National Defence Défense nationale

Canadian Forces College

Collège des Forces Canadiennes

OSCILLATIONS IN OBSCURITY: FORGING THE CANADIAN FORCES PARACHUTE SUPPORT CAPABILITY

Major K.D. Brodie

JCSP 34

Master of Defence Studies

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

PCEMI N° 34

Maîtrise en études de la défense

Avertissement

Les opinons exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

Canada

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE — COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 34 — PCEMI N° 34

2007-2008

MDS RESEARCH PROJECT — PROJET DE RECHERCHE DE LA MÉD

OSCILLATIONS IN OBSCURITY: FORGING THE CANADIAN FORCES PARACHUTE SUPPORT CAPABILITY

By Maj K.D. Brodie

ABSTRACT

Orphaned by its logistics brethren and largely misunderstood by the Army, the parachute support capability has oscillated in relative obscurity between the fighting and support arms of the Canadian military since the Second World War. This legacy of indifference is a reflection of the strategic ambivalence that has afflicted the larger Canadian airborne experience.

The parachute support capability is represented in a single organization. First established within the Army in 1943, the capability transitioned to an independent unit within the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps (RCOC) in 1950. Following Canadian Forces (CF) Unification in 1968, the unit was subsumed by the Logistics Branch. In 1998, on the verge of being contracted out to civilian industry, the parachute support capability returned to the Army, where it resides to this day.

The paradigm of support dependencies is shifting. Traditionally, the Army has been the largest user of parachutes. In the post CF Transformation configuration, emergent demands are weighted toward Special Operations and Air Force applications. Driven by necessity, not vision, the amorphous journey of the parachute support organization is analogous to a capability adrift.

An anathema within the logistics community and the Army, the parachute rigger community has forged a core support capability uniquely poised to meet exigencies of contemporary and future operating environments. The Army is best positioned to leverage this obscure yet vital capability. Any decision to the contrary requires prudent study, a thorough grounding in the historical nuances that have shaped the capability, and a clearly defined vision for the CF parachute capability at large.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OSCILLATIONS IN OBSCURITY: FORGING THE CANADIAN FORCES PARACHUTE SUPPORT CAPABILITY

CHAPTER 1 – Introduction: The Parachute Capability Conundrum

> What function do you perform which obligates society to assume responsibility for your maintenance?[1]

With this defining question noted political scientist Samuel P. Huntington challenges militaries to justify their relevance to their nations. Military capabilities must be credible, viable, and intrinsically linked to national strategy and objectives. Extrapolating this premise in the Canadian context, the need for a military parachute capability is absolute. With increased access to the North-West Passage and the re-assertion of Russian political and military influence, the nebulous threat of enemy incursions and sovereignty challenges in our northern frontier is crystallizing. The Canadian Government is responding with a "Canada First" defence policy and calling for enhanced military presence and responsiveness in the North. Concurrently, operations in Afghanistan are reaffirming that parachutes are needed to support a wide spectrum of combat and humanitarian activities in the contemporary operating environment. In both a domestic and expeditionary context, this is a capability that is immensely relevant to the national prerogative. It is therefore both puzzling and disturbing that the Canadian military has been unable to articulate an enduring role for her airborne forces. In his seminal work on Canada's airborne experience, military historian Colonel Bernd Horn convincingly argues that "the failure to properly identify a consistent and pervasive role for the nation's airborne forces led to a roller coaster existence dependent on personalities

---

[1] Samuel P. Huntington, "National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 80, no.5 (May 1954): 484.

in power and political expedients of the day."[2] It is a capability conundrum that resonates throughout the Canadian airborne experience.

This phenomenon of isolation and apathy for military parachuting is perhaps nowhere more evident than in an examination of the parachute support capability in Canada. Small and insular, with no clear strategic vision and historically buffeted by external factors of little design but tremendous consequence, the parachute support community has oscillated in relative obscurity between the fighting and supporting arms of the Canadian military. This unique support capability, orphaned by its logistics brethren and misunderstood by the Army, reflects the institutional ambivalence and functional disinterest characteristic of the larger Canadian airborne experience.

Military parachuting in Canada has persistently struggled to overcome incredible inertias in an atypical bottom-up approach to institutionalizing capability. Early efforts were galvanized by British and American interest in airborne forces and gave rise to a national training centre and to the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion (1 Can Para Bn). 1 Can Para Bn fought with distinction as part of a British Airborne Division during the Second World War, participating in the Normandy Invasions, the crossing of the Rhine and in the Ardennes. After the war the battalion was repatriated to Canada. When 1 Can Para Bn was eliminated from the order of battle in 1945 as part of the post-war down-scaling of military forces, elements of the training centre provided the link to permanent force parachute-capable organizations yet envisioned. The first of these, the Canadian Special Air Service (SAS) Company, was established during the winter of 1947/1948 only to meet an ignoble end less than two years later when its ranks were culled to

---

[2] Bernd Horn, *Bastard Sons: An Examination of Canada's Airborne Experience 1942-1995* (St. Catherine's: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2001), 276.

support the Mobile Striking Force (MSF). The Mobile Striking Force, ostensibly designed to meet the political demands of North American security obligations, "fuelled the continuing and invidious debate concerning the role of airborne forces in Canada."[3] The Korean War and a defence policy shift towards increased participation in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and United Nations (UN) operations in the early 1950s soon contributed to the dispersion of MSF units and the erosion of a capability that was further marginalized with the official down-sizing and renaming as the Defence of Canada Force (DCF) in 1958. With neither credible threat to the Canadian North nor perceived relevance to NATO or the UN, "paratroopers were on the verge of veritable extinction."[4] The emergence of the concept of strategic mobility in the mid-1960s revitalized the parachute capability and led to the creation of the Canadian Airborne Regiment in 1968. Despite initial optimism, the failure to rationalize persuasively the requirement for an Airborne Regiment systematically undermined the operational effectiveness of the unit over the next two and a half decades. The return to the familiar DCF construct of decentralized parachute companies in 1995 represented the "minimum viable" parachute force. Now, in an Army challenged to source and train sufficient sub-units to sustain the Afghanistan mission, the designated parachute companies are not immune to being re-assigned to fulfill more conventional infantry duties. The delivery of parachute capabilities to the battlefield is migrating from the Army to the clinical combat applications of Special Forces and precision airdrop initiatives led by the Air Force. This has been an accidental vice a deliberate metamorphosis. Basic necessity, not

---

[3] *Ibid*., 76.

[4] *Ibid*., 102.

comprehensive vision, has propelled the parachute capability on this tenuous journey. The Canadian airborne experience has been characterized by a lack of coherent vision that has failed to engender the endorsement of the military at large. The nation's paratroopers have become its "bastard sons."[5]

In telling portent, there is very little written on the Canadian parachute capability and even less on the parachute support capability. Horn's articles and books form the core of academically researched material on the Canadian airborne experience, supplemented by John A. Willes "Out of the Clouds: The History of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion," the recently published *War Diary of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion*, a small body of work on the Canadian Airborne Regiment, and a meager number of graduate and post-graduate theses.[6] All study of the Canadian airborne experience to date has focused on the fighting echelon; little has been written about the small group of intrepid individuals who give airborne soldiers their wings and in so doing allow them to fall from the sky to bring havoc on the enemy. There, in the shadow of the mythic airborne warrior, is an even more enigmatic figure – the parachute rigger. The parachute support capability has always been concentrated in a single organization. Varying in size between forty and eighty personnel in its various iterations, this organization has come to represent the collective identity and functionality of the parachute support community. The history of the parachute support capability, and hence of military parachute riggers in Canada, will be examined during five distinct

---

[5] *Ibid*., 263.

[6] Examples of these works are enumerated in the Bibliography. See Bercuson, Amaril, Winslow, Ewing, and Charters, among others. There are also comprehensive records of the Somalia Commission and the Board of Inquiry into the Canadian Airborne Battle Group in Somalia in the public domain.

chronological periods: the genesis of the parachute support capability 1940-1949; the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps (RCOC) years 1950-1968; the early Assistant-Deputy Minister (Materiel) (ADM(Mat)) period 1968-1980; the latter ADM(Mat) years 1980-1998; and the "Back to the Army" era 1998-2007. The meandering path illuminated by a study of these decades describes a capability adrift. It is evident that this valuable, yet fragile, military competency hinges on the fickle finger of fate. But, in the Canadian context, it has always been so.

CHAPTER 2 – The Genesis of the Parachute Support Capability: 1940 to 1949

In 1940 Canada was a nation at war. The economic despair of the Great Depression and the public memory of the First World War peace had eschewed defence spending and left Canada unprepared for the newest outbreak of hostilities on the European continent. Struggling to mobilize along with England and her allies, the Canadian Army was philosophically entrenched in the conventional defence. German airborne successes in Holland and Crete contributed to the rapid fall of Europe and threatened England with a new offensive spectre. Emboldened with offensive spirit, the British and Americans embraced the recent concept of paratroop units, and over the next two years, from 1940-1942, grew their airborne forces in anticipation of future offensive action in Europe. In striking parallel to current manning pressures within the Army vis-a-vis Afghanistan, the Canadian Army Commander in England, Lieutenant-General A.G.L. McNaughton, was reluctant to commit to generating and training specialist forces that would detract from the raising of the field divisions so desperately needed for the Canadian war effort. Back in Canada, however, political and military pressure to join the

airborne "club" was increasing. Consequently, and perhaps in deference to the Army Commander, an almost clandestine approach was taken. Indicative of a confused mandate from inception, 1 Can Para Bn was established during the summer 1942 using the British organizational model but, due to both proximity and the originally stated concept for the unit to be used in a defence of Canada role, was trained in parachuting using the American model in Fort Benning, Georgia pending the completion of the Canadian Parachute Training Centre (CPTC) in Shilo, Manitoba the following year. By December of 1942, in the absence of government or military policy outlining how the battalion was to be employed, overtures were made to the British who quickly included 1 Can Para Bn into their order of battle. The convoluted propensities of the early Canadian airborne experience were clear: British structure, American training, a nominal domestic role, and employment overseas. Following honourable service in Europe, 1 Can Para Bn was disbanded as the military was dramatically downsized in the post-war period. The parachute support capability, augmented by the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC) from 1943-1945, was retained in the Permanent Force of the Canadian Army and slowly coalesced in airborne research and training centres while airborne forces found a tenuous home in first the SAS Company and later the MSF.

The Second World War origins of the Canadian Airborne experience are tenuous. As Horn so bluntly put it, "no effort was made in Canada prior to the commencement of hostilities either conceptually or in practice to develop an airborne capability."[7] In the harsh reality facing the Allies following stunning German advances and fear of the German *Fallschirmjager*, Colonel E.L.M. Burns, a prolific writer and intellectual

---

[7] Bernd Horn and Michel Wyczynski, *Paras Versus the Reich: Canada's Paratroopers at War, 1942-45* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2003), 34.

advocate of "modern" forces, returned to Canada in July 1940 as the Assistant Deputy Chief of the General Staff (CGS) working for Major-General H.D.G. Crerar. Tasked with organizing Canada's army to meet these challenges, he conceptualized a parachute battalion designed to capitalize on offensive mettle and mobility and submitted his first proposal to the director of military operations at National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) on 13 August 1940. Citing resource constraints of time, money, and equipment, the proposal was quickly dismissed. Undeterred, Colonel Burns staffed a second submission "cloaked…in the mantle of home defence"[8] to the CGS six days later. Within two weeks, this was followed by a third memorandum emphasizing the psychological and internal security benefits along with the credibility conferred by taking a modern approach to entrenching offensive capability in an army struggling to mobilize to the aid of the Allies through airborne forces. Mobility and the ability to project offensive power was again a central theme when, on 12 November 1940, Colonel Burns "staffed his fourth and final paper to the Chief of the General Staff."[9] Despite his efforts, the concept of airborne forces did not gain support until the Allies launched ambitious programs following the German *Fallschirmjager's* success in May 1941 seizing the island of Crete. Inflamed to respond in kind, British Prime Minister Churchill galvanized his military staffs. While British efforts to form airborne divisions failed to resonate with the senior Canadian Commander overseas, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), after having been offered instructors and equipment for parachute training by the Royal Air Force, began, in

---

[8] *Ibid*., 38.

[9] *Ibid*., 39.

October 1941, to put the pressure on NDHQ.[10] Despite RCAF staff efforts, Canadian indifference to the establishment of airborne forces continued until June 1942 when a representative from NDHQ's Directorate of Military Training, Lieutenant-Colonel R.H. Keefler, "was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, to report on the state of parachute training in the United States."[11] Keefler's report and the input of Air Vice-Marshall Steadman of the RCAF, who had recently visited the British airborne training school and Division in England, gave reason to reconsider the prevailing intransigence. Realizing the scope of Allied commitment to generating airborne forces, the CGS reconsidered and quickly recommended the formation of the unit that was to become 1 Can Para Bn. The Canadian War Cabinet approved the proposal 1 July 1942.

The decision was made on 29 July 1942 that Camp Shilo, Manitoba would be the home of both 1 Can Para Bn and the Canadian Parachute Training Centre (CPTC).[12] In the absence of Canadian facilities, volunteers for service as elite paratroops from Canada were sent to the Parachute School at Fort Benning, Georgia, while those that volunteered in England were sent to the Parachute Training School at the Royal Air Force Station in Ringway. The sources of the Canadian military parachute rigger were drawn from these Allied antecedents. Parachute packing in England was done by the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) and had been functionally separated from the sixteen-day long training course for military parachutists. In Fort Benning, the month-long basic parachuting course was divided into four week-long phases. The first concentrated on physical

---

[10] *Ibid*., 42.

[11] *Ibid*., 44.

[12] *Ibid*., endnote 234, 272.

fitness, the second on parachuting drills such as exit and landing techniques and oscillation drills, and the third focused on various training exercises on the 250-foot High Tower to simulate exit and canopy opening shock and parachute packing. During these first three weeks candidates underwent parachute packing courses and "[t]he rule was that each candidate jumped with the parachute he packed."[13] The final week of training at Fort Benning's Parachute School delivered the five qualifying descents from an aircraft in flight. When the initial group of Canadian paratroopers trained in Benning returned to Ottawa they were told by Lieutenant-Colonel Keefler in his capacity as Director of Military Training that as pioneers they had an obligation to pass on the knowledge obtained, to be open-minded and draw on the best of both the British and American systems in forging the new Canadian capability. Delays in constructing the necessary training apparatus in Shilo necessitated a joint-training initiative that saw American troops conduct winter training and cold weather equipment testing in Shilo in exchange for dedicated vacancies on the basic parachute training serials conducted at the Parachute School in Fort Benning. Throughout the autumn 1942, both 1 Can Para Bn that was destined for service with the British and the 2nd Canadian Parachute Battalion that was to later form the core of the unique Canadian-American Special Service Force were sourced from the successful candidates of this training. In this way, 1 Can Para Bn managed to qualify paratroopers up to its projected War Establishment of 616 all ranks between October 1942 and March 1943 at the same time as Canadian training centre facilities were under construction.[14] On 7 December 1942, ninety-seven trainees left Fort Benning

---

[13] *Ibid*., 77.

[14] *Ibid*., 72-74.

with the 2nd Battalion's recruiting officer for further training at Fort Harrison, Montana.[15] Using the American parachute course model, every one of the initial complement of soldiers trained as paratroopers received instruction in parachute packing and jumped with a parachute that they had themselves packed. During the final stage of training candidates performed five mandated parachute descents, one each morning, and repacked their parachutes in the afternoons.[16]

As 1 Can Para Bn continued to consolidate in Fort Benning throughout Winter 1942 and Spring 1943, ten graduates from each of the fifty-five man basic parachute training serials went on to complete a separate four-week parachute rigging course that honed packing skills and qualified candidates to supervise the packing of parachutes and perform safety inspections on packed parachutes prior to their use. This, along with the candidates that were sent to train as parachute instructors, allowed the Canadians to conduct and support their own training at Benning[17] starting on 1 February 1943.[18] On 22 March 1943, 1 Can Para Bn received orders to return to Canada. They left Fort Benning the following day and proceeded on twenty days leave. The facilities at Camp Shilo, Manitoba were nearing completion and the Battalion was set to reconstitute on Canadian soil to continue their training.[19] There was now sufficient expertise and experience to staff the parachute school at Shilo when training eventually shifted there in

---

[15] John A. Willes, *Out of the Clouds: The History of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion* (Port Perry: Port Perry Printing Limited, 1981), 15.

[16] Horn, *Paras Versus the Reich…*, 77.

[17] *Ibid*., endnote 286, 279.

[18] Willes, *Out of the Clouds…*, 15.

[19] *Ibid*., 16.

late May 1943. The primary responsibility of the school was to ensure that a steady flow of Canadian replacements for 1 Can Para Bn was trained in basic parachuting operations. Collective training was a responsibility of the receiving units, and organizations like the 1st Canadian Parachute Training Company soon took on these roles.[20]

The first significant consolidation of the parachute packing, maintenance and rigging functions came in May of 1943 with the formal establishment of the Canadian Parachute Training School under the command of Major R.F. Routh. Routh had been one of the first group of trainees to be sent to Fort Benning, Georgia in late August 1942. As one of the originals, Routh was present when Major H.D. Proctor, who had been commanding the training group of the new battalion, was killed on 7 September 1942 during their first qualifying jump. In a tragic accident, a follow-on aircraft in the formation severed Proctor's parachute lines and he plummeted to his death. Routh assumed command of the Canadian training group in Fort Benning until the arrival of the newly appointed Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel G.F.P. Bradbrooke later in September.[21] He stayed on to serve with the Battalion until his appointment to the Training School during May 1943.

The S-14 Canadian Parachute Training School (S-14 CPTS) opened on 24 May 1943 under the authority of NDHQ with a complement of thirty officers and 218 other ranks.[22] Within two days the Packing hangar was actively receiving and preparing new

---

[20] Willes, *Out of the Clouds…*, 20.

[21] *Ibid*., 15.

[22] Canadian Army, *War Diary of A-35 Canadian Parachute Training Centre (formerly S-14 Canadian Parachtue Training School)* (Library and Archives Canada: RG24-C-3), File No. 1286, Volume 17137, 24 May 1943.

parachutes.[23] Unit daily orders published by Routh on 28 May appointed Lieutenant F.G. Boyd as the Officer Commanding Packing and Maintenance (Wing) effective 26 May 1943.[24] With a core staff drawn from those members of the 1 Can Para Bn cadre who had undergone further parachute packing and rigging training while in Fort Benning and who had been transferred to the Training School following their return to Canada, the Packing and Maintenance organization was soon augmented by packers from the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC). The first of the CWAC packers reported to S-14 CPTS on 31 May[25] and they continued to arrive at the unit throughout the early summer.

While individual jumpers had originally packed their own parachutes, it is clear with the early consolidation of the packing function in the school that this method was dismissed as impractical and inefficient. However, parachutists continued to learn basic packing skills during their initial training and to pack their own parachute for their first jump. This practice placed the candidates under inordinate stress and often gave them pause to reflect the path that had led them to take this leap of faith. Master Warrant Officer L.A. (Monty) Marsden, an icon of the early Canadian parachute rigging community, enlisted after his cousin came home on leave from "the Paras" looking sharp in his jump boots and sporting his wings on an immaculate uniform. Determined to

---

[23] *Ibid*., 26 May 1943.

[24] Canadian Army, *Part 1 Order by Major R.F. Routh, T/Commanding S-14 Parachute Training School, Shilo Camp, Manitoba, Nos. 4-5, 28 May 1943* (Library and Archives Canada: RG24-C-3), File No. 1286, Volume 17137. As accurately as I have been able to determine, the stand-up of Packing and Maintenance Wing under Lieutenant F.G. Boyd on 26 May 1943 within S-14 CPTS is the 'official' institutionalization of the parachute support capability in Canada. This point of fact stands to correct the pervasive error, reiterated in numerous documents from the 1950 Annual Historical Report to Briefing Notes, unit historical articles, official correspondence, as well as magazine and newspaper articles, that the parachute support capability finds its "roots" in 1941 (in units that had yet to be established).

[25] Canadian Army, *War Diary of A-35 CPTC*…, 31 May 1943.

become a paratrooper, he quickly volunteered during Basic Training when the parade commander asked for paratroop volunteers. Of the 200 that stepped forward, thirty were selected as a draft and sent to Winnipeg for further assessment. Mr. Marsden found himself among the twelve that proceeded to Shilo to commence the rigorous training that saw only six qualify for their parachutist wings on 10 June 1944. Prior to the jump stage week the candidates were taught basic inspection, layout, panel folding and completion procedures. He recalls, "before my first jump I had many anxious thoughts, did I do it right, will it work as designed? I inspected my parachute twice the night before my first jump."[26]

The Canadian parachute support capability was founded on the premise of a comprehensive approach, meaning that everything from technical parachute packing and rigging training to the full life-cycle management[27] of parachutes and related equipment would be performed in-house. Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (Sr NCOs) qualified in packing and rigging in Fort Benning supervised and trained the CWAC personnel assigned to the unit and built the capability within the training centre's Packing and Maintenance organization. Like the other women employed as packers at the Training Centre, eighteen year-old Private T.M. Poitras (later Beach) completed basic training in Kitchener-Waterloo prior to being posted to Camp Shilo, Manitoba. The parachute training school had been re-designated A-35 Canadian Parachute Training Centre (A-35 CPTC) in September 1943.[28] Poitras arrived at the A-35 CPTC in July 1944 and

---

[26] L.A. Marsden, letter to author, 12 February 2008.

[27] Life-cycle management of parachute and airdrop related equipment includes depot supply functions, support to trials and evaluations, receipt of items off-contract, assembly, inspections, quality assurance and technical expertise, as well as repairs, modification and disposal.

immediately underwent an intensive course in parachute packing. Training focused on the continual repetition of packing techniques until of each stage of the packing process was thoroughly ingrained. She was granted the trade designation "Parachute Packer" in October 1944.[29] This designation permitted packers to pack parachutes under supervision. This was followed by a period of on-the-job training and practice until they could maintain a reasonable speed without sacrificing accuracy.[30] From the outset of the consolidated packing tradition in Canada there was no room for compromise or error. CWAC personnel were also heavily involved in maintenance. Following the packer's course, several of the women went on to receive detailed instruction on the use and care of the various types of sewing machines and on the wide range of repairs necessary to keep parachutes in-service: "Maintenance section was well equipped with materials and facilities for making every kind of repair. We could, if required, make complete chutes."[31] Demonstrating exceptional skill and leadership qualities, a number of the CWAC packers went on to complete rigger training. Poitras quickly became one of the top packers at A-35 CPTC and successfully qualified as a "Parachute Rigger" in March 1945.[32] As a rigger this allowed her to supervise packing teams and act independently to inspect parachutes during the packing process and prior to use. The training undertaken by the CWAC personnel in Shilo was the first of its kind in the Canadian context and

---

[28] Canadian Army, *Part II Order by Major R.F. Routh, Commanding A-35 Canadian Parachute Training Centre, Shilo Camp, Manitoba, No. 87, 17 September 1943* (Library and Archives Canada: RG24-C-3), File No. 1286, Volume 17137.

[29] T.M. Poitras, Service Records 1943-1946. From the Private Collection of Mrs. T.M. Beach (née Poitras).

[30] T.M. Beach (née Poitras), letter to author, 28 February 2008.

[31] *Ibid*.

[32] T.M. Poitras, Service Records 1943-1946. From the Private Collection of Mrs. T.M. Beach (née Poitras).

closely mirrors the three-phased packing, maintenance and rigging qualification standards that are delivered in-house by the parachute support organization to this day. Not until candidates complete all three phases of training do they earn their coveted rigger qualification.

Despite repeated requests, the CWAC packers were not permitted to jump from aircraft in flight, but the parachutes they packed were not only used by the students but by the command elements within the company as a demonstration of confidence. One former CWAC packer recalled that the supervisory staff, headed by Staff Sergeant R. Porter in the Maintenance Section and Sergeant T. Brewer in the Packing Section, were all qualified and active jumpers. "They did not however, pack their own parachutes. All the packing was done by the women."[33] Private J. de Vries recalls that as young paratroopers in 1 Can Para Bn they were only too happy to have the women pack their parachutes, as they did it all the time and quickly became experts and the soldiers could stop worrying about malfunctions due to their own lack of practice.[34]

Bulk packing resulted in a number of efficiencies. Production increased with increased proficiency within the packing section and the time needed to train basic parachutists was trimmed. In an effort to maximize the number of qualified replacements that could be sent overseas, and as there was no operational role for women in the parachute battalions, the CWAC packers were an essential and appreciated component of the training and support cadre.[35] Fully integrated into the unit social life, there were

---

[33] T.M. Beach (née Poitras), letter to author, 28 February 2008.

[34] J. de Vries, conversation with author, 23 October 2007.

[35] L.A. Marsden, letter to author, 12 February, 2008.

frequent dances at the Men's Canteen for other ranks and CWACs. Not only were the women "top packers" the general consensus was the "our girls" did a "swell" job of making dainties and party sandwiches.[36]

By mid June 1945 there was evidence that A-35 CPTC was going to close down.[37] Ominously foreshadowing the centre's imminent closure, the war diary of 20 June 1945 noted that the 108 men and one officer conducting their final qualifying jump that day were "probably the last men who will become parachutists in Canada at least during this war or unless the picture changes." Interrupted due to weather, the final 28 men jumped on 2 July, marking the cessation of parachute training and the end of Parachute Training Wing.[38]

Over the next month, the bulk of A-35 CPTC was moved to Brandon to staff the Canadian Army Permanent Force (CAPF) camp. Left behind in Shilo was Flint, who was the Officer Commanding, Brewer and Porter, the Sr NCO section heads, along with the Packing and Maintenance staff. On 14 July 1945 an entry in the war diary speculated: "it will be interesting to learn what the future will be for this department. Hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of silk surely will not be stored away and forgotten. Will experimentation continue and result eventually in a para P.F. [permanent force] unit?" Four days later the Officer Commanding Packing and Maintenance Section was in Ottawa on official business, presumably having been called into discussions with respect

---

[36] Canadian Army, *War Diary of A-35 CPTC*…, 31 December 1943 and 2 June 1945.

[37] *Ibid*., 16 June 1945.

[38] *Ibid*., 30 June and 2 July 1945.

to the future of parachuting in Canada. Flint returned on 28 July with "news that cannot be divulged at present."[39] The staff did not have long to wait.

> The small party left at Shilo – the Packing & Maintenance Section, as of 1 Aug 45 has officially become known as #1 Airborne Research & Development Centre under command of Capt George Flint, capable director of Packing & Maintenance since early in 1944. He has taken considerable interest in research and development of parachuting & it is fitting that Canadian Paratrooping should continue to exist & perhaps contribute to posterity. It is conceivable that this unit will become a part of the Permanent Force.[40]

The formal transfer of remaining personnel from A-35 CPTC to the #1 Airborne Research and Development Centre (refered to as the Airborne Centre), Shilo by early September completed the transition.[41] An obscure but necessary capability had been preserved as part of the Canadian airborne capability.

1 Can Para Bn had returned from overseas that summer and was located at Niagara-on-the-Lake. The Battalion's demobilization in September 1945 provided a pool of experienced and battle-hardened candidates for potential employment at the Airborne Centre. While camped in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Captain R.B. (Bob) Firlotte, who had served as an instructor in the original Training Centre in 1943 and also with the unit overseas, received a request from the Airborne Centre to be part of the regular army parachuting establishment. He picked thirty of the best men who wanted to remain in the post-war service and they went back to Shilo.[42] Building on the core personnel originally

---

[39] *Ibid*., 18 and 28 July 1945.

[40] *Ibid*., 10 August 1945.

[41] *Ibid*., 3 September 1945.

[42] R.B. Firlotte, interview with author, 17 February 2008.

transferred from A-35 CPTC and augmented by members of the now defunct 1 Can Para Bn, the new organization developed slowly.

The original complement at the Parachute Packing and Maintenance Section in Shilo included seven ex-members of 1 Can Para Bn and seven from the wartime staff at A-35 CPTC. This amalgamated crew provided the experience and disciplined soldiering required to maintain the high quality work demanded when lives are at stake and there is no tolerance for mistakes.[43] They formed the core of the airborne capability with the formation of #1 Airborne Research and Development Centre in Shilo in September 1945.

CWAC personnel were demobilized in April 1946, creating a critical manning vacuum in the packing and maintenance organization. One solution was to hire back some of the CWAC personnel as civilians, thus starting a long tradition of hiring former military parachute packers and riggers as civilian employees. Poitras was one of three women who went back to work in Maintenance as a civilian after Porter, the Sr NCO overseeing Maintenance Section, wrote a letter inviting them back.[44] While this provided continuity in a few key positions, a more permanent military manning solution was needed.

Looking to advance the cause of paratroopers in the immediate post-war period and cognizant of the need to backfill the parachute support capability, the new Airborne Centre took it upon itself to conduct demonstration jumps all over the country. At one such Ontario demonstration, Marsden, who during his initial parachute course had demonstrated angst regarding his ability to properly pack his own parachute and was now

---

[43] L.A. Marsden, letter to author, 14 February 2008.

[44] T.M. Beach (née Poitras), letter to author, 28 February 2008.

recently off disembarkation leave, was delighted to run into Firlotte and another of the former 1 Can Para Bn officers who quickly pulled a few strings to get him posted to Shilo. In November 1946 Marsden reported to Packing and Maintenance Section for an initial three-year stint that eventually extended to 1969.[45] Under the tutelage of Porter and Brewer, new packers and riggers were trained in every facet of the trade and specialization was not permitted. They rotated through employment both in packing and maintenance. The mandate of the section was expanded to include the packing of cargo chutes for re-supplying communities in Northern Manitoba.[46]

Parachute Packing and Maintenance Section soon became the nucleus of an autonomous parachute support entity when it was left behind with "detachment" status in Shilo when the rest of the unit re-located to Rivers, Manitoba. Presumably this move was intended to capitalize on access to the modern runway and infrastructure vacated at the end of the war and to facilitate the transition as the Airborne Centre became the Joint Air School (JAS) on 15 August 1947. The JAS was later renamed the Canadian Joint Air Training Centre (CJATC). The parachute support functions required purpose built facilities that did not exist in Rivers. Until a plan was devised to address the functional infrastructure shortages the packing and maintenance functions would remain in Shilo as a detachment of the larger unit. The new unit was entrusted with the retention of skills necessary by both the Army and the RCAF for airborne operations.[47] Firlotte, now working out of Rivers and responsible for both packing and training, recalls the

---

[45] L.A. Marsden, letter to author 12 February 2008.

[46] *Ibid*.

[47] Horn, *Bastard Sons…*, 71.

difficulties of the decentralized locations, but was amazed at the truly tri-service nature of the new unit "with components from the Navy and Air Force as well as the Army."[48]

With the underpinnings of the Canadian parachute capability now incorporated in a permanent post-war structure yet unhindered by a defining strategic vision there was impetus to expand from within the airborne community. The danger of lower-level initiatives developing at odds with higher intentions was soon realized. The first manifestation of a broader parachute mandate in the post-war period was evident in the establishment of a Canadian Special Air Service (SAS) Company. Conceived as an integral sub-unit of the Army component of the CJATC, purportedly to conduct tactical research and development, training demonstrations, airborne firefighting, search and rescue and aid to the civil power, the SAS Company surreptitiously transitioned to a war fighting and special forces focus soon after it was authorized in January 1948.[49] The fledgling SAS Company was soon undermined by re-allocation of its sub-units to the newly created Mobile Striking Force (MSF). The first to be detached was the platoon of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry soldiers. When these soldiers returned to their parent regiment to provide an experienced instructor cadre, a replacement platoon was raised from the service support trades resident in the SAS Composite Platoon, who were typically employed in parachute packing and maintenance.[50] Significant to the evolution of parachute support concepts, the SAS Company was the first designated parachuting organization to formally embed parachute support operations in the Canadian

---

[48] R.B. Firlotte, interview with author, 17 February 2008.

[49] Bernd Horn, "A Military Enigma: The Canadian Special Air Service Company, 1948-1949," *Canadian Military History* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 23-25.

[50] *Ibid*., 27-28.

context. The SAS Composite Platoon was the inaugural integral parachute support construct. The practice of embedding riggers in parachute organizations was to become the norm. Field rigger sections were later attached to the dispersed "jump" companies of the DCF in the mid-1960s and subsequently incorporated into the Canadian Airborne Regiment, Search and Rescue Squadron establishments and, most recently, into Canadian Special Operations units.

Chief Warrant Officer R.B. (Bruce) Edey, destined to become the Canadian Forces longest serving Senior Parachute Rigger (SPR), was posted to the SAS Composite Platoon during the winter of 1949. Edey had joined as a boy soldier in 1944 and upon successful completion of his apprenticeship was processed into the infantry corps. Finding that the infantry did not hold his interest, Edey displayed the initiative that was to become the trademark of his career, arriving for his assignment to an infantry unit wearing the proper accoutrements of the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC). The assigning officer, puzzled and mumbling about an error in the records, asked the young soldier where he would like to be posted. Wisely assessing that the best place to be was as far away as possible, Edey volunteered for duty as a driver on the Alaska Highway. His self-imposed exile came to an end when he heard while attending an aerial delivery course in Rivers that the SAS Company was looking for volunteers for their Composite Platoon. Pte Edey reported to his new commanding officer and was promptly told that due to the formation of the MSF, the SAS Company was being disbanded. The officer then looked out the window where there loomed a small mountain of coal, and turning back to Edey asked if he would prefer to shovel coal that winter or pack

parachutes. Not taking long to deliberate, Edey remarked that "I chose the latter, and was soon on my way to Shilo."[51]

As the Shilo Detachment continued to operate in geographic isolation, the unique supporting nature of the packing and maintenance functions must have become more apparent throughout the chain of command. The accidental autonomy of the parachute support organization and the common trade designations of parachute packers and riggers who had been drawn from across the arms and services contributed to the gradual coalescing of the parachute support capability as a stand-alone entity. In the late 1940s, riggers were briefly designated "parachute and safety equipment workers" under the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC).[52] This "rankled" those who had been badged with front line units of the fighting arms and now had to remove their specific regimental identifiers.[53] The question of distinctive badging became fundamental to forging a common and colloquial rigger identity. The official aggregation of the parachute support capability as a cohesive unit occurred with the assumption of the detachment and its soldiers by the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps (RCOC) on 1 November 1950.

The first seven years of its existence the parachute packing and maintenance capability found itself in the dichotomous position of having both a tenuous future and a focused mission. The former was a direct result of the lack of pervasive role for airborne forces or paratroopers in the post-war Canadian context, while the latter a product of the

---

[51] R.B. Edey, email to author, 28 January 2008.

[52] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report – No 28 Central Ordnance Depot, RCOC – 1 November 1950 to 31 March 1951, DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

[53] L.A. Marsden, letter to author, 12 February 2008.

clear mandate to pack and repair parachutes and manage related airdrop stores that governed day-to-day activities. This asynchronous existence reflected the ambiguities of the Canadian airborne legacy. As the parachute capability became increasingly dilute with the demise of the SAS Company and the scaling down of the MSF concept from 1948 onwards, the rigger capability was concentrated and migrated from the fighting arm to nest for the next half century in the Logistics community. This dichotomy of purpose under a canopy of disinterest set the stage for the arrested development of Canada's airborne forces.

CHAPTER 3 – The Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps Years: 1950 to 1968

The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 shifted political and military attention in Canada from the myopic and nebulous demands of North American security to generating forces for UN and NATO deployments for combating communist expansion abroad. Defence spending was increased and the armed forces were expanded in order to deploy Canadian forces to face more tangible threats in Korea and Europe, "where some thought the real communist blow would fall."[54] As a result, the territorial defence mandate was curtailed, units designated for service in the MSF remained scattered across the country, and many of their soldiers were reassigned to augment overseas deployments. In 1958 the MSF was officially downsized and renamed the DCF. The parachute capability in Canada was now limited to a reinforced company group within each of the tasked battalions. There were insufficient personnel, equipment and aircraft to respond to enemy incursions in the Canadian North. Any semblance of an airborne

---

[54] Horn, *Bastard Sons*…, 79.

capability was an illusion. Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s the threat to North America was increasingly defined in terms of Soviet bombers and inter-continental ballistic missiles. The focus of continental defence was on air defence, not airborne forces.[55] In a significant about-face, the 1964 *White Paper* provided the impetus for reinvigorating the Canadian airborne capability. Strategic mobility was a key tenet in the new approach. The corresponding proposal to establish a small, mobile and airborne army with dedicated tactical air support that could serve in UN, NATO and domestic deployments had broad appeal.[56] The conceptual framework of the Canadian Airborne Regiment emerged from this momentum and the unit was created in 1968.

The vagrancies of the Canadian airborne experience during this era lie in stark contrast to the emerging cohesion of the parachute support capability over the same period. In a decision rendered without a context, the transfer of parachute packing and maintenance functions to the RCOC had unifying effect. From this coalescing experience many of the themes that would come to identify the collective rigger experience in the following decades were accentuated. Prominent amongst these challenges were manning struggles, financial constraints and supply and accounting difficulties, along with the cultural peculiarities of a professional ethos developed in relative isolation.

The first intimation that the RCOC was to take over the support capability came when Army Headquarters published *General Staff Policy Statement No 50 (D Air) Responsibility for Canadian Army Parachutes* on 7 June 1949. This policy statement

---

[55] *Ibid*., 100.

[56] *Ibid.,* 103.

defined parachutes and related stores required by the Army for air transported operations as ordnance stores, and specified that the Ordnance Service would be responsible for their provision, storage, repair, maintenance and issue. This included the provision of spare parts and material required for repair. Packing specifications stipulated that: "Parachutes issued by Ordnance to Units will be so packed as to be immediately ready for use. Parachute packing will be done by RCOC personnel."[57] The document directed, in general terms, the establishment of a permanent peace-time active force Ordnance Service organization to provide parachute packing and maintenance functions to the Army. In the first formal acknowledgement of its unique role and a precursor to its separate identity, the new unit was to serve, but be independent of, the CJATC at Rivers.[58] This initiating direction also provided for sections to perform detached duty as sub-depots, a tacit recognition of the requirement for field riggers. Recent initiatives that had seen riggers designated as "Parachute and Safety Equipment Workers" under the RCASC were now superceded and the new unit was set to absorb the personnel trained in those functions and employed under the auspices of the CJATC as "Safety Equipment Technicians" of the RCOC. In recognition of the economies and benefits garnered by co-locating supporting with their supported arms, the new Ordnance Parachute Depot was to take over the existing facilities in Shilo until accommodation was available in Rivers.[59]

28 Central Ordnance Depot (28 COD) became the newest and smallest of the RCOC depots, unique in that it was the only airborne ordnance establishment in the

---

[57] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report – No 28 Central Ordnance Depot, RCOC – 1 November 1950 to 31 March 1951, DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

[58] *Ibid*.

[59] *Ibid*.

Canadian Forces, on 1 November 1950. During the last two weeks of October 1949 in anticipation of the imminent handover, Major R.N. Brooks was posted from the CJATC as Officer Commanding, and twenty-one other ranks were transferred from their original Corps[60] to the RCOC and posted to 28 COD. They were later augmented by another thirteen members of the CJATC until the end of January 1951 to ensure continuity of production during the transfer of command authority.[61]

Common themes that were to become the hallmark of the collective rigger experience in Canada came to light immediately upon stand-up of the unit. Similar to the broader issues facing the future of airborne forces in Canada, there was a systematic absence of higher direction and economic factors quickly achieved primacy over visionary considerations.

Beyond the initial policy statement and posting messages, there was a distinct lack of information regarding the new depot. The Annual Historical Report covering the period 1 November 1950 to 31 March 1951 quite bluntly highlights this deficiency.

> In fact, throughout the entire period covered by this report there were no directives of any sort received from higher authority. This lack of direction adversely affected all of the depot activities during the first five months of its existence.[62]

The unit spent little time lamenting the paucity of oversight and quickly began to grapple with matters of mission, organization, personnel, stores and accommodation. The

---

[60] *Ibid*. The original twenty-one soldiers posted from CJATC to 28 COD included one from the Royal Corps of Engineers, ten from the Royal Canadian Infantry Corps, eight from the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps, one from the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps, and one from the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps.

[61] *Ibid*.

[62] *Ibid*.

mission, derived from the establishment cover sheet, called for 28 COD to be both the master and distribution depot for a complete range of parachutes and allied stores, and to provide sections for detached duty as sub-depots as warranted. Organizational tables provided for three officers, eighty-one other ranks and one civilian, divided into a stock control wing (supply and accounting functions) and a stores wing (parachute packing, maintenance and warehouse sections). Originally short twenty-five personnel (thirty-eight counting the temporary manning provided by the CJATC), the deficiencies had been reduced to seven by the end of March 1951.[63]

Entrenching the tradition of riggers being qualified parachutists, subsequent messages from Army Headquarters directed that "all ranks will be parachutists."[64] This was a policy consistent with American precedent and it came to be a defining measure of the Canadian rigger experience. While messages calling for volunteers from safety equipment technicians willing to be trained as parachutists were explicit in stating the necessity for candidates to successfully complete training as basic parachutists, an odd assortment of reluctant or dubiously motivated individuals began to arrive at the unit. Luckily, this pre-requisite basic parachutist training served to weed out those prone to false bravado or who had been sent on false pretences by previous units eager to be rid of problem soldiers.[65] The inaugural historical report of the fledgling unit captures the essence of these early force generation challenges in a telling ditty:

> Go west to Shilo there's lots to see,
> They've guns and soldiers, and oh golly-gee

---

[63] *Ibid*.

[64] *Ibid*.

[65] *Ibid*.

There's a brand new unit called a COD
That's just the place for you and me.

Alas dear friend that's not quite true,
For I know something more than you,
Out there is nothing but a great big plain
And lots of work, sweat and pain.

Another thing they often do,
Is jump from an airplane, sometimes two.
Those are things I actually saw,
I watched and was filled with a horrid awe.

I ran to the padre and made a date,
And begged him to spare me so grim a fate,
To send me back to Mum and Dad,
Shilo's no place for their little lad.[66]

The uncompromising approach to safety underpinned by the philosophical and practical commitment to jumping as a prerequisite for service as an airborne rigger has transcended its historical origins to become a key component of the collective rigger identity in the Canadian experience. By the mid-1950s the parachuting requirement was recognized to be "a most important item in the training program. Morale is in direct proportion to the number of jumps that rigger personnel complete."[67] 1958 and 1961 were heralded as record years of airborne continuation training for riggers because of the high number of parachute descents completed in training. The singular affiliation of supporting to supported echelons that this small measure of military elitism represented also predicated six decades of recruiting difficulties.

The challenge of generating suitable candidates to man the new RCOC depot quickly came to light in the early years of the unit's existence. Annual Historical Reports

---

[66] *Ibid*.

[67] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report – No 28 Central Ordnance Depot, RCOC - 1956, DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

from the early fifties consistently refer to shortfalls and the requirement to reallocate personnel from maintenance operations to packing in order to meet production demands. In these early years of hammering out a collective identity within the larger service support arm and within the larger airborne community, the unit grappled with ways to reconcile the monotony and physicality of parachute work in a semi-isolated post with the requirement to instill a safety consciousness and technical proficiency.

The difficulty of reconciling mission and purpose is illuminated in the infrastructure challenges that soon came to light. The Packing Hangar, now the centre of activity for 28 COD, had been purpose built over the winter1942/1943 and was certainly adequate for operations during and immediately after the Second World War. With the advent of the new unit as the nexus of parachute support operations and in anticipation of increased production in support of MSF activites, the designated infrastructure in Shilo appeared inadequate.[68] The existing layout was adjusted to allow for thirty-four packing tables, up from twenty-three, and a larger maintenance section. An additional nearby building was allocated to accommodate the supply warehouse and bulk storage.[69] Seeking to solidify their position and advance unit interests, unit leadership persuaded the Director of Ordnance Services over a series of visits to direct a detailed infrastructure assessment. In December 1955 the Commanding Officer of 28 COD, Major J.L. Cumberford, submitted a formal appreciation of options for relocating the unit.[70] Among

---

[68] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report – No 28 Central Ordnance Depot, RCOC – 1 November 1950 to 31 March 1951, DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

[69] *Ibid.*

[70] Canadian Army, *Appreciation of the Situation by Major J.L. Cumberford at Shilo, Man at 0900 hrs on 20 Dec 55*. HQ Prairie Command: file PCS 5022-984/28 (Q), 6 January 1956 (Library and Archives Canada: RG24-C-1-c), Box 305, File No. S-2001-98428.

the options considered were a move to Winnipeg, Regina, or Rivers, or substantial monetary injects into Shilo to replace (Option "D") or upgrade and expand (Option "E") existing facilities. The deduction was made that as 57.3% of stores provided by the unit were used in the Shilo-Rivers corridor, it did not appear to be economically sound to locate the depot outside the boundaries of Prairie Command.[71] The concluding paragraph of the detailed estimate is extremely telling. It reveals that in the absence of a definitive and convincing overarching vision for parachuting in general, and parachute support in particular, a systematic preoccupation with matters of fiscal prudence, not operational relevance, had become the primary focus:

> Considering the economic factors to be of prime importance, and in the light of known Army policy here, there appears to be no alternative but to select Course "E" as the logical course open. However, if it were possible to ascertain the role in respect to the continued use of parachutes and if it was found that these were to be used in the Canadian Army in excess of ten years, then the acceptance of Course "D", and the necessary new construction which this involves, might prove to be the wiser course of action.[72]

It would not be long before economic considerations and not strategic vision would become the quintessential defining characteristic of the collective rigger experience.

The complexities of supply and accounting procedures as they pertained to parachutes and related equipment became apparent as these functions merged and matured in the new Ordnance Depot. Prior to the stand-up of 28 COD, parachutes had been issued in bulk rather than by serial number through the CJATC Quartermaster Stores in Rivers. Geographical separation and rudimentary practices compromised the basic materiel accountability that was the foundation of ordnance operations. The

---

[71] *Ibid*.

[72] *Ibid*.

increased demands of stocktaking and internal audit precipitated the request for an establishment adjustment to reflect an additional eleven accounting clerks.[73] From 1950 onwards, depot activities including stock control and warehousing were strained by insufficient establishments. Repeated attempts by the unit chain of command to address the issue did not appear to resonate within the Army or the Ordnance Corp. With what was to become alarming regularity, the unit was left in isolation, an all too common ailment in the Canadian airborne experience. The parachute support organization had to rely on its inherent strengths and resources to not only survive but to flourish.

The annual demand for personal parachutes decreased starting in 1957. In 1956 23,708 parachutes of all types were packed by 28 COD. In 1957 the number fell to 20,245. In 1958 there was a further decrease in production to 16,154 due to the reduction in numbers of parachutists in the MSF units. Between 1959 and 1967 the annual average was between 12,000 and 14,000.[74] With this slump in production demands, extra-curricular sporting, military and social activities took on disproportionate importance in the life of the depot and contributed to a culture of long-standing high morale, engendering a team spirit that has survived to be the envy of larger, more dilute organizations despite the eroding effects of larger movements in the airborne and logistics worlds.

The Annual Historical reports of 1950-1968 are replete with tales of the unit's athletic prowess. 28 COD frequently won the grand aggregate trophy for the Shilo Garrison Summer Track and Field Meet and took honours in the Winter Sports

---

[73] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report – No 28 Central Ordnance Depot, RCOC – 1 November 1950 to 31 March 1951, DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

[74] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Reports – No 28 Central Ordnance Depot, RCOC – 1956 to 1962 and 1965 to 1967. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

Cavalcade, along with encouraging individual and team achievements in everything from boxing and golf to broomball. With a concerted focus on military skills and marksmanship, the depot had its name etched on the Cambridge Bowl trophy repeatedly throughout these early decades.[75] All members of the new depot and their families socialized together, enjoying outings and starting the long-standing tradition of celebrating unit anniversaries with a church parade, all ranks dinner and dance, open house and demonstrations. Additionally, in October 1954 28 COD formed a band that became a unique presence on the base and in the greater community.[76] By 1957, the drum and bugle band had reached iconic stature when annual reports included an entire annex dedicated to Band Engagements and Competitions. The band was extremely popular in small town Manitoba and Saskatchewan, often participating in community celebrations. On occasion members of the band would parachute into the local fields prior to retrieving their instruments and leading the parade down Main Street.[77] Chief Warrant Officer J.R. (Roger) Gallien was posted to the unit in 1962 from the RCOC's apprentice program. RCOC soldiers had the option of proceeding on a basic parachutist course immediately following their two-year apprenticeship; if they were successful they were immediately posted to 28 COD to commence packer/rigger training. Throughout the early years of the depot, parachute riggers were regularly generated from this

---

[75] R.B. Edey, email to author, 13 January 2008. The Cambridge Bowl was donated by the British officers of the Halifax Garrison when they were withdrawn to England in 1906. Between 1906 and 1914, and again from 1921 to 1939, the trophy was awarded annually to the "minor" unit that won the annual rifle competition. Competitions resumed from 1953 to 1957. 28 COD won it four of those years. It remains a prized possession of the parachute support organization to this day.

[76] Materiel Command, "[28 COD Update]," *The Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps Information Bulletin* 5, No. 3 (September 1966): 43.

[77] R.B. Edey, Unpublished article, 2003. Emailed to author 28 January 2008.

program. Intrigued by the personal and professional challenge, the young Gallien volunteered for parachute training and soon arrived at the depot. Unfortunately, he spoke no English. When the Commanding Officer, described as "an old Brit with a big moustache, leather gloves and a German Sheppard that would inspect the morning parade with him,"[78] stopped to question the young Gallien, a translator had to be dragged out of the ranks. The Major then asked him, "What instrument are you going to play in the band?" The translation, "He's telling you you're in the band," resulting in Gallien choosing the trumpet:

> At 1500 hours we would go to the H-hut beside the Depot to practice. Nobody read music; we learned the tunes by ear and eventually we got it. The problem was we only knew so many tunes. There was one we played over and over, *There's Something About a Soldier*.[79]

In those days monetary remunerations for soldiering were insubstantial. The riggers had enough to pay their rent and grocery bills with nothing left over. Every weekend during the summer they would pile into buses along with their families and head off to the little fairs in all the small prairie towns. After the parade there would be free beer and food and "[t]hat was our entertainment all summer. We made up our own uniforms with jump boots with white laces and white helmets."[80] On Friday mornings the Commanding Officer would march the band around the base, stopping in front of one of the lodger units to play until the other Commanding Officer would have to come out and inspect the band. As Gallien observed, "Even then we were a bit apart."[81] The band

---

[78] J.R. Gallien, interview with author, 22/23 February 2008.

[79] *Ibid*.

[80] *Ibid.*

[81] *Ibid*.

was a cornerstone of unit spirit, pride and identity right through until its disbandment in 1969, "due to the pressures of increased workload and other exigencies of the forces."[82] As the soldiers remember it, "We got a big raise in 1968 and that destroyed the band. It had been mandatory in the early years but the mentality was changing."[83] Times were certainly changing, but the foundations of unit identity and professional culture forged in relative isolation would continue to perpetuate over time.

While the airborne community in Canada had struggled to find a place during the Cold War, the parachute support community enjoyed a relatively autonomous existence, and took full advantage of the opportunity to hone its technical operations and to forge a unique and enduring identity that further served to set apart those called to make men and materiel float from the skies. The lack of synchronization between the airborne and logistics communities in this timeframe illustrated the dearth of an overarching vision for airborne forces in the Canadian context. The profound reversal of fortune that was about to ensue in the upcoming years would prove that this condition was not an anomaly.

CHAPTER 4 – The Early ADM(Mat) Period: 1968 to 1980

The next decade would see the rise of the Canadian Airborne Regiment and unprecedented demand for parachute support. In 1967 Colonel D.H. Rochester, the Commanding Officer designate of the new unit, formed a planning team to reconcile details pertaining to the formation of the new Regiment and to choose its future location.

> After exhaustive analysis and study, Rochester's planning team chose Edmonton because of the excellent air facilities and abundant drop zones, its important

---

[82] "To All Stag Readers from CO 28 CFSD," *The Shilo Stag*, 23 December 1969, 11.

[83] J.R. Gallien, interview with author, 22/23 February 2008.

> strategic location from a global point of view, proximity to training areas at Wainwright, nearness to mountains and ski areas, and particularly because the PPCLI was moving to Calgary and the accommodation they were vacating was made to order.[84]

The formal establishment of the Airborne Regiment on 8 April 1968 was accompanied by much optimism. The robust training mandates implemented by the sub-units, or commandos, of the Regiment immediately increased the workload at the parachute support depot. In a stunning clash of external forces, and indicative of a profound lack of strategic appreciation of the interdependency of these two organizations, this would occur at the very moment that the Unification of the Canadian Forces was eroding the parachute depot's ability to provide that support.

In characteristic fashion, 28 COD brought its influence to bear during the early planning for the Canadian Airborne Regiment, but it was powerless against the forces of change sweeping the Logistics community. When the dust settled, the unit had a new name, the RCOC had been absorbed into Materiel Command, and the rigger trade had been subsumed within the Air Force Safety Systems Technician trade. However, there was no time to reflect. The Airborne Regiment was about to have an indelible impact on the future of the depot. It would provide the impetus for the move of the parachute support organization to Edmonton after over two and half decades in Shilo. It would cause the Army to consider direct ownership of the parachute support capability, just as it had from 1943 to 1949. It would revolutionize depot operations with the advent of free fall parachuting. All of this while facing the most profound manning challenge and systemic dislocation yet experienced.

---

[84] Horn, *Bastard Sons…,* 122.

Reports in the *Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps Information Bulletin* allude to the collaborative approach taken at the grass-roots level to ensure an appropriate integral parachute support capacity in the new Airborne Regiment, as well as an understanding of the increased demands the nascent unit would place on the depot. Rochester's visit to 28 COD 24 May 1967[85] was the catalyst for ensuing discussions between the two organizations. He visited the depot again in July 1967, and the Senior Parachute Rigger was seconded to NDHQ Ottawa for six weeks that autumn to prepare the list of stores and equipment that the Regiment would require to commence operations. Recalling the thirty-two page typed list of items and the technical advice provided to set up the supply and accounting framework for the new unit, the Senior Rigger posited: "So one can say 28 COD was instrumental in part in establishing C.A.R. [the Canadian Airborne Regiment]."[86] While the depot enjoyed a modicum of influence within the larger airborne community, it was impotent in the face of Unification.

The impact of Unification on the parachute depot was nothing short of profound. The change of name from 28 COD to 28 Canadian Forces Supply Depot (28 CFSD) on 9 February 1968 was in itself insignificant, for at Unification all Central Ordnance Depots had become Canadian Forces Supply Depots,[87] but the organizational and structural disruptions that came along with this shift were determinant.

Under the Canadian Forces unified construct, the parachute depot was grouped with all the major supply depots in Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel) (ADM(Mat))

---

[85] Materiel Command, "[28 COD Update]," *The Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps Information Bulletin* 6, No. 2 (June-September 1967): 47.

[86] L.A. Marsden, letter to author, 14 February 2008.

[87] F.J. Tudor, email to author, 7 February 2008.

and further subordinated to Chief of Technical Services (CTS). As the only operational field unit in ADM(Mat), 28 CFSD was an anomaly. With no command staff to provide strategic guidance and little common ground other than the technical universality of depot supply functions, the cultural remoteness of the parachute support capability was perpetuated. Major G.P. (Gordon) Gedge, Commanding Officer 28 CFSD Commanding Officer from 1970 to 1974 recalled,

> Honestly, most [ADM(Mat)] staff did not really understand what we did other than pack and repair parachutes, and fall out of aircraft. We were their smallest customer and our demands for staff assistance were few. The lion's share of our contacts was with the units we supported and at the working level.[88]

The parachute support capability now exemplified dis-unity. Counter-intuitive to the intentions of Unification, 28 CFSD was now firmly embedded within in the Logistics Branch as an ADM(Mat) unit but the riggers, born of Army tradition, that manned it and delivered parachute support to the Canadian Forces now belonged to the Air Force. Consolidation for the sake of consolidation appeared to be the prevailing wisdom, and there was no doubt that Safety Systems Technicians possessed a broad range of technical expertise pertaining to aircraft systems and safety, including Air Force and Navy parachutes.[89] The practical integration of the re-designated parachute riggers had an immediate impact on production at a time where unit activities were accelerating to meet the demands of the new airborne regiment[90] and a protracted effect on the long-term manning sustainability of the specialty.

---

[88] G.P. Gedge, email to author, 31 January 2008.

[89] R.D. Amos, email to author, 25 February 2008.

[90] In 1968, the first year of Canadian Airborne Regiment parachute activities, the number of parachutes packed by 28 CFSD increased 25% over the previous year. (Based on statistics reported in the Annual Historical Reports of 28 COD in 1967 and 28 CFSD in 1968.)

The homogeneity that the rigger specialty had enjoyed under the RCOC was quickly diluted. A newspaper article in *The Shilo Stag* captured the new dynamic with the following observation:

> Paramount during the past decade has been the advent of integration which propelled the old Para Rigger into a completely new and even more technical field. This new trade concept encompasses land, sea and air elements into one group known as Safety Systems Technicians which requires us to work side by side with sailors and airmen.[91]

A 1968 photo shows the Commanding Officer, Major F.J. Tudor, surrounded by the students – one Army, one Navy, and six Air Force – of the first post-Unification basic rigger course.[92] Due to the requirement to be a qualified jumper, service at 28 CFSD was voluntary for Safety Systems Technicians, and many shied away from diversifying in this manner. The duties of the depot were still perceived to be an Army requirement and, in some circles, employment there was seen as a career limiter, particularly for the Air Force tradesmen.[93] For the riggers already employed at the depot, the shift to Safety Systems was mandatory if they wanted to remain in the specialty. The first serial of conversion training ran with five candidates from 28 August to 17 December 1968.[94] Over the next several years, five to ten at a time, the pre-1968 riggers converted to Safety Systems. Gallien, now a fully qualified rigger who had been with the unit for six years, remembers filtering through the aeronautical school in Borden: "Originally the course

---

[91] "To All Stag Readers from CO 28 CFSD," *The Shilo Stag*, 23 December 1969, 11.

[92] "28 CFSD 19th Anniversary: History of 28 Canadian Forces Supply Depot," *The Shilo Stag*, 13 November 1969, 4.

[93] R.D. Amos, email to author, 25 February 2008.

[94] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report 28 Canadian Forces Supply Depot - 1968. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

was six months long but it was later cut as the riggers didn't need all the parachute sections. This was followed by a two year mandatory OJT [on-the-job training] period in the Safety Systems world."[95] The obligatory on-the-job training (OJT) threw a wrench into depot productivity. Experienced packers and maintenance workers were systematically being culled from the unit to undergo training demanded by the new specialty designation and were being replaced at a much slower rate with soldiers and Sr NCOs with no corporate knowledge or experience with this unique parachute support capability. A further dissatisfier came when, due to previous momentum in the Safety Systems trade, several of the new arrivals by-passed the RCOC riggers whose career progression had stagnated during the early lonely decades and were promoted into supervisory positions ahead of their stoically proud counterparts.[96] But by now the rigger identity was firmly rooted in decades of collective spirit and a transcendent work ethic. From 1970 to 1972 Gallien did his two years of on-the-job training in Bagotville, primarily working on the Voodoo, still wearing his maroon beret and jump jacket. "I wouldn't take it off. After a year the Sergeant finally ordered me to get an Air Force uniform and wedgie."[97] The Safety Systems Technicians, accustomed to packing pilot ejection seat parachutes for the Air Force at a rate of one per day, were in for a shock. The norm for RCOC packers was eight per day. It was usual for more experienced personnel to pack ten to twelve a day.

> At Bagotville for OJT I was put in the parachute section. I would be finished by 9 a.m. and had nothing to do. I became disillusioned and moved to aircraft R&O

---

[95] J.R. Gallien, interview with author, 22/23 February 2008.

[96] *Ibid*.

[97] *Ibid.*

> [Repair and Overhaul] where they scheduled three days to do a quick check on the aircraft and fourteen days for a major check where you would completely strip down the aircraft and all its systems (oxygen, ejection seat etc). I could do the major check on my aircraft in five days.[98]

After his two-year banishment to Bagotville, Gallien returned to the parachute depot. There were others unable to make the leap of faith. The retention and recruiting dilemma became acute. Riggers unwilling to make the transition were lost to attrition. Some who did stayed in the Air Force Safety Systems world and did not come back to the depot. There was no impetus for Safety Systems Technicians to submit to parachute training in order to serve as riggers and consequently very few of them volunteered.[99] The soldier apprentice program that had fed the unit with young riggers during the RCOC era had ended in 1967.[100] Independent initiatives to attract occupational transfers from among interested infanteers serving in the Airborne Regiment were but a temporary panacea.[101] The disruption to the rigger specialty caused by its transfer from the RCOC to the Air Force, as the unit was transferring from the RCOC to ADM(Mat), was further compounded by the physical move of the depot to Edmonton. In characteristic fashion, strategic and tactical initiatives affecting the parachute capabilities were not reconciled.

The move of 28 CFSD from Shilo to Edmonton in 1970 was another triumph of lower-level initiative over higher-level ambivalence. As the first Commanding Officer of 1 Airborne Services Company in the Canadian Airborne Regiment from 1968 to 1970,

---

[98] *Ibid.*

[99] *Ibid.*

[100] Materiel Command, "[28 COD Update]," *The Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps Information Bulletin* 6, No. 2 (June-September 1967): 67.

[101] R.D. Amos, email to author, 25 February and G.P. Gedge, emails to author, 24 and 31 January 2008.

Gedge, who would subsequently serve as the depot Commanding Officer, lent his support to advancing the notion of an ideal airborne environment in Edmonton that would see the parachute depot, along with the training centre still resident in Rivers, co-located with the largest concentration of customers and the aircraft that delivered them. Fortuitously, warehouses were available in Edmonton and a concentrated effort on the part of the depot and the Airborne Regiment convinced higher authority to move 28 CFSD and the training centre into the adjoining buildings.[102] There were only two minor problems with the move. First, the Regiment did not take an operational pause while the depot transited. The sub-units of the Regiment were heavily committed to unrelenting training plans that had not been reconciled with the upcoming move. A number of ideas were considered to address this, including the option of hiring additional forty-foot Atlas moving vans and placing two packing tables in each to continue packing during pauses en route. That the depot riggers were able to pre-pack in the necessary volume despite their under-manning and pre-move preparations is a further testament to their robust professional culture. Second, the depot raised the ire of the Base Commander in Shilo when the Commanding Officer insisted, in accordance with the protocol at the time, that all the Base trophies that they had won for three consecutive preceding years were to accompany the unit to Edmonton (another Atlas moving van).[103] The legacy of a unit identity characterized in measure by its collective spirit and resolute pursuit of excellence is still very much in evidence in the vast array of silverware, including the Cambridge Bowl, liberated during the exodus from Shilo, that now rests in the trophy case of the riggers canteen in Trenton,

---

[102] G.P. Gedge, email to author 24 January 2008.

[103] F.J. Tudor, email to author 7 February 2008.

having once again made the pilgrimage out of Edmonton with the depot in 1996. The renovated facilities in Edmonton were first class and the geographic concentration with the other airborne units permitted economies in inventory and turn-around time that multiplied the efforts of a depleted rigger corps. "It was ideal situation. It was Canada's Fort Bragg. The home of the Airborne family with the best facilities money could buy."[104] It was a victory for the community that caused barely a blip on the ADM(Mat) radar. Not surprisingly, nor would the next challenge to face the depot.

The move of 28 CFSD to Edmonton was effective 25 May 1970. Concurrently, it became clear that Force Mobile Command (FMC), which had been formed in 1965 as a command that included the Army and certain aviation elements of the Air Force directly responsible for transporting and supporting the Army, had designs to absorb the parachute support capability and that the Logistics Branch was indifferent, offering little resistance. Correspondence out of CTS in April of 1970 anticipated a transfer of 28 CFSD from CTS Branch to FMC on 1 November of that same year pending submission of an FMC concept of operations that would guarantee the depot's continued provision of parachute support for other Commands along with warehousing and distribution functions for national parachute related items.[105] ADM(Mat)'s acquiescence to the FMC proposal was characteristically lackluster, demonstrating no great affiliation for 28 CFSD. In a blatant effort to explain support functions to a logistics organization, the Commanding Officer appealed to the Director General Supply requesting that the matter

---

[104] G.P. Gedge, email to author, 31 January 2008.

[105] Canadian Forces, *Future Organization and Role – 28 CFSD*, 28 CFSD: File 7605-1 TD 8122 S-1901-0, 6 May 1970. Unit Records.

be delayed until September 1971. This would allow for the completion of a number of external reviews and management studies that were already underway and for a more accurate assessment of the workload assumed from the sea and air environments following the amalgamation of the services. Also to be considered was the anticipated consolidation of all parachute and airdrop materiel, holdings known as 1670 NATO stock class, located at 28 CFSD.[106] Up to this point, the bulk of these items had been held at the 7 CFSD, the large general supply depot in Edmonton, where there were significant issues with life-cycle management. The supply technicians at 7 CFSD were not familiar with this special equipment, nor did they appreciate the processes required to prevent critical items from time expiring, or exceeding their self-life. The 1670 stock class needed to be constantly managed through being checked, rotated, and put into service.[107] 28 CFSD grappled with substantial supply and materiel accounting issues with little support from ADM(Mat). With only a peripheral interest in this small and uniquely focused subordinate element, the higher headquarters failed to grasp the significance of retaining the independent status of the unit. As a stand-alone unit, the depot served all customers in a manner divested of any perception of conflict of interest. Nurturing affiliation while maintaining a separate identity was paramount for the parachute support capability. Speaking to the issue of identity, Major Tudor noted in his 1970 letter outlining the challenges facing the unit:

> A loss of identity will inevitably be experienced among 28 CFSD servicemen; this Depot is, of necessity, a "morale unit" and its pride and individualism are

---

[106] *Ibid.*

[107] J.R. Gallien, interview with author, 22/23 February 2008.

> necessary ingredients for keeping technicians at the tedious and monotonous task of continuously packing parachutes on a production basis.[108]

The diversification of parachute support across the spectrum of Air Force and Maritime operations and the expanding supply mandate resulting from Canadian Forces integration was well understood by the unit. That it was not appreciated or adequately reconciled by the parent formation speaks volumes of the lack of a coherent vision for the capability within the Logistics Branch at the time of Unification. Tudor's letter did the trick. Once again stemming from internal initiative, a temporary reprieve was won. Tudor's position that the diverse mandate of the depot precluded ownership by only one customer was reinforced by his successor. The message out of 28 CFSD was clear. Cargo packing in support of the air drop and low-altitude extractions for Air Command, quality control for receipts off contract and repairs and modifications for all the Commands, along with technical authority and national-level supply responsibilities were on the rise and reshaping the nature of services encompassed within parachute support. FMC had no reason to look beyond the scope of its own requirements and could well ignore these other requirements. The perception of isolation was real. Too Army for the Air Force, too insular and elite for its logistics brethren, with a finely honed professional culture that precluded acquiescence to FMC's overtures, 28 CFSD truly was a unit apart. And as it happens, independent external reviews recognized the depot's uniqueness and supported the renaming of the unit on 1 July 1972 to Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot (CFPMD) – a name chosen by the unit to celebrate its identity.[109]

---

[108] Canadian Forces, *Future Organization and Role – 28 CFSD*, 28 CFSD: File 7605-1 TD 8122 S-1901-0, 6 May 1970. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

[109] G.P. Gedge, email to author, 31 January 2008.

The parachute support depot had fostered affiliation and engendered trust with the Airborne Regiment. There was little more to be gained. FMC backed down. The Logistic Branch remained oblivious. CFPMD now turned its attention to a new imperative in military parachuting and forged on in obscurity.

The advent of military freefall parachuting (MFP), in which the parachutist falls un-tethered from the aircraft and manually activates the parachute at a pre-determined altitude, had both an immediate and an enduring impact on parachute support. Developed throughout the 1960s, the introduction of the new technology added a new dimension to man's controlled descent from the skies and fundamentally altered the future scope of parachuting operations. At the depot, the introduction of MFP over the winter 1968/1969 occurred with little institutional oversight and was propelled by the seemingly insatiable demands of the Canadian Airborne Regiment. Drawing on the initial MFP experience of the Americans, three Majors seized the initiative to develop a similar capability for Canadian airborne forces. Fondly dubbed the "three stooges", they included the airborne operations desk officer from Ottawa, the major with the training mandate, and the Commanding Officer of the depot. The standard circular chute was redesigned into a steerable "7-TU", helmets, altimeters, and automatic opening devices were scrounged and trials commenced.[110] One rigger who worked on the project recalls that early on there was no money available from the centre to acquire the new technologies so they had to improvise. They took the standard in-service T-10 static line parachute, cut a panel, folded and taped the edges, sewed on toggles for steering and called the reconfigured chute the 7-TU (after the shape of the gaping holes in the

[110] F.J. Tudor, email to author, 7 February 2008.

canopy). To dampen the opening shock they experimented with difference length sleeves to vary the rate that the canopy fed out of the pack tray once activated by the jumper.[111] Edey, the newly appointed Senior Parachute Rigger, was among the early pioneers who insisted that riggers be amongst the first trained in MFP as it was the riggers who were modifying, packing, and inspecting the parachutes. The concept of "you pack them, you jump them" was so culturally ingrained that the proposal met with little resistance.[112] Once the nuances of the issue were made clear, the airborne regiment quickly deferred the bulk of their vacancies to later serials and the first course was loaded with airborne school instructors and parachute depot riggers.[113] The MFP Pilot course ran in the autumn of 1969.[114] *The Shilo Stag* newspaper captured the depot's involvement:

> Three of the unit's members completed the first Canadian Military Freefall course. Major Tudor, Sergeant Debolt and MCpl Carleton received their "HALO" (high altitude/low opening) certificate October 6....MWO Edey also holds the qualification which he picked up the hard way while working for the Airborne Evaluations Establishment during their freefall equipment trials last winter.[115]

As Major Tudor reminisced, "By some miracle everything worked out magnificently and Canadian Military Freefall Parachuting has never looked back."[116] A new lexicon and new workload entered and forever altered the collective rigger experience. With additional funding to support Canadian Airborne Regiment training, production demands

---

[111] J.R. Gallien, interview with author, 22/23 February 2008.

[112] R.B. Edey, email to author, 28 January 2008.

[113] F.J. Tudor, email to author, 7 February 2008.

[114] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report 28 Canadian Forces Supply Depot – 1969, DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

[115] "Under the Canopy," *The Shilo Stag*, 16 October 1969, 2.

[116] F.J. Tudor, email to author, 7 February 2008.

climbed steadily upwards throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. Increased collaborative training with the Americans heralded the introduction of the square canopy for MFP in the early 1980s. With square canopies came the added element of precision, as airflow through the elongated cells gave parachutes lift and facilitated steering. The packing requirements were fundamentally different. Round static-line parachutes were packed on long narrow tables by riggers standing alongside the table; square freefall parachutes (400-odd square feet of canopy) were laid out flat on the floor and packed by riggers on their knees. It was backbreaking work. There were fewer freefall parachutes in the inventory, they took longer to pack and required more space to be laid out. Riggers had to be qualified in the new techniques. Meeting production demands to sustain training courses and regimental activities typically resulted in long-hours and night shifts. The technical intricacies of the new canopies and associated hardware strained a maintenance section already registering significant hours of backlogged work. The introduction of square canopies was a powerful catalyst for change, effectively doubling the personnel parachute support dimension.[117] The tempo created by the establishment of the Airborne Regiment and the advent of MFP compounded the manning shortages brought about by Unification.

By the mid-1970s CFPMD was experiencing an acute manning crisis. During the first half of the decade measures to accelerate promotions and entice riggers to return to the depot had been moderately successful, but by 1977 there were no more Safety System volunteers and the Career Manager did not have an answer to the problem.[118]

---

[117] J.R. Gallien, interview with author, 22/23 February 2008.

[118] G.P. Gedge, email to author, 24 January 2008.

Occupational transfers from the Airborne Regiment virtually dried up.[119] That same year the Commanding Officer CFPMD instigated a series of recruiting seminars that had members of the depot travel to Air Bases across the country to entice Safety Systems Technicians to serve as riggers, but there were no new volunteers.[120] With the clash of cultures caused by Unification this was perhaps not surprising. As one depot recruiting team recalled, "We were seldom welcomed and often our introductions included the blatant comment that they had to let us brief but that no one could volunteer [to join the unit]."[121] Tribal protectionism was alive and well not only between the fighting and supporting arms, but within the very community that held the mandate to generate parachute support.

Once again, the failure to articulate a coherent role for Canadian airborne forces bore witness to a capability in flux. In 1975, with CFPMD in the throes of a manning crisis, the new Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), General J. Dextraze, announced that the Airborne Regiment was being considered for disbandment in favour of generating a Special Service Force (SSF) based in Petawawa, Ontario and more mechanized forces for service under NATO auspices. Airborne supporters from military and political spheres rallied to defend the regiment with limited success. In 1977, just as CFPMD embarked on their recruiting drive, a much-reduced Canadian Airborne Regiment was moved to Petawawa to become part of the SSF. The parachute support organization did not follow. Here again, much like the diluting effect of Unification on parachute support capacity

---

[119] R.D. Amos, email to author 25 February 2008.

[120] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot – 1977, DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 2 and G.P. Gedge, email to author, 24 January 2008.

[121] J.R. Gallien, interview with author, 22/23 February 2008.

coinciding with the upsurge of airborne activity in 1968, a divergent theme emerged. Now as the unique character of the regiment was being increasingly absorbed within the newly created SSF the rigger specialty was about to receive an infusion of new life. The anomalous paths of the Airborne Regiment and the parachute support organization in this decade further demonstrated the vacuum of strategic vision for airborne forces in Canada.

CHAPTER 5 – The Latter ADM(Mat) Years: 1980 to 1998

Confusion over the mandate of the Airborne Regiment continued throughout the 1980s and during the first half of the 1990s as cracks in the professional veneer of the unit began to appear. Flawed manning practices and an arrogance borne of elitism and unanchored by focused corporate leadership led to increasing disciplinary problems. The deployment of the regiment to Somalia in 1992 confirmed these systemic weaknesses. Once again a political expedient, the Canadian Airborne Regiment was disbanded in 1995. Amid tremendous sensitivities to all things "airborne", decentralized parachute companies were reintroduced within the light battalions of Canada's three regular force infantry regiments in 1995 and the parachute training and support organizations were both moved to Trenton in 1996. While the Airborne Regiment gradually deteriorated, CFPMD was exploring novel solutions to address the shortage of riggers, refocusing on unit solidarity, and fending off unsolicited proposals by civilian industry to usurp parachute support functions. Institutional malaise toward the variant encounters of parachute forces in this era was palpable.

By the early 1980s the manning issue was so acute that ADM(Mat) could no longer remain intransigent. Appointed Commanding Officer in 1981, Major R.D. Amos

was briefed by Brigadier-General J. LeClerc, Director General Supply Services, on the need to improve recruiting.

> Once I had a chance to study the issue, through discussions with senior riggers, the Safety Systems career manager, former COs and others, I came to the conclusion that a more radical approach would be necessary and started to develop the notion of the (rigger) specialty reverting to the Logistics Branch as a Supply Technician (sub-) specialty. When I presented my conclusion to BGen LeClerc he supported it whole-heartedly and gave me the go-ahead to develop a plan along those lines.[122]

The proposal had historical and practical appeal. Supply Technicians had a functional home in the Logistics Branch and shared a common RCOC heritage. It was also the largest trade in the Canadian Forces and with a tri-service flavour post-Unification had the most diverse range of employment across the environments. It offered the most likely source to fill the ranks of CFPMD.[123] In September 1983 a CFPMD article in *The Maroon Beret*, the official magazine of the Canadian Airborne Regiment, anticipated the phased transfer of the parachute rigger specialty to the Supply Technician trade and looked forward to the challenges the new designation would bring.[124] The dis-unity experienced at Unification, in which the unit had remained under the purview of ADM(Mat) while the riggers themselves had harboured for fourteen years as an Air Force technical trade, was about to be remedied. With little fanfare, the Parachute Rigger Specialty returned to the Logistics Branch on 2 January 1984 and riggers began the remustering process to the Supply Technician trade. Instructors from the Canadian Forces School of Administration and Logistics (CFSAL) in Borden, Ontario, traveled to

---

[122] R.D. Amos, email to author, 25 February 2008.

[123] *Ibid.*

[124] "CFPMD," *The Maroon Beret* 7, No. 1 (September 1983): 28.

Edmonton to train the first two complements of supervisors, Master Warrant Officer to Corporals, at the basic tradesmen level for supply technicians between January and May 1984. In June nine privates attended initial supply technical training in Borden.[125] Course listings in the annual reports of the ensuing three years indicate that subsequent qualification levels were diligently pursued.

To ensure success, the Commanding Officer CFPMD made several recruiting trips to CFSAL and acted as the reviewing officer for a number of graduating supply technician courses. "This resulted early on in the recruiting of a number of new Supply Technicians into the Rigger fold."[126] Warrant Officer J.J.D. Renaud was one of the first to volunteer out of the new stream. He had joined the Canadian Forces in 1983 and was undergoing basic trades training in Borden when one of the instructors came into the classroom and asked if anyone in the room was interested in leaping out of airplanes. Approximately seven of the class jumped at the opportunity and were subsequently posted to Edmonton to undergo training as Parachute Riggers at CFPMD.[127]

The gradual decrease in regimental activities (despite the upsurge in MFP) during the 1980s and the alleviation of manning pressure following the transfer of rigger force generation to the supply trade allowed for a renewed focus on unit solidarity reminiscent of the 28 COD experience. The sentiment of belonging to a unique military service support culture was pervasive amongst the rigger community and the unit was seen by its members as one large family. The social element was a compelling component of unit

---

[125] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1984. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 2.

[126] R.D. Amos, email to author, 25 February 2008.

[127] J.J.D. Renaud, email to author, 26 February 2008.

life. CFPMD was a low-porosity unit, small in numbers and with little turn-over of personnel, that nurtured well-established traditions dating from the war years. A strong sense of history and relevance was ingrained during the three stages of rigger training conducted in-house throughout the unit's existence. New arrivals were inculcated in the lore of this insular and isolated capability and their service perpetuated the reality. In 1989, the Noel Gay tune "There's Something About a Soldier", a favorite of the bugle and drum band of the fifties and sixties, was approved as the official unit March Past.[128] A professional culture grounded in an uncompromising pursuit of excellence and a collective pride born of success at work and play engendered the fierce loyalty of almost all who served under its canopy. The unsolicited proposals from civilian industry during the early 1990s to take over the parachute support capability came as a shock to the collaborative culture and sensibilities of the specialty.

Irvin Industries had a longstanding professional relationship with the military stemming from the provision of personnel parachutes during the Second World War.[129] The close relationship and Irvin's monopoly on the industry in Canada was insidious. Beyond the two or three civilian positions in Maintenance, retired riggers wishing to remain employed in their field of expertise had little choice but to work for Irvin. As a result, the depot was keenly sensitized to perceptions of conflict of interest and unbending in its assertions that the quality control of parachutes and related equipment received off-contract from civilian industry must be completely transparent. In this

---

[128] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1989. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 2.

[129] Airborne Systems Canada, "Airborne Systems Canada History," http://airbornesystemscanada.com/history.html; internet; accessed 22 April 2008.

general context the repeat proposals, seen as "hostile take-over bids" by many at the depot, were corrosive.

At the culmination of Gallien's military career following three decades of service as a rigger he was appointed as the Command Chief ADM(Mat) from 1992 to 1996. It was early in his tenure when the first proposal arrived at the executive floors of the headquarters in the form of an official visit by an Irvin representative. Presenting the industry position on behalf of the company was a former Safety Systems Technician who had risen to be the Senior Parachute Rigger for a three-year period in the first half of the 1980s and was now, by all appearances, supporting if not leading the unsolicited attempts by Irvin to take over the depot. Consulted by ADM(Mat), Lieutenant-General R. Fischer, Gallien explained the role of the unit, the scope of services it provided and how it worked. "I left the general's office after twenty minutes or so and didn't hear anything about the proposal again."[130] During this same timeframe Gedge, a former depot Commanding Officer, was working for the Chief of Supply as a civilian. His comments were also sought regarding contracting out parachute packing and maintenance to Irvin. Gedge wrote a strong rebuttal highlighting conflict of interest and the demise of the ultimate quality control measure of packers being active parachutists as the essential detractors to the proposal.[131] The collective efforts of the rigger community at large were successful in retaining parachute support within the military. Despite the trend for logistics of the day, the capability did not go to contract. However, another battle would not be long in coming.

---

[130] J.R. Gallien, interview with author, 22/23 February 2008.

[131] G.P. Gedge, email to author, 24 January 2008.

The next unsolicited privatization proposal put forth by Irvin Industries Canada Limited instigated an in-depth study in 1994 by Consulting and Audit Canada. No decision was rendered.[132] Pressure was being levied on National Defence from the political sphere as well as from civilian industry to reduce costs. The decade of darkness had fallen on the Canadian Forces and CFPMD was not immune to the ubiquitous sweep of defence budget reductions. The attention aroused by repeated external interest in the military's parachute support capability guaranteed that this small and oft-ignored entity would not be overlooked. The compound effect of these external forces resulted in a 1995 Most Efficient Organization study that forced the unit to drastically downsize from it's previous strength of fifty-four all ranks and five civilians to a 1996 establishment of forty-one, including three civilians.[133] Significant that it was, it was but one of a myriad of changes to effect the unit in 1996, the year after the closure of the Canadian Airborne Regiment. 1996 witnessed the move of the depot from Edmonton to Trenton, the implementation of the supply restructure hinted to at the move of the depot from Shilo to Edmonton a quarter-century earlier, and the implementation of an expanded role in support of Search and Rescue (SAR). Then, on 16 December 1996, CFPMD officially commenced the NDHQ directed Alternate Service Delivery (ASD) process, and all of the previous year's activities paled in the harsh light of the Commanding Officer's startling premonition that 1997 would be a year in which even greater events could decide the very existence of CFPMD.[134] Such tumult was not unprecedented, but it did not precisely

---

[132] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot – 1994, DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 3.

[133] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1996. DHH File 1326-3605, Volume 1.

[134] *Ibid*.

mirror the turmoil ongoing within the airborne community. Not until the move to Trenton in 1996 did the parachute training and support organizations briefly align.

Defence Expenditure Review 1994, a Canadian government policy directive, predicated the move of the depot and the airborne training centre (formally known as the Canadian Airborne Center or CABC) from Edmonton to Trenton.[135] Left behind with supporting and supported Air Force elements in Edmonton when the Regiment was shunted away to Petawawa in 1977, both units were now slated to move to Ontario with the announcement that all Air Force assets, including the transport planes so crucial to parachuting operations, would be relocated in order to make room for 1 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group. The Brigade was being ousted from its home station upon closure of Canadian Forces Base Calgary.[136] A ditty popularized in the Officers Mess during this period and sung to the tune of "Goodnight Sweetheart" captures the political undertones.

> Goodbye Calgary, well it's time to go.
> The Liberals took the polls by storm.
> Too bad for you, you voted Reform.
> Goodbye Calgary, goodbye.[137]

A large air force hub, Trenton was the most logical base to become the new home of CFPMD and CABC due to the concentration of transport lift required for full-spectrum

---

[135] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1994. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 3.

[136] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1996. DHH File 1326-3605, Volume 1; and Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report The Canadian Parachute Centre - 1996. DHH File 1326-3526, Volume 1.

[137] Written and performed by the Subalterns of 1 Service Battalion, this jingle won the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadian's) and 1 Service Battalion Officers Mess Barbershop Quartette Contest Spring 1996. Subsequently, it became the "anthem" of the move.

parachute training and operations. Over the summer of 1996, CFPMD moved into a brand-new state-of-the-art customized facility,[138] its first truly new infrastructure since 1943. Unlike the move from Shilo to Edmonton in 1970, this time there was no need to plead for an operational pause. Dispersed across the country following the disbandment of the Airborne Regiment, the parachute companies in the light infantry battalions were busy organizing themselves and "jump" training was temporarily suspended to allow for CABC's move and stand-up as the Canadian Parachute Centre (CPC). Interestingly, the term "airborne" was conspicuously absent from the new name but its functions and structures endured largely unchanged. CFPMD's new infrastructure accounted for the expanded depot supply mandate, as well as accommodating the continuing diversification of support to air operations in the fields of aerial delivery/air drop and SAR. The new building was commissioned on 1 November 1996 to coincide with the unit's 46th Anniversary.

Conceived in concept at the time of the move of 28 CFSD from Shilo to Edmonton in 1970, it was not until 1993 that the supply warehousing project, dubbed "Rigger Restore," designed to consolidate the entire 1670 NATO stock class (all parachute and air drop related equipment) under control of CFPMD was finally instigated.[139] Significant strides were made over the next two years[140] and the project was completed in late December 1996. Previously resources had been scattered between

---

[138] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1996. DHH File 1326-3605, Volume 1.

[139] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1993. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 3.

[140] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1994. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 3; and Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1995. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 3.

the parachute depot and two of the general Supply Depots (7 and 25 CFSD).[141] This centralization had been intended to improve accountability and management of parachute related materiel, but soon lapses in supply discipline due to lack of experience and the primacy of parachute production became problematic.

That same December, Operation Assurance, which was a Canadian led initiative to alleviate a pending humanitarian disaster in Zaire, provided occasion for CFPMD to demonstrate flexibility and operational responsiveness. On extremely short notice, the unit packed and made ready all available cargo parachute resources to use in possible aerial delivery drops of humanitarian supplies to support the refugee crisis.[142] Cargo packing of this scope would be undertaken again at the turn of the millennium and then not again until December 2007 in support of operations in Afghanistan.[143]

Unit led initiative also saw Canadian Forces-wide coverage extended into the SAR community. Following the inroads made by parachute riggers involved with SAR parachute trials conducted in British Columbia in the early 1990s,[144] the staffing process to create positions for two parachute rigger qualified supply technicians in each of the SAR Squadrons throughout Canada came to fruition with a successful trial at 442 Search

---

[141] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1996. DHH File 1326-3605, Volume 1.

[142] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1996. DHH File 1326-3605, Volume 1.

[143] Cargo packing of the same scope was undertaken throughout Autumn 1999 in preparation for a potential domestic "Y2K" disaster. (Recollection of author, 2IC Support Company 1999-2002.) In December of 2007, Support Company received an immediate operational requirement demand for cargo parachutes for Task Force Afghanistan. This required a significant re-prioritization and re-allocation of packers and riggers to meet the shipping deadline. (G.J. Strome, conversation with author, 16 January 2007.)

[144]Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1990. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 3.

and Rescue Squadron in Comox in 1996.[145] With Air Command's approval, remaining Squadrons were staffed with riggers by 1998.[146] Parachute support to SAR activities soon expanded to include maintenance of the SAR parachute, a unique static-line square configuration. CFPMD guaranteed a 30-day turnaround on all repairs. The arrangement met with such success that DND did not renew its maintenance contract, worth approximately two million dollars, with private industry. Civilian industry routinely took several months to perform the same tasks that the depot now assumed.[147] With the service provided by CFPMD clearly surpassing that offered by industry, "contracting out" was a particularly low blow.

Alternate Service Delivery so fundamentally undermined the very core of the military's service support ethos that a decade later the logistics community at large is still reeling from the impact of unintended consequence. To the rigger community, the impact was calamitous. Compounding industry pressure to go commercial, there was now a formal NDHQ-driven methodology to systematically examine the option of "contracting out" all or part of the depot's functions.[148] The June 1996 revised proposal from Irvin was assessed within this ASD methodology. Without substantively addressing any of the concerns of the early proposals, the industry initiative was now conferred a legitimacy it had not previously enjoyed. To the institution, the proposal appeared

---

[145] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1996. DHH File 1326-3605, Volume 1.

[146] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1997. DHH File 1326-3605, Volume 1.

[147] *Ibid.*

[148] Major D.C.M. Zientek, Commanding Officer, letter to CWO J.R. Gallien (Retired), 31 April 1998. From the private collection of J.R. Gallien.

palatable. It spoke to efficiencies and recent contracting precedents within the American and British systems that were as yet untested but soon afterwards found wanting. To CFPMD the proposal was seen as an affront to the Canadian parachute support culture and ethos. Summarizing this conviction on a facsimile covering sheet accompanying the submission of unit observations and concerns regarding the most recent Irvin proposal, Major D.C.M. Zientek, the incumbent Commanding Officer CFPMD wrote:

> You will notice that I have not commented on the jump requirement for Riggers [with respect to] the quality assurance or quality control issue. This is due to the fact that we have discussed it in the past and believe that it is necessary, but with any emotive issue it can be discussed at length. It is an issue best understood by paratroopers. My only comment at this time is that we are, not the UK Forces, not the US nor any other force for that matter. We are Canadian, and our system should reflect who we are not what we might be. Our record stands, and our motto stands, and our Riggers put their life on the line each and every time they jump, and until men grow wings parachutes will be needed.[149]

The Market Feasibility Assessment prepared by Performance Management Network Inc. as part of the ASD process was presented to DND on 8 July 1997. It concluded that it was "a feasible, competitive and viable alternative for the private sector to manage and operate a parachute maintenance depot."[150] For the Logistics Branch, buckling under unrelenting pressure to pursue desperate budget cuts regardless of second and third order effects, it was enough. The newly appointed Director General Logistics, Brigadier-General L.M. Lashkevich, expressed reservations. While it was clear that from a materiel perspective, parachute packing and maintenance could be provided by civilian industry, there were also "core" military requirements to guarantee reliable parachute

---

[149] D.C.M. Zientek, Fax, 21 June 1996. From Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot ASD Information File Volume 1*, 1995-1997. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

[150] Performance Management Network Inc., *Market Feasibility Assessment Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot (CFPMD)*, 8 July 1997, ii. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

supply and field rigging capabilities.[151] With incredible pressure from government for the CF to down-size and exploit civilian industry, there was the perception that "our National-level ADM(Mat) elders were about to sell the farm."[152] If the parachute support capability was to survive, the solution was going to have to come, in a fashion antithetic to parachuting, from the ground upwards.

The answer came, unsurprisingly, from the Army's airborne community. Harbouring a subtle resentment harkening back to the depot's transfer to the RCOC in 1950, and FMC's unsuccessful attempt to re-absorb the parachute support capability in 1970, a friendly rivalry between supporting and supported had been encouraged. Competitions between CFPMD and CABC over size of lettering announcing unit identity on building fronts and height of flagpoles, frequently won by the depot, were legend and often met with the retort "one day we'll get you – one day you will belong to us."[153] In the once-benign banter now came the hint of salvation.

Historic and intrinsic functional links had always existed been the two communities. During the unsolicited industry proposals of the early 1990s and preparations for the move from Edmonton to Trenton there had been cross-talk between CFPMD, CABC and their superiors at ADM(Mat) and Land Force Command on the potential for the Army to take over the school as they continued to be the depot's biggest customer. Although CFPMD dependencies continued to evolve and expand, it was not in the interests of either unit to highlight this reality at such a tenuous moment. There was

---

[151] L.M. Lashkevich, interview with author, 18 February 2008.

[152] R.J. Powell, email to author, 2 February 2008.

[153] J.R. Gallien, interview with author, 22/23 February 2008.

common concern regarding the consequences if the ASD initiative was allowed to continue. To lose quality control over rigger training and parachute packing and maintenance was unacceptable to those who viewed it as a core capability. There was a sense that the rigger pledge of "I Will Be Sure Always" would get lost in translation to the corporate motto of "profit generation above all."[154] The concepts of safety and perfection elemental to the parachute rigger profession were so culturally ingrained in the paratrooper psyche that preservation instincts overrode pedantics.

In July 1997, in collaboration with his counterpart at CFPMD, the Commanding Officer at the Canadian Parachute Centre submitted a proposal for the amalgamation of CPC and CFPMD. Issues that did little to engender military confidence were starting to arise regarding the strength of the industry position such that an internal solution was welcomed by senior commanders within ADM(Mat) and the Army.[155] Consequently, the proposal for amalgamation was accepted in January of 1998. The ASD project was terminated with the expected savings realized in the transfer of positions from the Logistics Branch to the Army and in economies resulting from the merger.[156] In his request for Ministerial Authority to officially disband CFPMD as a unit of the Canadian Forces, ADM(Mat) P. Lagueux wrote:

---

[154] D.C.M. Zientek, email to author, 19 February 2008.

[155] L.M. Lashkevich, interview with author, 18 February 2008 and D.C.M. Zientek, email to author 19 February 2008. There were concerns that Irvin Industries Canada, located in an economically depressed area of Ontario, needed the contract to avert bankruptcy. They have since been bought out by Airborne Systems, a large parachute supplier conglomerate.

[156] *Transfer Implementation Plan for the Amalgamation of the Canadian Forces Parachtue Maintenance Depot and The Canadian Parachute Centre,* February 1998; and *Request Authorization to Disband the Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot (CFPMD)*, file no. 1901-ASD (D Sup 2), February 1998. From Department of National Defence, *CFPMD/CPC Amalgamation Files*, 1995-1998. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

> In January 1998, Chief of Land Staff (CLS) and I agreed to the LFC proposal to amalgamate CFPMD with CPC. This decision implies that LFC will be taking over the responsibility to provide the parachute support service [to the CF].[157]

CFPMD would be disbanded and the riggers would submit to a further organizational distillation as they were incorporated as Support Company, CPC.[158] The decision, a painful compromise to so proud a unit, preserved the integrity of the unit to the maximum extent possible and was "a sound decision all things being considered."[159] Orphaned by its logistics brethren, parachute support had again been entrusted to the Army. Major D.C.M. Zientek, the Commanding Officer at disbandment, penned an apposite conclusion to CFPMD's last historical report:

> The final chapter of the unit's 47-year history has been written. It is re-assuring to know that the rigger core competencies will be maintained in the CF. At the same time, it is somehow disheartening to see the unit leave the CF order of battle after establishing and maintaining a tradition of excellence and safety second to none. Its affiliation to the Airborne community instilled in its members a distinctive esprit de Corps that reflected its "can do" attitude and high standard of physical fitness. Its disappearance is only so indicative of a growing and unfortunate trend in today's military: that of financial considerations taking precedence over military institutions and traditions…[160]

The parade that fractured the depot's autonomy was held on 26 May 1998. Ironically, not nine months earlier a special badging ceremony had been held to acknowledge the unique professional identity of the parachute support community. Incessant efforts by the unit over a number of decades had finally resulted in the approval of a distinctive rigger

---

[157] *Request Authorization to Disband the Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot (CFPMD)*, file no. 1901-ASD (D Sup 2), February 1998. From Department of National Defence, *CFPMD/CPC Amalgamation Files*, 1995-1998. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

[158] Major D.C.M. Zientek, Commanding Officer, letter to CWO J.R. Gallien (Retired), 31 April 1998. From the private collection of J.R. Gallien; and Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1997. DHH File 1326-3605, Volume 1.

[159] L.M. Lashkevich, interview with author, 18 February 2008.

[160] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot - 1997. DHH File 1326-3605, Volume 1.

qualification insignia to be worn above the left breast pocket on the dress tunic and jump smock of all qualified parachute riggers.[161] With their new "rigger wings" proudly displayed, the depot soldiers witnessed the lowering of the Logistics Branch and ADM(Mat) flags and marched back into packing hangar to resume production. The peculiarities of their legacy had bequeathed an organizational and functional resiliency that would continue to define the rigger experience into the next millennium.

Within the appreciable decline of the Airborne Regiment from 1980 onwards, the dilution of the parachute capability amongst the light infantry battalions in 1995, the indignities of ASD to the parachute support capability, and the cooperative amalgam of CFPMD within CPC, is a requiem to the vagaries of an institutional hierarchy that failed to voice a comprehensive vision for Canada's airborne forces. Agitated by systemic uncertainty and viscerally familiar with the connivances that led to the subordination of the parachute support depot, CPC was anything but smug towards the neoteric group of parachute packers and riggers in the years immediately following amalgamation.

CHAPTER 6 – The "Back to the Army" Era: 1998 to 2007

In a singularly hazardous profession, where mitigation of risk is ingrained in practice and principle, there must have been a keen appreciation of the danger lurking in the salvation offered when five decades after its genesis during the Second World War, the parachute support capability was again subsumed by the Army. This was no panacea, and with the specter of budget cuts still looming, implementing strategic vision, had there been one, and had it included a viable role for parachute forces, was a luxury none could afford. Not even the Army. Newly linked by circumstance and design, the vestiges of

[161] *Ibid*.

the parachuting community embodied in CPC and its ensconced support echelon fought back-to-back in the next battle for survival that materialized in 1999 in the form of *The Parachute Capability Study*. The peril to the rigger community during this period was annihilation by association. However, such is the burden of intimate affiliation. Suspended in an uncertainty perpetuated by the NDHQ directed study until the late Spring 2001 the riggers did what riggers do best and focused on production. Fortunately, there was no shortage of work. Support Company was busy with SAR demands, higher than anticipated packing requirements for two of the three light infantry battalions and the task of bringing a new generation of military freefall parachutes into service. The shocking events of 11 September 2001 sparked a renewed interest in military parachute capabilities. Canadian Forces (CF) Transformation would provide the impetus for CPC to pursue a visionary new approach to training. With the unit headquarters justly preoccupied with garnering the attention of an Army staff attenuated by constant change, a gradual and subtle marginalization of the parachute support capability was hardly surprising. Today, Support Company is buried in an Army unit under successive layers of superior headquarters, with no logistics champion or institutional oversight, struggling to embrace the flexibility and responsiveness demanded by its customers and a maturing mandate. The current desolation may well feel comfortably familiar, but for a brief time in recent memory the training and support echelons of the winged warrior class banded together to secure a collective reprieve.

In 1999 the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff instigated a review of the CF parachute capability. The intent of *The Parachute Capability Study* was plain. "Translated for us dumb jumpers by NDHQ staff to mean 'get rid of the parachute

capability,'"[162] the unit found itself on familiar footing at the edge of the abyss. The CPC command team, concerned with the study's premeditated short sightedness and utterly convinced of their future relevance, took a collaborative approach to countering the threat. Support Company input figured prominently in the synchronized effort. Atypical of many of his contemporary combat arms commanders, Lieutenant-Colonel P.M. Bartlett had a keen appreciation of the breadth and scope of service provided by his indigenous support organization. The persuasiveness of the unit position hinged on a diagram that captured, in colour-coded circles, the significance of removing various components of the parachute capability; green for Army, light blue for Air Force, purple for rigger and support tasks. The preponderance of purple spoke volumes without words.[163] The study concluded that mass drops into non-permissive environments were no longer a requirement for the Land Force. It also concluded that the ability to respond to a Major Air Disaster, an explicit expectation of the Government, is essential. SAR capabilities were never contested.[164] Based on these conclusions, the options, heavily influenced by input from CPC, were formulated and refined. Each of the potential courses of action acquiesced to the requirement for an enduring parachute support capability in some measure. Only one of these options saw the continuance of CPC in any semblance of its current configuration. In the others the Army centre of excellence was eliminated and the parachute support capability transferred to the Chief of the Air

---

[162] D.L. Cowling, email to author, 27 February 2008.

[163] *Ibid*.

[164] Department of National Defence, *Briefing Note for the CLS*, prepared by LCol P.M. Bartlett, CO CPC, 12 April 2001. From Department of National Defence, *Transformation Files*, Support Company, CPC, 2000-2005. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Staff.[165] For the rigger community, recognition of its relevance under such circumstances was a double-edged sword. Corporate knowledge was lost to the corporation; only the initiated still felt the sting of the Safety Systems and ASD eras. The Air Force position was succinct: "If the CPC is eliminated, these functions would have to be assumed by the Air Force, or contracted out."[166] When Armed Forces Council (AFC), the CF's senior decision-making body, met in the late Spring 2001 there were essentially five courses of action. It could choose one of the three presented options, it could defer a decision, or it could discard the study.[167] AFC did the latter. This was preservation, not progress and for the time being it was enough. It had been a defining journey for the parachuting conglomerate. It would not long before a bygone wariness returned.

The renewed interest in parachuting following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 reinvigorated the operational focus of the Centre.[168] This, in concert with sweeping institutional transformation across the military, provided a powerful incentive for CPC to re-invent itself. Unit headquarters was soon immersed in plans to solidify the unit's footing by seeking to expand CPC's training mandate from the traditional parachuting and aerial delivery operations to include training in complex terrain such as mountains, deserts, and the arctic as well as for special capabilities

---

[165] *Ibid*, and Department of National Defence, *Briefing Note for the CAS: CF Parachute Capability Requirement*, prepared by LCol R.B. Hanna, D Air FE 3, 27 March 2001. From Department of National Defence, *Transformation Files*, Support Company, CPC, 2000-2005. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

[166] R.B. Hanna, *Briefing Note for the CAS*...

[167] P.M. Bartlett, *Briefing Note for the CLS*...

[168] Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report The Canadian Parachute Centre – 2001, DHH File 1326-3526, Volume 1; and Canadian Forces, Annual Historical Report The Canadian Parachute Centre – 2002, DHH File 1326-3526, Volume 1.

including air transported, airmobile and amphibious forces.[169] In a significant departure from the collaborative approach taken to fend off *The Parachute Capability Study*, CPC headquarters pursued special warfare centre status as a largely unilateral effort. The responsibilities that Support Company had across the services were significantly under-represented during this period. From 2003 onwards the preoccupation with transitioning to an Advanced Warfare school and the corresponding transfer of command authority from Land Force Central Area (LFCA) to Land Force Doctrine and Training System (LFDTS) incrementally alienated the Support Company from the rest of the unit. By the time the unit transferred to LFDTS on 1 April 2005 with the new name Canadian Forces Land Advanced Warfare Centre (CFLAWC) the common ground nurtured during the amalgamation in 1998 and ensuing efforts to preserve a CF parachute capability had eroded. Support Company, CFLAWC, the CF parachute depot, was now a sub-unit to a unit embedded within the Army training system, maintaining its long-time direct technical links to the Directorate of Technical Airworthiness and Engineering Support and the CF supply system without institutional oversight of its logistics functions. Under-resourced to meet the challenges of an emergent generation of support dependencies, including the special operations community, and to reconcile significant material acquisition and accountability shortcomings within the depot supply functions, Support Company petitions went unrecognized and unsupported.[170] The parachute

---

[169] Department of National Defence, *Service Paper on the Transition of the Canadian Parachute Centre to a Special Warfare Centre*, prepared by Capt D.M.G. Beatty, Adjutant CPC, 13 January 2003; and Department of National Defence, *Service Paper – Precision Parachute Capabilities and their Potential Employment in the Land Force*, Prepared by LCol R.B. Ewing, CO CPC, 29 June 2005. From Department of National Defence, *Transformation Files*, Support Company, CPC, 2000-2005. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

[170] D.A. Smith, interview with author, 7 February 2008.

support organization, focused on remedying internal processes in order to better support pure parachute applications across the CF, was nested within an organization with an increasingly diversified training mandate in which parachute training was only one component. Major D.A. Smith, Officer Commanding Support Company from 2005-2007, focused his tenure in command on improving depot supply functions and educating "anyone who would listen" on the parachute support capability.

Supply processes had degraded to the point that parachutes were being shipped across the country without the obligatory material accountability records being maintained. Consequently, there was no visibility of where parachute assets were located in the system at any given time and the management of the parachute fleet was becoming increasingly problematic. Persistent manning shortages had led to a general neglect of depot supply functions and personnel were routinely shifted to packing and maintenance functions in order to meet production demands. Facilitated by institutional ambivalence, supply expertise within the unit was quickly outpaced by updates to automated systems. Smith had been briefed by his predecessor about the Quarterly Materiel Management and Distribution Steering Committee run by Director of Supply Chain Operations (DSCO) within ADM(Mat). Brigadier-General (Retired) Lashkevich, now a civilian Director General in ADM(Mat), was a key member of the Steering Committee, and with his corporate knowledge of the move of the parachute support capability to the Army in 1998, was sympathetic to Support Company's plight. Smith presented his case to the committee and Support Company was added to the national level bar coding project and received technical advice in the form of a visiting DSCO team. "[The technical assistance visit] was invaluable. It made up for the lack of internal supply knowledge and

experience."[171] The DSCO team set up systems, wrote manuals, and conducted training with newly assigned supply staff. A proposal was submitted to augment the number of dedicated supply technicians within Support Company. Although buoyed by the success of unit driven initiatives to improve depot supply functions, external petitions to increase the manning failed to penetrate successive layers of higher headquarters within the Army.[172] Internal offsets were required to maintain the momentum achieved by the company's supply re-engineering efforts. In a fashion reminiscent of the past, the depot contrived its own successes and continued to establish and nurture working relationships with parachute users from across the CF.

The reprieve from the decades of the persistent march, counter-march of the airborne and parachute support communities proffered by *The Parachute Capability Study* was short lived. The assimilation of CFPMD within CPC in 1998 and the subsequent divergence of interests as the training and support mandates evolved along separate paths led to a tenuous co-existence that endures to this day. Bereft of strategic direction and conditioned to survive and excel in an atmosphere of perpetual angst, the parachute support capability continues to embody excellence in obscurity.

CHAPTER 7 – Conclusion: On the Winds of Will and Whimsy

The oscillations and machinations of the military parachute support capability in Canada exemplify the paucity of strategic vision that has plagued the larger Canadian airborne experience. Without an enduring credible role, airborne forces have languished

---

[171] *Ibid.*

[172] *Ibid.*

and prospered on the winds of will and whimsy; frequently tapped as a political expedient in a fluctuating and evolving defence climate. Allied impetus during the Second World War spurred the creation of 1 Can Para Bn and a parachute training centre in Shilo, Manitoba. Following the disbandment of the battalion in 1945, #1 Airborne Research and Development Centre, and later the JAS and CJATC provided the foundation for permanent force airborne units. These organizations all succumbed to the nemesis of ill-defined treats and nebulous mandates. The Canadian SAS Company was short-lived. The MSF was systematically undermined as Defence of Canada proclivities were eschewed in favour of commitments to NATO and the UN. The DCF was merely a nominal way to appease the Americans regarding existing security commitments for the defence of North America. In the mid-1960s, an upsurge in American interest in the strategic mobility of airborne forces reinvigorated a Canadian focus on a force able to deploy rapidly around the globe. The resultant organization, the Canadian Airborne Regiment, was emasculated by an elusive mandate that ultimately led to its demise in 1995. The parachute companies that emerged from the ashes of the Airborne Regiment were never intended to be phoenix-like. They were the minimum needed to preserve an Army parachuting capability. With the insatiable need to generate troops for ongoing operations in Afghanistan, the parachute companies now frequently find themselves depleted and re-tasked as conventional infantry.

The circuitous inheritance of the parachute support capability is a reflection of this disjointed experience. Conceived of the Army in 1943, the packing and maintenance functions migrated to the RCOC in 1950 and later transitioned to ADM(Mat) at Unification in 1968. For the next sixteen years, riggers were generated from the Air

Force before a protracted manning crisis culminated in the assignment of the rigger specialty to the Logistics Branch in 1984. Caught up in the defence budget cuts and the Alternate Service Delivery initiative of the 1990s, the capability teetered on the eve of uncertain tomorrows until it drifted back to the Army in 1998. An amorphous creature, the parachute support capability has submitted to three significant geographical dislocations, Shilo 1943-1970, Edmonton 1970-1996, Trenton 1996-present, in addition to innumerable name changes. Incongruities in the two experiences resonate with dissonance and reveal a fundamental disconnect between capabilities that should be inherently aligned. As airborne forces were marginalized from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s the parachute support capability was cultivated and aggrandized. Conversely, as the Canadian Airborne Regiment roused the airborne capability from its stupour, the parachute support organization was debilitated by the effects of Unification. The evolution of the parachute support capability unhinged by strategic cohesion and without synchronization has lent itself to a modest diversification and the gradual assimilation of a wider spectrum of support dependencies. Its destiny is both disparate from and intrinsic to the Army's future.

From the outset, the CF packing and maintenance organization provided the functional support underpinnings of the Canadian Airborne experience. In the following decades its mandate expanded to encompass a broader range of customers and roles. Faced with the realities of the contemporary operating environment and latter-order effects of CF Transformation, the parachute support organization grapples with the emergent demands of a new generation of support dependencies weighted heavily toward Special Operations and aerial delivery applications.

Impoverished by a legacy of visionary ambivalence at the institutional level yet grounded in grass-roots relevance derived of historical and contemporary necessity, the parachute support organization, now resident in the Army's joint warfare centre, provides the Canadian Forces (CF) with a resident and robust capability. The challenge of sustaining operations in the modern non-contiguous battle space spurns the systemic neglect of parachute support and demands institutional patronage of this remote yet vital entity. The hard reality of the requirement for a parachute capability is born out in the modern non-contiguous battlespace, where lines of communication are stretched, operations are dispersed, and there is no safe "rear" area. Combat logistics patrols are increasingly in harm's way as they fight supplies through using ground transport. Resultantly, as Major-General D.J.R.S. Benjamin, Commander Canadian Operational Support Command (CANOSCOM), identified, "we need to find other means to do logistics resupply."[173] Lieutenant-Colonel J. Conrad commented on his tenure as a logistics commander in Afghanistan that "Kandahar is the white-hot anvil upon which many timeless truths are being hammered out for the Canadian Forces (CF)."[174] Delivery of supplies and soldiers by air is one of those modern truths. Tellingly, there is now widespread acceptance of the requirement for precision airdrop and enhanced aerial delivery options. The Vice Chief of the Defence Staff has recently provided unifying direction on a deliberate way ahead in an effort to synchronize Army and Air Force

---

[173] D.J.R.S. Benjamin, interview with author, 10 April 2008.

[174] LCol John Conrad, "We Three Hundred: Logistics Success in the New Security Environment," Chapter 14 in *In Harm's Way The Buck Stops Here: Senior Commanders on Operations*, edited by Col Bernd Horn (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 257.

efforts in this area.[175] In the Canadian Special Operations Forces (CANSOF) community, parachuting is a growth industry. There is increasing demand for training and innovation in military freefall and static line parachuting techniques.[176] These emerging requirements rely on the expertise and services provided by Support Company. Integral to the process from initial trials and evaluations through to receipt of new technologies off-contract and assembly, inspection, packing and maintenance of parachute and airdrop systems, the parachute support organization is a niche technical service provider. The traditional paradigm in which the Army was the predominant dependent of the parachute support capability is shifting. In addition to precision aerial delivery and special operations applications, parachuting within the Search and Rescue (SAR) community continues to evolve relying on the integral support of riggers and the life-cycle management of parachute systems by Support Company. Riggers have deployed to Afghanistan to support Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and Aerial Delivery operations.

Simultaneously, CF Transformation has seen the consolidation within CANOSCOM of all national supply depots that provide support to operations, less parachute support. Initially overlooked in the functional review of support capabilities, the argument could be made that the time is right for the parachute support capability to migrate once again from the Army to the logistics community. There is, however, little

---

[175] Department of National Defence, *Acquisition of Minimum Viable Capability – CJ-PADSS,* Vice Chief of the Defence Staff: file 1950-1 (D Mil CM 5), 30 January 2008.

[176] CANSOF Representatives, confidential interviews with author, March 2008.

appetite on the part of ADM(Mat)[177] or CANOSCOM[178] to subsume parachute support. ADM(Mat), as a national strategic level maker of materiel accountability policy and centralized equipment acquisition agency, no longer has the mandate to provide direct control of support capabilities since the formation of CANOSCOM. CANOSCOM does not need to own a capability so long as that capability is delivered. There is both precedent and mechanism for the Army to retain the capability. In terms of precedent, the Navy has been tasked as the lead environment with respect to Canadian Forces diving specialties. This includes functional authority over the Army's Combat Divers. Command influence and new infusions of government funding are breathing new life into material accountability mechanisms. ADM(Mat) is being aligned in order to provide centralized policy direction on material acquisition and accountability with scope for devolved authority and responsibility for compliance to be retained within the environments.[179] Among the senior serving military logisticians there is tacit acknowledgement of the need to elevate the capability in terms of institutional recognition in order to stem the legacy of indifference towards parachute support. Beyond branch parochialisms there is also respect for the primordial affiliation of the parachute support community to the land force, and an appreciation that perhaps parachute support is right where it is supposed to be – emboldened by the Army to provide a joint capability to the CF at large.

Like the Canadian airborne experience, parachute riggers have long been an anathema. Defying condemnation to obscurity, they have forged a core support

---

[177] L.M. Lashkevich, interview with author, 18 February 2008.

[178] D.J.R.S. Benjamin, interview with author, 10 April 2008.

[179] L.M. Lashkevich, interview with author, 18 February 2008.

capability and developed a resiliency borne of flexibility and foresight. The parachute support capability is poised for leverage against the exigencies of contemporary and future operating environments. Here, within this oxymoron of a logistics elite, indigenous to the Army, is a professional culture grounded in the uncompromised pursuit of excellence providing a vital capability across the CF at home and abroad. The service that engenders institutional abutment is clear. The parachute support capability deserves succor, not derision as the orphan of the bastard son. The legacy of this unique capability is unequivocal in its reflection of the strategic ambivalence that has afflicted the larger Canadian airborne experience.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Annual Historical Reports

Canada. Canadian Army. Annual Historical Report No 28 Central Ordnance Depot, RCOC - 1 November 1950 to 31 March 1951. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

Canada. Canadian Army. Annual Historical Report No 28 Central Ordnance Depot, RCOC - 1 April 1951 to 31 March 1952. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

Canada. Canadian Army. Annual Historical Report No 28 Central Ordnance Depot, RCOC - 1 April 1952 to 31 March 1953. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

Canada. Canadian Army. Annual Historical Reports No 28 Central Ordnance Depot, RCOC – 1953 to 1962 and 1965 to 1967. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

Canada. Canadian Forces. Annual Historical Reports No 28 Central Ordnance Depot, RCOC – 1968 and 1969. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1.

Canada. Canadian Forces. Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot – 1977 to 1987 and 1989. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 2.

Canada. Canadian Forces. Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot – 1990 to 1995. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 3.

Canada. Canadian Forces. Annual Historical Report Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot – 1996 and 1997. DHH File 1326-3605, Volume 1.

Canada. Canadian Forces. Annual Historical Report The Canadian Parachute Centre – 1996 to 2004. DHH File 1326-3526, Volume 1.

Documents, Reports, Websites

Airborne Systems Canada. “Airborne Systems Canada History.” http://airbornesystemscanada.com/history.html; Internet; accessed 22 April 2008.

Australia. Royal Australian Army. Report of Visit to 28 COD, RCOC, CFB Shilo, Manitoba, Canada, 5-15 September 1966 by Capt L.T. Towers, RAASC and Capt T.A. Tabart, RAASC. Dated 16 September 1966. DHH File 1326-1944, Volume 1, DHH Archives, Ottawa.

Canada. Canadian Army. *War Diary of A-35 Canadian Parachute Training Centre (formerly S-14 Canadian Parachute Training School), May 1943 – September 1945*. Library and Archives Canada: RG24-C-3. File No. 1286, Volumes 17137, 17138, and 17139.

Canada. Canadian Army. *Part I Order by Major R.F. Routh, T/Commanding S-14 Parachute Training School, Shilo Camp, Manitoba, Nos. 4-5, 28 May 1943*. Library and Archives Canada: RG24-C-3. File No. 1286, Volume 17137.

Canada. Canadian Army. *Part I Order by Major R.F. Routh, T/Commanding S-14 Parachute Training School, Shilo Camp, Manitoba, Nos. 25-28, 9 June 1943*. Library and Archives Canada: RG24-C-3. File No. 1286, Volume 17137.

Canada. Canadian Army. *Part I Order by Major R.F. Routh, T/Commanding S-14 Parachute Training School, Shilo Camp, Manitoba, Nos. 65-75, 25 June 1943*. Library and Archives Canada: RG24-C-3. File No. 1286, Volume 17137.

Canada. Canadian Army. *Part II Order by Major R.F. Routh, Commanding A-35 Canadian Parachute Training Centre, Shilo Camp, Manitoba, No. 87, 17 September 1943*. Library and Archives Canada: RG24-C-3. File No. 1286, Volume 17137.

Canada. Canadian Army. *Safety Equipment Technicians (SETs)*. Executive Sub-Committee Joint Air Policy Committee: file C.2-JAS-1(D/Comd), 12 September 1950. Library and Archives Canada: RG24-C-1-c. Box 305. File No. S-2001-98428.

Canada. Canadian Army. *Appreciation of the Situation by Major J.L. Cumerford at Shilo, Man at 0900 hrs on 20 Dec 55*. HQ Prairie Command: file PCS 5022-984/28 (Q), 6 January 1956. Library and Archives Canada: RG24-C-1-c. Box 305. File No. S-2001-98428.

Canada. Canadian Army. *Depot Operating Instructions for 28 Central Ordnance Depot, RCOC*. Dated 20 July 1966. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Canadian Forces. *Future Organization and Role – 28 CFSD*. 28 CFSD: File 7605-1 TD 8122 S-1901-0, 6 May 1970. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. Assorted Historical Summaries, undated. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Recognition of CF Parachute Rigger Specialist Skill Badge*. Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel): File 1060-33-1 (Log Br Adv), 28 June 1991. Library and Archives Canada: RG24-G-10-8-23. BAN No. 2002-01265-2, Box 2/3 CFPMD.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Canadian Forces Parachute Rigger wings Historical Perspective and Staff Notes for DCDS 26 February 1992*. Library and Archives Canada: RG24-G-10-8-23. BAN No. 2002-01265-2, Box 2/3 CFPMD.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Advance Copy: Amendment of CFAO 10-9 Supply Technician – Airborne Duty as a Parachute Packer and Parachute Rigger*. DSRO: File 1600-1 (DSRO 3-4), January 1993.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Service Paper on Project Rigger Restore*. CFPMD: File 10001-2(CO), 1 October 1993. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Briefing Note: Concept of Operations Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot (CFPMD)*. Prepared by Capt Q.M. Innis, DLR 9-8-2, 1993. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Our Job…Their Safety; Our Aim…Perfection CFPMD Information Package*, 12 January 1994. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Recognition of CF Parachtue Rigger Specialist Skill Badge*. Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel): File 1060-33-1 (Log Br Adv), 25 July 1995. Library and Archives Canada: RG24-G-10-8-23. BAN No. 2002-01265-2, Box 2/3 CFPMD.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *CFPMD Move Files*. Binder with emails, orders, correspondence. 1995-1996. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot ASD Information File Volume 1*. Binder of emails, correspondence, documents and directives. 1995-1997. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *CFPMD/CPC Amalgamation Files*. Binder with emails, documents and directives. 1995-1998. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *911.06 Parachute Rigger Positions for SARTECH Section*. 19 Wing: file 1920-1(WComd), 14 March 1996. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *CFPMD Move Administrative Instruction 001*. CFPMD: file 1902-1 (DCO), 8 May 1996. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Para Rigger Badge*. Director History and Heritage: File 1060-1 (DHH 3), 19 November 1996. Library and Archives Canada: RG24-G-10-8-23. BAN No. 2002-01265-2, Box 2/3 CFPMD.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *US Army – Aerial Delivery Operational Concept*. CFPMD: file 11670-1(CO), 22 October 1997. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Award of the Specialist Skill Badge: Rigger/Arrimeur to Qualified Parachute Riggers (911.06) within the Canadian Forces*. CFPMD: File 1060-1(CO), 2 December 1997. Library and Archives Canada: RG24-G-10-8-23. BAN No. 2002-01265-2, Box 2/3 CFPMD.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot Level 3 Business Plan for 1998-2003*. Dated 5 December 1997. Binder. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot ASD Information File Volume 2*. Binder of emails, correspondence, documents and directives. 1997. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *CFPMD Close Out Parade*. CFPMD: file 1310-1(CO), 21 May 1998. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *The Canadian Forces Parachute Capability Study Report*. Chief of Land Staff: file 1901-2 (DLFS 2-4), 18 May 2000.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Transformation Files*. Support Company, CPC. Binder of emails, orders, correspondence, briefing notes and service papers. 2000-2005. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *CLS Capability Development Planning Guidance – Light Forces*. Chief of Land Staff: file 3189-1(CLS), 8 July 2004.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Briefing Note: Employment of a Canadian Forces Parachute Rigger Specialist in DAES*. Prepared by Maj D.A. Smith, OC Sp Coy CFLAWC, 19 January 2007.

Canada. Department of National Defence. *Acquisition of Minimum Viable Capability – CJ-PADSS*. Vice Chief of the Defence Staff: file 1950-1 (D Mil CM 5), 30 January 2008.

Performance Management Network Inc. *Market Feasibility Assessment Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot (CFPMD)*, 8 July 1997. Support Company, CFLAWC Records.

MacKendrick, J.H. *History, Organization and Activities of 28 Central Ordnance Depot Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps*. Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1961. From the private collection of CWO J.R. Gallien (Retired). Viewed 22/23 February 2008.

McFetridge, Hal. "An Airman's Airborne Experience and Perspective." From the Private Collection of R.B. Edey, emailed to author, 15 January 2008.

Poitras, Therese M. Service Records 28 June 1943 to 9 April 1946. From the private collection of Mrs. Therese M. Beach (née Poitras). Photocopies provided to author.

Romanow, Walter I., et al. *War Diary of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion*. Calgary: Bunker to Bunker Books, 2006.

Zientek, D.C.M. (Major, Commanding Officer) Letter to CWO J.R. Gallien (Retired) 31 April 1998. From the private collection of CWO J.R. Gallien (Retired). Photocopy provided to author.

Personal Communications

Note: Interview Transcripts and hard copies of emails have been retained by the author.

Amos, R.D. (CO CFPMD 1981-1984). Emails to author, 15, 16 and 25 January 2008.

Beach, Mrs. Therese M. (nee Poitras, CWAC Parachute Packer/Rigger 1943-1945). Letter to author, 28 February 2008.

Benjamin, MGen D.J.R.S. (Comd CANOSCOM). Telephone interview with author (Ottawa, ON), 10 April 2008.

Bishop, Sgt Darrell (CFLAWC). Email to author, 17 March 2008.

Conrad, LCol John (CFC). Conversation with author, 14 February 2008.

Cowling, Dennis (OC Sp Coy CPC 1998-2001). Emails to author, 27 and 28 February 2008.

Daigneault, Fernand (CO CFPMD1974-1977). Email to author, 7 February 2008.

Davies, Col C.R.D. (DMGSP). Email to author, 14 February 2008.

de Vries, Jan (1 Can Para Bn). Conversation with author, 23 October 2007.

Edey R.B. (CF SPR 1969-1980). Emails to author, 13, 26, 28 and 29 January 2008 and 10 February 2008.

Firlotte, Robert B. (S-14 CPTC). Interview with author (Scarborough, ON), 17 February 2008.

Gallien, J.R. (CF SPR 1989-1992). Interviews with author (Ottawa, ON), 22 and 23 February 2008.

Gedge, Gordon (CO 28 CFSD/CFPMD 1970-1974). Emails to author, 24 and 31 January 2008.

Kilcup, MWO E.J. (CF SPR 2007-). Email to author 18 February 2008.

Lashkevick, L. (DGMSSC). Telephone interview with author (Ottawa, ON), 18 February 2008.

Lodder, WO M. (CFLAWC). Email to author, 18 February 2008.

Marsden, Monty (SPR 1966-1968). Email to author, 5 February 2008 and letters to author 12 and 14 February 2008.

Post, Capt L.W. (DTAES). Emails to author, 15 and 22 February 2008

Powell, R.J. (CO CFPMD 1984-1987). Email to author 2 February 2008.

Rafferty, L. (Widow of CO CFPMD 1987-1990). Email to author 2 February 2008.

Read, Angus (CO 28 COD 1965-1968). Telephone interview with author (Cobourg, ON), 12 February 2008.

Renaud, John (CFLAWC). Email to author, 26 February 2008.

Smith, D.A. (OC Sp Coy 2005-2007). Telephone interview with author (Edmonton, ON), 7 February 2008 and email to author, 8 February 2008.

Strome, G.J. (OC Sp Coy CFLAWC 2007-). Emails to author, 22 January 2008 and 14 and 20 February 2008.

Swain, I. (DSRO 1985-1987) Email to author, 4 February 2008.

Tudor, H. (CO 28 CFSD 1968-1970) Email to author, 7 February 2008.

Zientek, LCol D.C.M. (CO CFPMD 1995-1998) Email to author, 19 February 2008.

SECONDARY SOURCES

"28 CFSD 19th Anniversary: History of 28 Canadian Forces Supply Depot," *The Shilo Stag*, 13 November 1969.

Amaral, Rui and Mike Vernon. *Eat Your Weakest Man: Inside the Canadian Airborne Regiment.* Calgary: Bunker to Bunker Pub., 2000.

Beatty, Capt David M.G. "The Future of Parachute Operations," *Doctrine and Training: Canada's Professional Journal on Army Issues* 5, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 53-54.

Bercuson, David. *Significant Incident: Canada's Army, the Airborne, and the Murder in Somalia*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1996.

Canada. Materiel Command. "28 COD Anniversary Party," *The Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps Information Bulletin* 4, no. 4 (December 1965): 19-22.

Canada. Materiel Command. "[28 COD Update]," *The Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps Information Bulletin* 5, no. 3 (September 1966): 43.

Canada. Materiel Command. "28 COD Reports Again," *The Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps Information Bulletin* 5, no. 4 (December 1966): 19-26.

Canada. Materiel Command. "[28 COD Update]," *The Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps Information Bulletin* 6, no. 2 (June-September 1967): 47, 67.

Canada. National Defence. "Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot Celebrates its 45th Anniversary," *Logistics Newsletter* Issue 2 (1995): 20.

"CFPMD," *The Maroon Beret* 7, no. 1 (September 1983): 28.

Charters, David A. "Armed Forces and Political Purpose: Airborne Forces and the Canadian Army in the 1980s," Dissertation, University of New Brunswick, 1984.

Charters, David A. "Five Lost Years: The Mobile Striking Force 1946-1951." *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 7, no.1 (1978): 44-47.

Conrad, LCol John. "We Three Hundred: Logistics Success in the New Security Environment," Chapter 14 in *In Harm's Way The Buck Stops Here: Senior Commanders on Operations*, edited by Col Bernd Horn. Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007.

Conrad, Maj John. "Wind Without Rain: The Erosion of Canadian Logistics Thought Since The Hundred Days," Master's Thesis, Canadian Forces College, 2004.

Detomasi, David. "Operation Deliverance: the Canadian Airborne Regiment and the Somalia Peace Enforcement Mission." Toronto: Canadian Forces College National Security Studies Course Case Study, 1999.

Duggan, D.M. "Canadian Airborne Forces." Toronto: Canadian Forces Command and Staff Course New Horizons Paper, 1994.

Edey, CWO R.B. "Canadian Forces Parachute Maintenance Depot Celebrates 29 Years of Service," *The Maroon Beret* 5, no. 1 (March 1980).

Ewing, LCol R.B. "Precision Parachute Capabilities and their Potential Employment in the Canadian Forces," Master's Thesis, Royal Military College, 2007.

Hellyer, Paul. *Damn the Torpedos: My Fight to Unify Canada's Armed Forces.* Canada: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1990.

Hope, LCol Ian. "Reflections on Afghanistan: Commanding Task Force Orion," Chapter 11 in *In Harm's Way The Buck Stops Here: Senior Commanders on Operations*, edited by Col Bernd Horn. Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007.

Horn, Bernd. "A Military Enigma: The Canadian Special Air Service Company, 1948-1949," *Canadian Military History* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 21-30.

Horn, Bernd. *Bastard Sons: An Examination of Canada's Airborne Experience 1942-1995*. St. Catherine's: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2001.

Horn, Bernd and Michel Wyczynski. *Hook-Up! The Canadian Airborne Compendium: A Summary of Major Airborne Activities, Exercises and Operations, 1940-2000*. St. Catherine's: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2003.

Horn, Bernd and Michel Wyczynski. *In Search of Pegasus*. St. Catherine's: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2001.

Horn, Bernd and Michel Wyczynski. *Paras Versus The Reich: Canada's Paratroopers at War, 1942-45*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2003.

Huntington, Samuel P. "National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 80, no.5 (May 1954): 483-493.

Jayne, Andrew R. "The Future of Canadian Airborne Forces," Master's Thesis, Canadian Forces College, 2007.

Joyce, Kenneth H. *Snow Plough and the Jupiter Deception: The Story of the 1st Special Service Force and the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion, 1942-1945*. St Catherine's: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2006.

Loomis, D.G. *The Somalia Affair: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*. Ottawa: DGL Publications, 1996.

Low, Floyd. "Canadian Airborne Forces," Graduating Essay Bachelor of Arts, The University of Victoria, 1978.

Maloney, Sean M. "The Mobile Striking Force and Continental Defence 1948-1955," *Canadian Military History* 2, no. 2 (1993): 75-88.

Nolan, Brian. *Airborne: the Heroic Story of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion in the Second World War*. Toronto: Lester Publishing Limited, 1995.

Polunin, Nicholas. *Arctic Unfolding: Experiences and Observations during a Canadian Airborne Expedition in Northern Ungava, The Northwest Territories, and the Arctic Archipelago.* London: Hutchinson, 1949.

Russell, Ruth. *Proudly She Marched. Training Canada's World War II Women in Waterloo Country. Volume 1: Canadian Women's Army Corps*. Kitchener-Waterloo: Canadian Federation of University Women, 2006.

"Silken Prose," *The Maroon Beret* [Vol, no.] (May 1984): 26.

Smith, G.R. "Breaking Trail: Towards Relevant Canadian Parachute Forces," Master's Thesis, Canadian Forces College, 2007.

"To All Stag Readers from CO 28 CFSD," *The Shilo Stag*, 23 December 1969.

"Under the Canopy," *The Shilo Stag*, 16 October 1969.

"Under the Canopy," *The Shilo Stag*, 17 November 1969.

Willes, John A. *Out of the Clouds: The History of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion*. Port Perry Printing Limited, 1981.

Winslow, Donna. *The Airborne Regiment in Somalia: A Socio-Cultural Inquiry*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997.