

971 RCAF AIR MARSHAL SLEMON WING

Air Force Association Newsletter January 2008



Barbara Edwards looks on as Gary Thompson displays the current 971 Wingers hockey sweater.

Social Page

- Nov 04 It was an enjoyable game, but our 971 Wingers lost 9-8. At the dinner afterwards I always find I meet interesting people. This time an ex Ottawa and Montreal player told me of his father walking down a street in his home town in Poland being grabbed by a German press gang and shipped off to Auswitz where he was selected to work on missile production in Peenemunde. There were many cases of sabotage but the Germans learned to trace back these actions to specific groups. They would then shoot the entire group. His father bore no ill will towards any entire populations, saying he found good and bad everywhere. There were Jews who betrayed other Jews for profit. Post war his parents were among the thousands seeking a new life in Canada. His mother was able to reach Halifax a year before his father.
- Nov 11 Once more the Canadian Regular Force contingent was the largest there with some 200 people. Our Wing managed only 11. As usual, Darrell made an impressive master of ceremonies. The Wing wreath was laid by Paul Elis and Ye Olde Scribe.
- Dec 15 22 Wing members enjoyed the Regular Force Christmas Party at the DoubleTree Hotel.

At the time of going to press we have no social activities for January or February to announce. You will be advised by e-mail about whatever evolves.

Sick Parade:

It appears you are all healthy out there. No aches or pains have been wafted this way. Should you come across any, please advise Joan Peterson who has resume her old post as our Angel of Mercy.

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The Editor's Corner

SUPER RACE: Mankind is bent on climbing to yet another plateau full of promise - and danger. As far as we know, experimentation has so far been restricted to mice, but there are groups worldwide seeking to marry the human brain to artificial neurons to create a super race with far more potential than Hitler's super race.

Vancouver scientist, Danielle Egan, went to the 9th annual meeting of the World Transhumanist Association (WTA) in Chicago to listen to, and report on, Anders Sandberg of Oxford University describe how to go about uploading the contents of human brains, memories, emotions, and all, onto computers. Combining artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and nanotechnology, we can cheat death and speed human evolution.

The WTA, that has attracted a wide range of people from Buddhist monks to millionaires to Star Trek's William Shatner to Ray Kurzweil, author of *The Singularity is Near*, argues that this marriage is inevitable and that a benevolent group should be in the forefront to thwart those who would use the technology to create a selected few to prey on the rest of mankind.

I am compiling a list of names of all those we can trust to be among those chosen for enhanced intelligence.

Please send me your list. As I suspect that your entire list will fit on the back of a postage stamp, would you mind using a commemorative stamp? I am a collector and need to fill numerous blanks.

Human nature is such that, from the very first clan and tribal associations, attempts have been made to establish checks and balances. Too often these have been insufficient to prevent man's exploitation of man. Even in the well-meaning WTA team, Egan reports differences. And did not William Shatner's Star Trek team have deep frictions off screen? So many world problems, along with the good, are human-created.

DIFFERENT WORLDS, DIFFERENT MINDSETS: My once-frequent visits to local military establishments have dwindled to almost zero because of the hassle of identity checks in a frightened world. It now seems so improbable that, during our desperate struggle for survival in WWII, we had such lax security. Before being shot down, 27 Mar 1943, I spent a year in Britain, serving on 9 different stations and travelling all over the country by train, bus, and bicycle. It was inconceivable that anyone, living in that beautiful country, would want to harm it, so we wandered on and off base at will and encountered no check points on the road. We all had identity cards. No one ever asked to see mine and it was the same for Joan who worked for a large company that manufactured military equipment. None of us ever heard of any sabotage. Today, we scorn Ahmindinejad for saying there are no homosexuals in Iran. We made the same statements not so long ago. In fact I never knew of any homosexuality in 25 years of military service including being locked up with 11,000 men in one compound.

I discovered a different world when I found myself trying to find a way out of Germany. Every bridge, road intersection, and the like were guarded. The air, heavy with oppression, was difficult to breathe. We had the same feeling in the 1950s when we crossed, as tourists, from West to East Berlin.

After the war we still had lax security. It was quite a shock to us when our group from Summerside, PEI, visited a SAC base in the States in 1950. We could see our ageing Lancasters beaming with pride when the USAF placed an armed guard around them. Finally, someone thought them important enough to guard!

In 2005 we tried to visit my old base at Leeming Bar, Yorkshire, from which I had wandered in and out unchecked while flying Halifax bombers in 1942 in the midst of WWII. The armed male and female guards were friendly but declined to allow us one step into the now NATO base. Fearing my memory could be flawed I asked my Bomber Command and POW friend, Vern White, who confirmed lax security adding that there was a midnight curfew on bases. No problem! Those returning late would avoid the main gate and use the hole in the fence. The UK was an occupied country but they knew that, with victory, we friendly occupiers would all go home.

Today we see fields of flags and frequent singing of national anthems. Then, the only flags we saw were one lone RAF/RCAF flag over the main administration building on each base and the only time we heard *God Save the King* was at the end of movies in cinemas. Such displays, we thought, were for those who never saw action. Actually, it was much the same for the Luftwaffe. Even when ordered to use the Heil Hitler salute after the 1944 attempt on his life, the Luftwaffe in our camps complied for only a few days before dropping the pretense. Such ostentation was just too much for those who had suffered in action while defending their countries.

WILDLIFE CROSSINGS: The Banff area of Alberta has the world's highest concentration of animal highway crossings with two overpasses costing \$2.5 million each and 22 underpasses. Eight more are under construction. So far 90,000 animal crossings have been detected including 1,000 black bears and 400 grizzlies. These have reduced animal fatalities in the area by 80%.

THE ARCTIC AIN'T WHAT SHE USED TO BE: Normally 8 million sq. km remain ice covered. By 17 Sep 2007 it was down to 4.2 million. On the NW Passage 14% had remained ice chocked. This year it was 2%. On Melville Island (76°N) the mean July temperature was 5°C, this year 17° with a high of 22°. In Chesterfield Inlet, Inuit saw dragonflies and complain they can no longer predict the weather as they had been taught to do since age five.

CANADIAN SOVEREIGNTY: In Aug - Sep 2007 a cruise ship transited the NW Passage. On board were 100 passengers from Australia, Canada, Germany, the UK and the US. Among the Canadian contingent was Doreen Larsen Riedel, daughter of Henry Larsen who sailed the St. Roch both ways through the ice-chocked passage in the 1940s. This time sea ice had vanished.

On reaching the western end of Banks Island (71°11'N 120°55'W) all 100 passengers assembled on the bow to affirm Canadian sovereignty, lower a Canadian flag, and sing O Canada.

The ship that carried them all was the Russian R.V. Akademik Ioffe with a Russian crew. We still need the Russians! (From Keith Greenaway)

CANADA'S NATIONAL DEBT: In 1996, after years of deficits, the debt stood at \$560 billion, costing taxpayers \$43 billion a year in interest.

Fiscal responsibility arrived in 1997 and 10 years of surpluses have followed, permitting the reduction of the debt to \$475 billion and a saving of \$10 billion a year in interest. There is pressure for tax relief and for more spending on social programs, but newspaper polls indicate the majority still prefer to continue paying down the debt.

FAIR ENOUGH: Pres. Rafael Correa will renew the US lease on its Manta, Ecuador, base provided the US allows Ecuador to have a base in Florida.

A CRANIAL GOD TERMINAL?

Trying to expand our limited knowledge of the human mind, the University of Montreal recruited 15 Carmelite nuns for fMRI scans while concentrating on their strongest religious experiences, Laurentian University got hundred of volunteers, for electrical stimulation of areas of the brain while wearing a "God

Helmet", and the University of Pennsylvania injected radio-active isotopes into Buddhists as they reached their meditation peak.

Changes in blood flow and brain wave activity were recorded for most volunteers. There was a drop in parietal lobe activity but an increase in the prefrontal cortex, and all were happy with the results as they deepened the beliefs they originally held. The Laurentian experiments with Atheists and Agnostics produced a state of cosmic bliss, while others felt closer to their God. During the tests most sensed a person or spirit in the room with them when no one was there.

No single God spot was found. The complexity of spirituality calls for much more study on our neural networks. They did discover that meditation can reverse the effects of ageing in the brain. (Scientific American Mind, Oct/Nov 2007)

CEOs vs GENERALS: The Irish, who were a major factor in the building of the British Empire, discovered it was much more remunerative to supply the army rather than to enlist in it. Things have not changed. Generals today may be well paid but it would take them an average of a hundred years to earn what some CEOs rake in annually. The average intake of a CEO of a top US defense contracting company is over \$12 million. Nicholas Chabraja of General Dynamics netted \$32 million while David Lesar of Haliburton got a mere \$30 million.

If this is not sinful, what is?

A BOTTLE OF JIAHU, PLEASE: The world's oldest-known alcoholic beverage was brewed in Jiahu, Henan, China, some 9,000 years ago. Archeochemists at the U. of Pennsylvania determined the honey-barley-hawthorn base and had a Delaware brewery recreate it. Testers call it pleasant, strong, meady, and heavy with hints of sake and rice and with a yeasty aftertaste. Yes, the testers did go back for seconds, finishing the lot, short of being able to report on a hangover.

RUSSIAN RESPONSE: With the US so active in Russia's backyard, building missile sites in Poland and the Czech Republic, deploying half of its 277-ship navy off Iran, not to mention the war in Iraq, the Russians are improving the Syrian ports of Tartus and Latakia to accept the largest warships to give Russia its first Mediterranean presence since 1991. This move was provoked by the announcement of increased US military aid to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Jordan, Egypt, and Israel. The planned 4-ship Russian Mediterranean fleet will have to come from the Black Sea Fleet which is a mere shadow of its former self. Besides being little more than a face-saving move the Russian ships could provide Syria with more air defence against Israeli raids

WATERLOO TOPS: The Intelligent Communications Forum in New York has chosen Waterloo, Ontario, population 115,000 and home of the BlackBerry, as the world's top community for broadband and information technology

THE 15 x 5 km AYLES ICE SHEET that broke off from the northern tip of Ellesmere Island 13 August 2005 has been racing westwards at a speed of 4 km per month. A satellite tracking beacon has been planted on it, knowing you will want to keep current on its progress.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED - N. IRELAND: 38 years ago the British Army ventured into Northern Ireland to help the Royal Ulster Constabulary deal with violent IRA tactics. With a broad peace supplanting "The Troubles" the last British unit, the 39th Infantry Brigade, lowered its flag in Lisburn, last July and quietly melted away. Even with 738 dead and 6,116 wounded, the British Army argues its intervention served a good purpose and that lessons learned have been useful in Afghanistan and Iraq - for another 38 years?

SEAN PENN: I had paid little attention to this US actor until I discovered he was so popular in Iran. During a recent visit to Tehran he received over 30 dinner invitations and was even summoned by Rafsanjani for a photo op. Sean was with Reese Erlich who was touring Iran and Iraq, gathering data for his excellent book *The Iran Agenda* which I am tempted to review for the March newsletter.

TROPICAL FORESTS absorb 15% of the CO₂ humans produce. Some is used in growth, some stored, but all is given back on death. Studies on hundreds of plots worldwide show that global warming has already slowed this intake and thus growth. In the past 20 years, trunk-diameter growth has slowed by 25% due to warmer nights and days. Increases in CO₂ encourage faster-growing trees to take over from the slow giants that store more CO₂

OUR PORTABLE TOILETS IN AFGHANISTAN are segregated. There is a reason. Westerners use sit-down toilets and toilet paper which is considered unhealthy by Afghans who use squat holes and water for clean up. Afghans trying to balance while squatting on NATO seats can create a mess for those responsible for maintaining clean toilets. Esprit de Corp magazine argues that our engineers should be smart enough to design squat-hole toilets, placing them side by side with ours to avoid criticisms of our sanitary aloofness.

THE ROBITAILLES and LA BELLE FRANCE: "We left Montreal on 3 Sep and returned 27 Sep. We

first visited Brussels and Brugge, then headed for Strasburg where we toured the Alsace/Lorraine wine region, including the town famous for Dijon mustard. While in that area we went Beaune, known for good wines, and the Bourgogne region. Then we drove towards the Loire Valley, famous for its castles. There we visited a wine cellar in the small town of Vouvray. The cellar covered 3 KM under ground.

After staying in few small towns we went to Brittany and ended up in St-Malo, the town Jacques Cartier left from to claim Canada. Our final couple of nights were spent in Paris.

THE THOMPSONS: Margit and Roy followed in October with a Caribbean cruise.

VETERAN SUICIDES: By delving deeply into military records and those of 45 states, going back to 1995, CBS has uncovered a frightening course of war. In the year 2005 alone there were 6,256 suicides among US vets who had seen action in Afghanistan or Iraq. That averages 120 per week! The 20-24 age group suffered 4 times the national average.

From my teenage years when I knew many Boer War and WWI veterans through WWII, I saw many with war-induced mental problems. It was an age when families would not admit, but hid, these ailments.

PRISON POPULATIONS PER 100,000: India 28, Japan 48, Venezuela 62, Sweden 82, France 85, Turkey 93, Italy 95, Germany 96, Canada 110, Australia 116, Spain 126, UK 130, Israel 153, Iran 229, South Africa 404, Cayman Islands 664, USA 738, N. Korea 1080.

Obviously the greatest threats to humans are other humans Not counting the millions killed in battles we have some 9 million locked up in jails.

THE COMMONWEALTH? GAD, SIR! IT STILL SERVES HUMANITY This 53-member club of 2 billion people met this year in Kampala, Uganda, chaired by the Queen as head of the Commonwealth. Its strength lies in its diversity of cultures all of whom have inherited the English language, the rule of law, and a sense of fair play. It has attracted non-British Empire members. Ex-Portugese Mozambique was admitted in 1995 as well as ex-French Cameroon. Somaliland, Rwanda, and Timor-Leste hope to join. Rwandans are even learning to play cricket hoping it will enhance their chances of joining. The club corrects wrong-doing through peer pressure. Zimbabwe was expelled in 2003, Fiji in 2006, and Pakistan in 2007. Repentant sinners, however, are welcomed back.

The Commonwealth encourages wealth sharing and the mingling of members of small and poorer nations with the wealthier and more powerful as well as with royalty.

There are other idealistic and far-flung groups such as OSCE with members such as Canada, the US, all of Europe and the ex-Soviet republics. This year Spain chairs the club.

Bill Edwards - A Small Sample of an Amazing Career

After frolicking over Europe in an RAF Spitfire during WWII, making a nuisance of himself to the Luftwaffe and Wehrmacht, which is another story, Bill found himself in Malta, 1954-5, as a USAF Lieutenant Colonel air advisor to an admiral along with air advisors from the UK, France, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. Working for Lord Louis Mountbatten, he attended numerous functions with him and Lady Mountbatten finding both of them to be wonderful people. After retiring from the USAF, Bill took a job with Lockheed who had taken over the UK Marconi contract to install and operate radar equipment in Saudi Arabia. He was sent to the UK to study British equipment then to work in Saudi Arabia, 1973-5. He tells of being in a 5-car convoy crossing the desert between Riyād and Tabūk, of making a wrong turn, resulting in a bunch of infidels finding themselves in forbidden Mecca. A hasty retreat was in order. In Tabūk they set up radar just prior to the 1973 Israeli surprise attack that destroyed the Egyptian Air Force. They were able to monitor Israeli flights so Israel's Moshe Dayan placed a bounty of \$10,000 on each of their heads. Their Saudi colonel told them not to worry, he would protect them. Tabūk is just north of where, in WWI, Lawrence of Arabia blew up a Turkish train en route from Aleppo to Jidda, thus terminating all rail traffic in Arabia for the rest of the war.

While in Saudi Arabia, Bill met King Faisal whom he remembers as being very pleasant. During one feast he sat four seats away from the King and was impressed with the mountains of food, prepared in Jordan, most of which went uneaten, so was taken to be distributed among the poor. Bill also met Mohammed Ali Alwan, one of thousands of Yemini working in the country, and one of the finest people Bill has known so, when he was sent to Yemen in 1977 and would be responsible for a staff in a villa and hotel prefabricated in the USA, he requested the services of Alwan who was a devout Muslim, believing he had a direct line to Allah while followers of other religions had to work through priests. Alwan was very tolerant of other religions and had only one wife and only one son who was in university in Cairo. He accompanied Bill to Sanaa (San'a), North Yemen. His home was in South Yemen but he could not return there due to the friction between the two areas. South Yemen was communist with USSR support. A South Yemini envoy was dispatched via a DC3 to bring peace offers to President Ahmad al-Ghasmi in Sanaa. Appearing to present his credentials he opened his brief case which exploded killing himself and the president. This was followed by S. Yemen tanks crossing the border and the US airlifting in tanks to augment N. Yemen forces. The war lasted until 1982 with unification following in 1990.

Bill discovered he had to work with numerous tribes that controlled small areas. One such tribe was only half a kilometre from Sanaa so he delighted them by running an underground line to install a lone light in the village. He took along cans of Pepsi and Mars bars for the children as well as a box of spare bulbs for the light.

Bill relates numerous problems getting ILS to work for runway approaches due to lack of, or unreliable, radar returns from sand that often changed with sandstorms.

Bill never had any difficulty working with any of the locals in Saudi Arabia or Yemen. Due to his 62 years and grey hair he was always treated with respect while many of his younger technicians were leery of venturing out into country teeming with youths carrying AK47s during their 2-year compulsory military service. With a tiny camera, Bill was able to take many forbidden photographs.

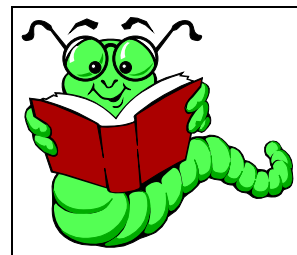
Bill describes a male-dominated society with few women to be seen. Their lot was slightly better in Yemen as there were no dress police beating women who showed as much as an inch of ankle. Crossing the border in Jordan was entering a different, modern, world. One of the Yemini officials Bill worked with had two wives, one white, one brown. He did meet the white one in her separate home and says she was a beautiful woman. Although he worked with Alwan for 3 years he never met his wife. In Yemen, foreign women were allowed to wear western dress, but could not drive cars.

Bill made friends with a retired Jordanian Air Force officer who ran a travel agency and got Bill considerably cheaper fares for his annual Christmas leaves home from Amman via Paris and New York. This friend took him on tours of many historic sites such as Petra and the supposed home of the Queen of Sheba.

In making friends with so many Arabs, rich and poor alike, Bill downed numerous cups of tea. In fact he remains a tea man and downed two cups of it during this interview. That is why he remains so healthy!

Jan 2008

Book Review



THE WHITE RABBIT

Wing Commander Yeo-Thomas, George Cross, Military Cross, Croix de Guerre
by Bruce Marshall, Arrowsmith, UK, 1952, 262 pages

This book was sent to me by Peter Tutt of Brantford, who holds the Membership Chair for the 426 Squadron Association. It is a book that should be studied by all those contemplating occupying another country. It is the story of W/C Francis Yeo-Thomas, born in London in 1901 of Welsh parents, but raised in France, who volunteered for RAF service in 1939. He wanted aircrew but, at 38, was considered too old, so served as an intelligence officer.

In the 1919-20 Polish-Soviet war, he fought for the Poles, was captured, but escaped the night before his planned execution. Numerous other escape attempts were to follow.

Known as Tommy, or the White Rabbit, he became involved in the immense task of co-ordinating the numerous, scattered French resistance movements, the most important of which were (1) Organisation Civile et Militaire, (2) Ceux de la Libération, (3) Ceux de la Résistance, (4) Libération, and (5) Front National, a group of some 30,000, the leadership of which was secretly communist with post-war plans for a communist France. The membership was not communist and joined because they were unaware of other groups. Monthly, this group carried out 250 attacks killing 600 Germans, but, bent on expansion, their security suffered allowing German infiltration. They suffered heavy casualties which only increased volunteers, amounting to a final strength of 100,000.

On 26 February 1943, Tommy parachuted from a Halifax, along with others and supplies, into Normandy near Lyons-la-Forêt. His first meeting was with Colonel Touny (later arrested, tortured, and killed) of the Organisation Civile et Militaire that, with 40,000 members, was the best organized with the best security. He also met with Front Nationale that needed British supplies and money as they got none from Moscow, yet warned not to get too friendly with the West. Travelling by bicycle and train with perfectly-forged identification papers and passes, he was able to pass through numerous check points manned by German and French police, and to meet with all major groups. Many he met with on this trip were subsequently caught, tortured, and executed. Particularly vulnerable were the wireless operators who maintained daily contact with London. They had to transmit in code and quickly move on as Gestapo direction-finding vans prowled the countryside. Many were caught at surprise checkpoints.

Due to frequent roundups of French men to be shipped to Germany as slave labourers, Tommy urged a large influx of cash to support resisters living secretly apart from society. This was the origin of the Maquis.

Tommy found the French hungry, cold, and ill-clothed, most avoiding all Germans as much as possible. Those who collaborated were better off so Tommy always wore good clothes and used 1st class train travel to lessen interrogations. When walking, he confused anyone following by changing his hat on rounding corners and inserting wedges into his shoes to alter his gait.

Two Lysanders took Tommy's party back to Tangmere on 16 April. They had managed to unite, under the leadership of De Gaulle, the numerous groups they had met. Tommy kept pressuring all in power to do more for the resistance and to build a Secret Army which would be essential on D-Day. Severe blows were dealt by German infiltrators, leaders were lost and had to be replaced, so Lysanders took Tommy and party back on 18 Sep.

They found much disarray, careless overconfidence in their own security in spite of knowing 32,000 Gestapo were actively hunting them. Unity had broken down with the loss of leaders. Many of Tommy's friends had been captured and tortured to death. He managed to visit numerous poorly-armed groups, impressed at how much damage a few men could do. After 250 bombers had failed to stop ball-bearing production at Annecy, 3 saboteurs shut it down for the rest of the war. Another group blew up the locks at Gigny stopping essential river traffic for months. After numerous very close calls his small group did achieve success in re-organizing most groups.

On 15 November, a Lysander returned him and 2 girls whose cover has been blown to Tangmere. Tommy arrived with details of V-1 and V-2 emplacements. Allowed a 5-minute meeting with Churchill he excited Winston who, after 45 minutes of listening and questioning, diverted over 200 aircraft and supplies to resistance assistance.

Tommy was betrayed and captured after his third drop into France, suffering 7 months of intense torturing. A dozen times he was thrown, handcuffed, into a tub of freezing water and held under to the point of drowning when

he was artificially resuscitated for more beatings, all the while refusing to reveal his accomplices. He ended up in Buckenwald with 37 other captured operatives, all European except for two Canadians.

His descriptions of life in Buchenwald cover the wide spectrum of human behaviour from terrifying bestiality to acts of sacrifice and kindness. The fate of most was slow death by starvation and disease, but 16 of Tommy's group of 37 were hung on meat hooks to die slowly in agonizing pain.

His escape, recapture, re-escape, tramping through miles of forests, cold, wet, and hungry until eventually reaching Allied forces reveals amazing human tenacity.

The book ends too suddenly. It tells of his arrival back to Croydon, his reunion with his beloved wife, Barbara, and being awarded the George Cross. What it does not tell is that Tommy testified at the Nürnberg Trials, that Kenneth Moore played his role in a BBC TV documentary in 1967, or that he died in 1964 at age 62 as a result of the numerous beatings his body had endured. Throughout the book the reader is amazed at the scores of names Tommy remembered, not only of resistance men and women but also the scores of the Germans and Capos who tortured him and the few who befriended him. Also amazing is that, in spite of immense sufferings from beatings, cold, disease, and hunger, he kept organizing resistance.

The book ends with Tommy returning to his ladies' fashion business in Paris, sadly contemplating the death of 50 million in WWII including his closest friends, and realizing the new generation with its personal greed had forgotten them.

QUOTES

"A nuclear-armed Iran could lead to World War III." George W. Bush

"We can live with a nuclear Iran. It is not an aggressor nation." U.S. General John Abizaid

"Abizaid is speaking for many generals. Remember that, when Iraq used chemical weapons against Iran, Iran refused to reciprocate, claiming such weapons of mass destruction were un-Islamic." Pat Buchanan

"The history of any occupation is the story of its victims. It took 9 years and 1.5 million Afghan lives for the USSR to leave a devastated country. In Iraq about 1 million have already died since the US invasion. How many more will it take before we will do what we rightfully demanded from the Soviets a mere 20 years ago?"

Nikolai Lanine, former Soviet soldier in Afghanistan, now living in Victoria, BC.

"Large nations do what they wish, while small nations accept what they must." Thucydides, c.433BC

"The principle architects of a state's policies are its merchants and manufacturers." Adam Smith.

"The jihadist main war aim is not against the West but against occupiers: Russia in Chechnya, the US in Iraq, India in Kashmir, and Israel in Palestine." The Economist.

"Vacancy: The Middle East still needs a wise, caring, impartial, honest broker." Ye Olde Scribe

THE SUNDERLAND CAPER

The wartime RCAF enjoyed some colourful characters. I knew both Harsh and Brown and wish to share with you this extract from Vern White's book, *Four Years and a Bit*:

"In the summer of 1945, Bournemouth was crammed with RCAF personnel waiting to be repatriated to Canada. Some were ex-POW's and two Flight "Loots" from my camp, and whom I knew well, became involved in what became known as The Sunderland Caper.

George Harsh and Kingsley Brown, both shot down in 1942, became increasingly impatient about the repatriation delay and decided to do something about it. One evening in a bar, where all things seem possible, Kingsley and George dreamed up the idea of flying home and concocted a plan to liberate a Sunderland flying boat that was based at Poole nearby. They rowed out to the 4-engine Sunderland which was moored in the harbour. Kingsley had previously flown only twin-engine Hampden bombers and George Harsh was an air gunner. Somehow they got one engine going which alerted a guard on shore. He notified the military police who sped out to the Sunderland. They caught Kingsley and George in the act of trying to steal one of His Majesty's aircraft. The culprits were hustled off to the slammer where they spent the night. Next morning the news of the escapade spread around Bournemouth and Hank Dow and Chuck Willis, both of whom were decorated Wing Commanders and ex-POW's, hurried to the jail to see what could be done. They convinced the authorities that it was a harmless caper by a couple of guys who had been behind barbed wire for a very long time and simply wanted to go home. Brown and Harsh were released with a stern warning.

George Harsh from the Deep USA South should have known better. He was the same George Harsh who was in charge of Security for the Great Escape at Sagan and prior to his enlistment in the RCAF, spent ten years toiling on a Georgia Chain Gang. Kingsley Brown, who hailed from West Jeddore, NS, was no youngster either, having been a newspaper reporter for 10 years pre-war. George Harsh, Kingsley Brown and the rest of the remaining POW's at Bournemouth (including your scribe) were aboard the *Ile de France* a week or so later. The Atlantic was like a mill pond and we arrived in Halifax in record time, happy as clams."

Jan 08

For those who wish to read more about George Harsh and Kingsley Brown (both now deceased) you may be able to find their books in some libraries : *Lonesome Road* – by George Harsh – publisher W.W. Norton and *Bonds of Wire* – by Kingsley Brown – publisher Collins.

A BIT OF ARMCHAIR AND BACKYARD ASTRONOMY - by Peter Rallis

As many of you know, I am an avid amateur astronomer. My interest started in the late 1940's and was stirred by my fascination with pulp science fiction of the day and the existence of Edmond Scientific of Great Barrington, NJ which offered 10 surplus lenses for a dollar. I never did discover any aliens lurking on the moon or spot any spaceships circling the earth but I was fascinated with the rings of Saturn, the polar ice cap of Mars, and the moons of Jupiter. I learned a few constellations and spotted the Andromeda Galaxy, and Orion's glittering belt. It was many years later, after retiring from the military, and from a small business that Nancy and I had for several years, that I returned to the hobby with enthusiasm.

That said, I get a frequent query from friends and neighbors that follows the general pattern of "I was (getting the paper, putting out the trash, walking the dog) the other (morning, evening, night) and saw this bright thing in the (east, west), and wondered what it was?" I will attempt to inform you of what these bright objects that will appear in the sky in the following month might be and mention a few other items that may be worth looking for, weather permitting.

As I write this in late October, the buzz in the astronomical community is the sudden brightening of a comet from magnitude 17 to magnitude 2.5. This is Comet 17P/Holmes. It is currently in the constellation of Perseus which rises about dusk in the North, Northeast. It may or may not be prominent to the naked eye or 10X35 binoculars by the time this column reaches you. I hope so as it is quite a striking object.

December evenings will feature Mars in the eastern sky as it makes its biannual, nearest approach to Earth on December 24. Later in the night Mars will be high in the southern sky and in the early morning hours Mars will be setting in the west while the second brightest object in the night sky, Venus, rises in the southeast, and probably the most beautiful object of the night sky, Saturn, can be found in the southwestern sky.

Weather permitting The Geminid Meteor Shower will put on a show for us between the 13th and 15th of December. These will appear to come out of the constellation of Gemini that will be in the northeast sky in the early evening. Clear skies, Peter

THE PUGWASH PEACE EXCHANGE SOCIETY: Following the 1955 manifesto by scientists, including Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein, Linus Pauling, and Joseph Rotblat, to reduce the threat of nuclear war, Cyrus Eaton hosted a conference in his Pugwash, Nova Scotia, lodge of 22 scientists from 10 countries to consider ways of reducing the world nuclear buildup. In 1995 the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the society and its last remaining founder, Sir Joseph Rotblat. In July 2007, in Pugwash at the 50th anniversary, the mayor of Hiroshima, Tadatashi Akiba, delivered the keynote address. A new 836-square-metre facility will open in Pugwash in 2009. Your scribe is a member and you, too, may join for \$10 per person per year. www.pugwashpeaceexchange.org

The society is currently under the patronage of LGen Roméo Dallaire who remains a workaholic still recovering from his long bout with post traumatic stress following the UN putting him in charge in Rwanda then ignoring his pleas for help to prevent the genocide. Of tremendous help to him have been his wife, Elizabeth, and his 3 children: Willem 29, Catherine 25, and Guy 22, all of whom are members of Les Voltigeurs de Québec with Willem currently serving in Sierra Leone.

FROM THE HEAD SHED:

Since taking the reins in September and missing most of October due to my Lake Powell trip and a trip to Santa Cruz with Louise; I have "only just begun" to immerse myself in the business of the Wing.

One of the first things to occur is that I am the recipient of numerous e-mails from our "Director" at the AFAC in Ottawa. Much of the info he passes on may be of interest to more than just your executive. I will be forwarding the e-mails to our executive from now on, to keep them up to date, (and help to ensure I do not miss something pertinent). As well, some of the info will be passed on at our general meetings/get togethers. However, if you'd like to be added, as a wing member, to an e-mail distribution list for these communications; I'd be happy to do so.

The feedback I have received from the AFAC about the Annual General Meeting, (AGM), seems very positive and it appears the AFAC has addressed some of their financial issues and are looking forward to streamlining their budget and support operations; which will hopefully stem the need for further raising of dues. Next years AGM will be in Montreal.

The Wing has made our annual contribution to the Kuseler Campaign on your behalf. The campaign is spearheaded by the CF community, (more timely info will have been posted on our web site: www.971wingafac.com).

Best wishes to all for a great 2008

Paul Ellis