S.



Beginning in 1943, engineers made several attempts at dismantling Ripple Rock. Eventually, work began in 1955 to build shafts and tunnels under the water and fill them with explosives.

"At the time everyone was very, very concerned about what this was going to cause, what impact there might be," Parish said.

Some local residents boarded up their windows and headed for higher ground on the morning of the explosion, worried about tidal waves and aftershocks.

Broadcast live

The blast shot 635,028 tonnes of rock and water 305 metres into the air over the course of just 10 seconds, but most people felt and heard nothing. Even aquatic wildlife was deemed unperturbed, according to Parish.

Residents did, however, see the explosion burst across the screens of their televisions. CBC News aired the event live across the country using relatively new broadcast technology.

Parish said that it's because of the television coverage that many people still remember the event.



B.C.'s deadly Ripple Rock is blown up in the world's largest non-nuclear peacetime explosion.

She said people are still so fascinated by Ripple Rock that internet searches on the subject bring in some of the biggest traffic on the museum's website.

Today, as she looks out her office window, Parish sees the many vessels that still navigate the waterway on their way north — many of them cruise ships, fishing boats and tugs pulling logs. What she doesn't see is the swirling waters caused by the mountain lurking beneath, blown away long ago to make way for safe passage.

John, who lived in the north of England, decided to go golfing in Scotland with his buddy, Shawn.

So they loaded up John's minivan and headed north.

After driving for a few hours, they got caught in a terrible blizzard. So they pulled into a nearby farm and asked the attractive lady who answered the door if they could spend the night.

'I realise it's terrible weather out there and I have this huge house all to myself, but I'm recently widowed,' she explained, 'and I'm afraid the neighbours will talk if I let you stay in my house.'

'Don't worry,' John said. 'We'll be happy to sleep in the barn. And if the weather breaks, we'll be gone at first light.'

The lady agreed, and the two men found their way to the barn and settled in for the night.

Come morning, the weather had cleared, and they got on their way.

They enjoyed a great weekend of golf.

But about nine months later, John got an unexpected letter from an attorney. It took him a few minutes to figure it out, but he finally determined that it was from the attorney of that attractive widow he had met on

the golf weekend.

He dropped in on his friend Shawn and asked, "Shawn, do you remember that good-looking widow from the farm we stayed at on our golf holiday in Scotland about 9 months ago?"

'Yes, I do,' said Shawn

'Did you, er, happen to get up in the middle of the night, go up to the house and pay her a visit?'

'Well, um, yes!,' Shawn said, a little embarrassed about being found out, 'I have to admit that I did.'

'And did you happen to give her my name instead of telling her your name?'

Shawn's face turned beet red and he said, 'Yeah, look, I'm sorry, buddy. I'm afraid I did. Why do you ask?'

'She just died and left me everything

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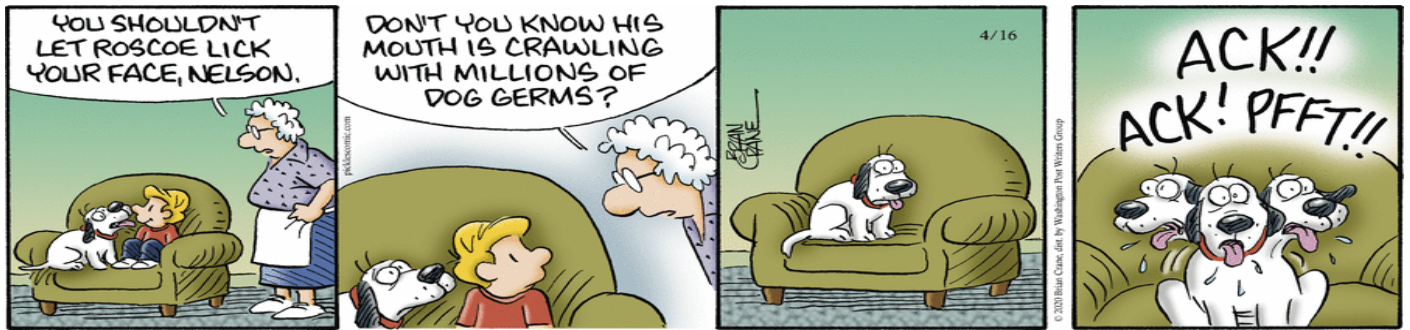
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