

The Old Guy's Stick

On 19 Jun09, LCol Jon Burbee, JTFP Joint Engineer and CFB Esquimalt BCEO, hosted the wider CME family at the annual Engineer Branch BBQ at picturesque Albert Head on a balmy summer's day.

All were invited to partake in a generous spread of BBQ food and drink. As appetites were sated, it came time for announcements and presentations, celebrating arrivals and departures in time-honoured fashion. Of particular note was recognizing the safe return home of Pacific NCT from Afghanistan.

When all the presentations seemed to be complete, there was a short pause after which LCol Burbee announced that he had one more presentation, an unusual one, to make. He asked recently retired MGen Ed Fitch to come forward. MGen Fitch had retired (again – this time after serving as a C1 'A' Reservist) at the end of Mar 09 upon attaining CRA(60). In Jan 09 he had completed 42 years of service and received the third bar to his CD. LCol Burbee declared that a CD3 is such a rare accomplishment that it merited special recognition.

On behalf of the CME Branch, he proceeded to present to MGen Fitch a truly unique walking stick (see photos) to steady him into his senior years. The stick was crafted by Maj Bruce Sand, who had served as MGen Fitch's DCO at 1 CER in 1985/86 and currently shares an office with him in the Games Red Team (GRT). This object was foot-treadle turned, from African ebony, in the style of the stick of office that would be carried by an *induna*, the commander of a Zulu *impi* (regiment). It is patterned after an ancient Zulu war club. The head of the stick is fitted with a large piece of vegetable ivory (no elephants were harmed in the production of this item) into which is carved a superb maple leaf. At approximately the 1/3rd point down the shaft, a discrete brass plaque is affixed emblazoned with the words: "Always a Sapper".

MGen Fitch was so overcome with the significance and beauty of the moment that he was struck speechless and did not even offer to answer his customary two questions. MGen Fitch (ret'd) continues to serve Commander JTFP as Leader of the GRT in support of the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games.

CHIMO!

