

192 Construction Engineering Flight Medals Parade

by MWO Dave Shavalier

192 Construction Engineering Flight is an Air Reserve Flight of 19 Wing, Comox but is located at the Naval Radio Detachment at the former CFS Aldergrove in the Lower Mainland of BC. It is a unique Flight in that most of its personnel work full time jobs elsewhere. Members comprise Operating Engineers from BC Ferries, Canada Post men, Inspectors from WorkSafe BC and the British Columbia Safety Authority as well as a hard-hitting lady from BC Corrections Service and three Water Fuels and Environmental Technicians (WFE Techs) who come out of the plants around Fort McMurray at their own expense to train and parade. Besides carpenters, plumbers, generator jockeys, welders and electricians there is also the keen-eye of a Sky Train cop! Meld these West Coasters all together and you have one enormous basket full of talent.

On the warm evening of 30 April, the unit formed up for a parade with a chorus of the swelling population of American Bullfrogs providing background music from the nearby swamp. At 19:15 hours Captain Pete Pitcher called his Flight to attention for a General Salute for the Colonel Commandant, Col Roger St. John, followed by a second Salute for the Reviewing Officer, 19 Wing Commander Colonel Fred Bigelow. Also in attendance were the Mayors of Abbotsford and Langley, many other community leaders and unit family members. Short hours ago these troops were on construction sites or driving trucks and heavy equipment through the mean streets of Vancouver and suburbs and are not used to wearing dress uniforms. With only a few short parade practices, the skill, patience and persistence of the Flight MWO Gerry Trottier put everyone into the same step as him!



After an inspection of the troops, Col Bigelow presented an overflowing table full of General Campaign Stars, CD2s, CD1s, CDs, and the show-stopper, a CDS Commendation for the Flight MWO's work on Roto 4 in Afghanistan. Then it was the Flight Commander's turn. Capt Pitcher presided over the presentations to outgoing 19 Wing Commander Col Bigelow; and Wing CWO Lloyd Hodgins (CME). The presentation to the Col Bigelow was a fly-rod holder and CWO Hodgins received a uniquely crafted drill cane and stand with an inset George VI RCE hat badge. These items were carefully crafted and assembled under the Captain's guidance and supervision. When asked by this astonished author "...a George the 6th, where the - - did you get that", his un-rattled reply was "found it on eBay".

After an Advance in Review Order, for which even the bullfrogs held their breath, the parade adjourned to the Combined Mess. Under the watchful eye of the Col Comdt and Abbotsford Mayor George Peary (himself a Pukka Sapper), two deserving unit sergeants (Sharon Murray,

the Chief Clerk and Debby Provencher our Supply Sergeant) were invested into the Order of the Pukka Sapper. Major Paul Yantha, Wing CEO Comox, volunteered to show the assembled crowd and initiates how to drink a drink upside down. Both sergeants demanded their turn to try and best him and both gave admirable showings.

Many spouses and family members sat in awe through the proceedings and gained an understanding of why it is important to their 'other half' to use so much of their vacation time (and family time) to serve in 192 Construction Engineering Flight. Their clutch on the arms of their loved ones as they departed said it all. Their pride was overpowering.

Footnote: By the time this article reaches print a large 192 CEF crew will be in KAF assisting 14 CES on NOCTUA TAV2. For some unit members this is their third time out-the-door on international deployments within a year.