



“Afghanistan: A Soldiers’ Story” January 2014 Newsletter

Well, we are in the home stretch. This is the year we will finally publish the Afghan Legacy Album. The year all our serving men and women will finally be home from the Canadian Afghan Mission. The working title of the book has been “Afghanistan: A Soldier’s Story” since its’ inception but this is not carved in stone. Perhaps it should be called “Afghanistan: A Canadians’ Story” or “Afghanistan: A Canadian Perspective”? Given that content is welcome from all who served, Land, Sea or Air component of the Military, Police, RCMP, Corrections, Civilians, Media who deployed, and Families of the Fallen, we invite suggestions. Send them to consult@mywrldwrx.com

Next week the arduous process begins to pull together all the submissions, organize, edit and format them, along with historical and background information specific to the mission, and sift through all the images donated by Combat Camera to fill the blanks for stories that have no photos. It’s exhausting just writing that all out! For those of you who have yet to share your stories and photos, remember, submission cut-off is May 1st. There will be an e-version of the book eventually, but once the hard copy goes to the publisher in May for fine tuning, if your story isn’t in there, it never will be.

Last fall saw the Afghan Legacy Album touring a series of films across Canada in an effort to encourage those of you who served to share your stories. The idea was that if you want someone to tell you a story, first you tell them a story. Turn out at a wide range of venues was mixed with anything from as few as one to as many as 50 turning out for the films. Unfortunately Canadian media did not see either the Afghan Legacy Album or the film tour to be sufficiently newsworthy to help spread the word. It’s sad to see over twelve years of tough and dedicated service so quickly and easily relegated to the back rooms of Canadian memory. DND was also reluctant to help get the word out. For those of you who did help promote the book or the films, or gave me a safe place to stay and at least one hot meal a day as I rattled across Canada with my little portable theater, many thanks.

Special thanks in particular to a handful of dedicated Regular Force and Reservists who arranged showings, friends, members of the Canadian Army Veterans Motorcycle Unit, and last but not least, the Newfoundland and Labrador Command of the Royal Canadian Legion. Without the Legions’ support and encouragement, not to mention safe places to stay and opportunities to show the films at multiple venues across The Rock, I would never have been able to take the films to their province at all. The films were excellent (and well received) and we had particularly good turn outs at the Canadian War

Museum in Ottawa, The Military Museums in Calgary, and the Esquimalt BC Military Family Resource Centre in Colwood. For those of you still interested in seeing the films, all but one can be viewed on line. Links are still available at the project web site <http://www.afghanistanacanadianstory.ca/whats-new/media-kits/tell-me-a-story-soldier-the-afghan-mission-film-festival/>

Speaking of thanks, a big thank you has to go out to Colonel (retired) Andrew Nellestyn for sourcing out the funding to publish the book in time for the launch we have planned for Veterans Week November 2014. This remarkable gentleman has also been tirelessly chasing down representatives of the various Branches of the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP to ensure all are represented in the book.

A big Thank You as well to all the producers who made their films available so that we could bring them to folks across Canada. All but the CBC Fifth Estate film “Life and Death in Kandahar” were generously donated.

The most remarkable recent effort in support of this project however, is that of a young woman currently living in Shilo Manitoba. The wife of a Patricia who returned home in time for this past Christmas from his third deployment to Afghanistan, Jennifer came to an evening showing of the films and was saddened to see that she was the only one in the theater. I showed her a couple of the films and afterwards she asked how she could help. I said we wanted to see to it that every Family of the Fallen was given the gift of a copy of the book. She ran with that immediately and thanks to her efforts, more than enough was raised, in less than three months, to surpass that objective. A remarkable young woman. Many thanks Jennifer!

A few final notes - As the editing and formatting commences, the accumulated content will be taken down. This is to ensure that the final publication is not stale “old news” but will be a surprise, a brand new fresh face for your home or office book shelf. Submissions to date are almost at capacity for the hard cover copy of the book. No content however, will be cut from the e-version of the book, and copy that exceeds the 208 page limit will be captured in a CD at the back of the book. Further to this, in response to many queries about telling Canadian stories from previous deployed conflicts, we have a plan or two. Once the book is published, all going well, the project may be expanded to collect Canadian military “boots on the ground” stories going back to the Boer War, and moved to a permanent home with The Military Museums in Calgary. If you have contacts there, feel free to encourage them in this direction. They already have the briefing note. We’d also like to see the launch of an annual Canadian Military Film Festival, perhaps at the Canadian War Museum. If you want to see the briefing note on either of these ideas, drop an email to consult@mywrdrwx.com

All the best in 2014. See you in November at the launch of the Canadian Afghan Legacy Album.

Many thanks

Melanie Graham
Lt(N) Retired
Afghan Legacy Album Project Coordinator
consult@mywrdrwx.com