

Mr. Ray Herbert
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Interview No. 503

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Mr. Specht: Does this mean that all units would have had almost identical training during the year?

Mr. Herbert: No. There were some problems in this regard which we worked out by having...some in common and some separate. We made the, you know, by now all three were shrinking under this quota system so it was feasible to do so. The opening of the evening would be as we had been doing it. Those who wanted to come to supper or were not boarding somewhere where-ever it might be, could and there was dinner served before the parade. And then the parade was common although in three divisions, if you like, Navy, on the right; Army on the middle; Air Force on the left sort of thing. A young Naval officer took charge of all the drill training. He, from amongst all three units, drew up his rosters for instruction, and exercise and so on in the drill thing. So that was common. Some of the basic sort of informational type lectures were common to all three services. You know, matters like the service history and organizations type of thing, basically, common information, but then the Navy, you see, were, quite properly, had to prepare their people for going to sea in their summer training and consequently they would then veer into specialist instruction in Naval subjects that were relevant to that and we'd similarly break up in the same way. But that's how we resolved that globbing of us together.

Mr. Specht: One of the stated objectives of integration of the forces was so that people in different specialties get to know

the functioning of other branches. Do you think that was achieved?

Mr. Herbert: No! Its largely an illusion that those who promoted it had. I know what the Navy does, but I can't steer a ship. You know, we really didn't feel that the integration imposed by the department of national defence at that time, really changed very much from what we had already achieved in our own in terms of integration.

Mr. Specht: What do you think you did achieve on your own as far as integration goes?

Mr. Herbert: Oh well, an acquaintance primarily with each other, what the other fellow does, and the program he goes through and common social events that sort of thing. You know, its just...almost a fantasy of Hellyer's that by stuffing every body in a green suit and mixing them up as much as possible, you're going to send a trained infantry man to sea? You know that's just b.s.! But that's what they've done. You'll have noticed I suppose, with interest, that the D.N.D. has just announeced that the Navy can now retain their Naval ranks. Its silly to call a Captain of the ship Colonel. Especially when you're working with other navies that haven't gone that stupid route, so our Navy now, and I thought it would come about, have managed to hang in there and now they're going to be Lieutenants and Lieutenant Commanders and Captains again in the old style. And, I don't know, in the Air Force these things don't signify so much. We are a very young service compared to the other two

and they didn't have regimental traditions and our rank structure of course, and badges and so on, were primarily derived from the Navy. Because the Royal Air Force was created by an amalgamation of the Army Royal Flying Corps and the Navy Royal Naval Air Service in April 1918. And guys came in with a hodge-podges of uniforms and ultimately an R.C.A.F. or an R.A.F. dress, the blue and Naval rank stripes in gold and cap badges rather close to the Navy one developed. And of course, the R.C.A.F. then imitated the R.A.F. in uniform.

Mr. Specht: What objectives of integration did you particularly object to?

Mr. Herbert: Well as long as one used the terms accurately, no objection whatever to integration, it made a lot of sense. In terms of the provision of support services in particular. Broadly speaking, dental service always was integrated. It was the Army Dental Corps that provided dental service to all three services in Canada from, if you like, time immemorial. A good deal of supply, of course, was integrated. A very enormous service corps provided all the basic rations for all three services, you know, purchased, warehoused, distributed, so on and had done so from time immemorial. What the cooks did with it after they got them varied from service to service I can tell you. You know, there already were, Army Postal Corps provided postal service for all three units. So there had been a great deal of integration. One of the earliest phases of it was to integrate the medical services because, by and large, the hospital care and what doctors can do

for you fall equally upon all of us although during the war, of course, they had developed a very specialist branch called Aviation Medicine which was concerned with anoxia and these sorts of things, air-sickness that were really rather specialist. Like Wing Commander Franks, invented the G-suit. We had decompression problems with operating airplanes and...so there was an area for specialization in medicine, but by and large the medical services could be integrated. You could always have an institute of aviation medicine branched off that, or something, so that if you examined the problem coldly the only places where, in some respects, you could see there was not already integration were really areas where we could and did have specialization anyhow. You know, it takes a lot of time and training to produce a good capable infantry soldier with all he needs to know and it takes a hell of a lot of time and trouble and training to get a competent pilot and the guy is just not going to be both.

Mr. Specht: Don't you think there's something to the fact that the services are becoming increasingly technical and the place for an infantry soldier is...his role in battle these days is very much diminished?

Mr. Herbert: I don't know about that. I don't agree with you.

Mr. Specht: But certainly he must...

Mr. Herbert: You know, what I'm getting at is that the destructive effect on a regimental tradition which was very important to the army, the destructive effect of even the titles given . The Canadian forces, look how they call it now, brackett's Air or something like that, its not nearly as

appealing to me at any rate as when it was called the Royal Canadian Air Force, or the Royal Canadian Navy, or the Queen's Own Highlanders, or the Queen's Own Rifle, or the Seaforth Highlanders, and indeed, we do see of course, the, in the reserve it continues, the retention of these differences in dress, and habits and so on. There not just there because they're fun, but because they help a guy identify with what he's doing. You know, the reason guys will get up out of the God damned trench and run across a bullet swept field carrying a rifle are hard to fathom. It doesn't make any sense. The reason he does it of course, is not that he's courageous more than anybody else, but because that's his family that's going. The mutual support one has for another.

Mr. Specht: The year 1968, the year that the units were disbanded. I'd like to ask a very general question, what do you remember of that event? How did you feel about it?

Mr. Herbert: Badly. I'd been at it so long that it was time I was out of it anyhow so its coloured a little by personal feeling but not all that much. I just thought it was an ill-judged thing. It was something they were never going to recapture in a sense, in the same way, you know, if there's another change of mind sometime. Perhaps I shouldn't say that but rather uniquely here it meant that the armouries went, the mess went, the identity went. There are a few R.O.T.P. still going to the institute, but administered ^{by a} staff officer, of headquarters down here recruiting, whatever the case may be. And they lost right there.

Its only for a modest number of people that opportunity, initially, to weld them together in this with a sense of corporate identity I was referring to...to feel they belong somewhere, you know, its very important. They don't belong anywhere, they're just at U.B.C. getting a government cheque and occasionally they're dragged into some lecture, of course they go off and get their summer training and that's where they begin to meld up. But I think they lose. They've lost the opportunity to say someday we're going to need more men and we'd better maintain that connection.

Mr. Specht: How was U.B.C. as a place for the military units?

Mr. Herbert: Very good.

Mr. Specht: Why?

Mr. Herbert: Oh well, because the total cooperation and interest of the whole university administration and staff very simply. Well for most of my years it was Dr. McKenzie, his greatest pride was he rose to the rank of sergeant at one time and managed to finish out the war as a private as he had begun it. Of course he was decorated, the military medal and the bar to it in France in the First World War and he had great empathy with the services and their encouragement on the campus. And that pervaded in a sense, the whole university as far as I was concerned. Where we got just great cooperation from everybody.

Mr. Specht: What do you think the training units did for the students? What did it do for them individually?

Mr. Herbert: Well it...in a fundamental way I suppose, it gave them what I'm going to call, sooner than they might have acquired it, a discipline and confidence in themselves. I don't know

that I can expand much on that phrase. I think you know what I mean. The...I'll illustrate it in this way, you know, say in the fall of the year, you're recruiting and there's a relatively young girl floating around, you know, seventeen, eighteen maybe, in the early days with saddle shoes and tweedy skirts and sloppy sweaters was the mode of dress and it really was a gratifying transformation. Now I'll use that first year as an example, to fly down from Kingston to London, Ontario for their graduation parade and see the transformation in those girls in terms of their poise, manners, confidence, health, you know a lot of exercise, and success in a fairly competitive situation, girls from other universities, would just delight your heart. Now they were good people anyhow and they were going to be good people anyhow, but they got there that much quicker by this, I think. And, also, they were much more aware than their contemporaries would be of these things that were of concern to the country. That is, the international scenario or the purpose and place of armed forces and so on. As you remember at the very first conference I attended when it was announced...there was a discussion about taking the girls and I ventured the remark that because of the natural proclivities of the selectors the kind of girls we were selecting were liable to get selected pretty quick again anyhow, get married, you know and lost to the services. And I remember the Air Commodore, what the hell was his name,... Doesn't matter, but he was presiding or attending, Flat top we used to call him, later Commander of Transport Command, he gets up and roars out that they'll get married, they'll be the mothers

of the future, they'll be Air Force minded!" and sat down. But one could increasingly impose responsibilities on them too. I mean in sort of minor things and totally rely on them. They'd be done and done well and that's what they got into them, you know. And that would apply to all of them, the men and the women. I used the women as an illustration of what I mean by an early arrival at a disciplined confidence. The subsequent success of many of these people is demonstrated. Now they might have been going to succeed anyhow, but I always felt that whatever efforts I made, although I was well rewarded by the service, in monetary and other senses, the real reward of course, was that a great opportunity to associate with a bunch of young people for a long period of time. Keeps you young yourself, you know.

Mr. Specht: Do you think I'd be far fetched to say that in a sense, the unit, the Air Force Squadron, contributed to the liberation of women?

Mr. Herbert: Oh sure. They were always liberated with us.

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