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Table of Contents

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Articles

- 3** "Une Permission! C'est bon pour une recrue":
Discipline and Illegal Absences in the
22nd (French-Canadian) Battalion, 1915-19
Maxime Dagenais
- 17** The Royal Military College of Canada and the
Education of Officers for the Great War
Andrew B. Godefroy
- 32** Military Training in an Academic Environment:
The University of Toronto Canadian
Officers Training Corps, 1914-1968
Robert Spencer

CANADIAN
WAR MUSEUM



MUSÉE CANADIEN
DE LA GUERRE

- 51** "A Unique Art": Canadian Anti-Gas Respirator
Production in the Second World War
Andrew Iarocci

Features

- 65** The Top 10 Most Important Books of Canadian
Military History
Tim Cook
- 75** "Passchendaele highlights uncounted casualties"
Nic Clarke

Other Matters

- 2** From the Editor-in-Chief
- 79** Electronic Resources by *Ken Reynolds*

From the Editor-in-Chief

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Tim Cook hits an inspired truism with his observation that “Historians love books.” He could have added that historians also love to make lists of books – and long before David Letterman began his lists. The first (and only) military history course I took in school was Theodore Ropp’s graduate seminar at Duke in 1975-6. Professor Ropp adored making lists, and may be best remembered for his compilations of the best hundred books on international military history. In my year he was hard at work on what would become one of his more formal iterations, which is still well worth a look: “Military Historical Scholarship Since 1937,” *Military Affairs* 41 (April 1977), pp. 68-74. Professor Ropp, as in everything he touched, brought a playful dimension to the exercise. Part of the fun was his gleeful admonitions about the subjectivity of any list (“Helllll yes!” was how he would put it). One of the delightful aspects of the contributions from the ten scholars Tim invited to participate is their forthrightness about how and why they are being subjective. What emerges is how immensely personal books are – or more precisely how personal they become in the many hours – weeks or even years – required properly to digest a substantial work. To draw on just one example, my copy of Stacey’s *Arms, Men and Governments* has a note that I bought it in May 1972. It was a major purchase. I had fondled the hefty tome when it first appeared in bookstores on its publication in 1970,

but it was something I had to save for (the price was something like \$12 – but a good wage for students was about \$1.50 an hour). When I took Colonel Stacey’s undergraduate seminar in 1973-4, I had him sign the book. Now, the binding is coming apart because of the constant use ever since; it is filled with pencil scribbles made in projects spanning more than a third of a century. Somehow I have difficulty imagining any website or e-book becoming such an intimate treasure.

This issue benefited from another of the coincidences that happen in an active, vigorous field. When I mentioned to Mike Bechthold that Professor Spencer was producing a piece on the Canadian Officer Training Corps at the University of Toronto (which he commanded in the mid-1960s), Mike suggested we pair it with a study Andrew Godefroy was completing on officer production at the Royal Military College of Canada during the First World War. The result is two quite different perspectives on two of the most important streams of officer production for the Canadian forces in the 20th century.

Maxime Dagenais’ new research on discipline in the 22nd Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force also has much to say about officers and leadership. The article supports Jean-Pierre Gagnon’s suggestion in his pioneering book *Le 22e bataillon* (1986) that the absence of the unit’s heroic commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Tremblay, in late 1916 largely accounted for the upsurge of indiscipline. Tremblay had to go to England for medical treatment at a critical moment when the battalion was being rebuilt after its heavy losses at Courcelette with reinforcements that had been

recruited by units known for their weak leadership.

Nic Clarke looks at another aspect of recruitment in the First World War – the experiences, often tragic, of the many men who endeavoured to volunteer for the Canadian Expeditionary Force, but were repeatedly refused on medical grounds. In a moment of rare gratification, Nic saw the subject of his research addressed – without glaring distortions – in Paul Gross’s recent film “Passchendaele.”

From the Canadian War Museum, Andrew Iarocci presents another instalment in his work to document the collections. He has found a wealth of documentary evidence at Library and Archives Canada on the struggle, ultimately successful, by officers at National Defence Headquarters to organize production in Canada of gas masks during the 1930s and the early part of the Second World War. The piece adds depth to our knowledge of how difficult the simplest procurement issue was in the face of small budgets, the government’s reluctance to work with private industry in munitions production, and the additional challenges Canadian firms faced due to their dependence on technology developed outside the country.

Ken Reynolds in his regular column, provides a detailed update on the growing online resources provided by Library and Archives Canada for access to the superb collection of military service records for the South African and First World Wars. As usual, Ken provides a good deal of “how to” advice for navigating the ever-evolving site.

Roger Sarty
November 2009

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