

Training and Equipment: Canada's Army during  
the Korean War

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With the conclusion of Second World War formally declared during September of 1945, the world rejoiced at the prospect of a long and enduring peace. But with a Cold War looming on the horizon, many anticipated a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the Western democracies over their very polarized ideologies. The tiny Asian peninsula nation known as Korea saw one of the many escalations which occurred during the Cold War. Here, Canada participated in a war far different from the others in which it had participated in as a nation. Canada was to be a part of a United Nations force sent to repel the illegal incursion by communist North Korea into South Korea. In order to contribute adequately to the U.N. mission in Korea, Canada had to undo the damage done by the massive demobilization that followed the Second World War. Thousands of new recruits had to be trained and masses of equipment had to be acquired, most of which had served the Canadian Army well during the Second World War. Despite the very different nature of this war and the required training and equipping of the Canadian ground forces for the coming fight, it was accomplished with a predominantly Second World War mindset. As such, it can be argued that the Korean War, for Canada, was somewhat of an extension of that brutal five year conflict. Both historians and veterans can offer insight into the nature of the training the Canadian Army had received, and the equipment used, both prior to and during their involvement in the Korean War in order to better understand and assess the level of preparedness and capability of this force. Despite what some might say were Canada's best efforts and intentions, historians believe the brave fighting men, though they trained hard and made due with what they had, were ill prepared for this war and were left to use outdated equipment and supplies. The consensus of some veterans is not necessarily in agreement with those historians.

Utilizing oral history interviews with veterans of the war, serves to answer this question of Canada's preparedness in the months leading up to the first commitment of ground forces.

Prior to the invasion of South Korea on 25 June 1950, the Canadian armed forces had suffered serious cutbacks after the Second World War. The Canadian Army was reduced to 25,000 men, of which only 7,000 of those would be part of the combat arms.<sup>1</sup> This was a far cry from the half-a-million strong force which had helped to liberate Europe from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.<sup>2</sup> Mackenzie King's government felt that in order to move Canada towards being a welfare state, cuts had to be made to the military apparatus in order to satisfy the coming financial burdens of such a change.<sup>3</sup> Funding during the pivotal year of 1943, in the midst of the Second World War, was \$4.2 billion for all branches, while in 1947 it was dropped to a meager \$196 million for all branches of the Canadian Armed Forces.<sup>4</sup> For the Korean mission however, Canada's contribution would not nearly be as substantial as it had been for the Second World War. The formation of the Canadian Army Special Force for Korea was announced on 7 August 1950 by Prime Minister St-Laurent and was meant to consist of 4,960, all ranks, as well as 2,105 for reinforcement purposes and would compliment the Active Force units already in existence.<sup>5</sup> Upon St-Laurent's announcement, when it came to volunteers, there was no shortage of them. Because there were so many volunteers of the Special

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<sup>1</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 14.

<sup>2</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 13.

<sup>3</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 13-4.

<sup>4</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Strange Battleground: The Operations in Korea and Their Effects on the Defence Policy of Canada* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1966), 27.

Force, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment, had to stop accepting volunteers and created a 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion just for the excess recruits.<sup>6</sup> With one hurdle achieved, the next would be training the mass of new recruits for the coming fight.

It was decided that the combat training location for Canadian troops, following the initial deployment of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry to Korea during the winter of 1951, was to take place at Fort Lewis in Washington State because the climate there allowed for training to occur during the winter.<sup>7</sup> Prior to training at Fort Lewis, Canadian recruits took part in a six week training program designed to instill the military ethos.<sup>8</sup> After that, in order to hone the skills of the individual soldier in their designated role, the recruits participated in a six week advanced infantry training program.<sup>9</sup> The advanced infantry training was met with some criticism. Two targets of criticism were the lack of preparedness to shoot at the enemy as well as the failure to familiarize the troops with combat conditions in Korea since the warzone itself was much different than the level, open and unobstructed views in the areas where the recruits learned to fire their weapons.<sup>10</sup>

Not all of the components of Canadian Army training took place at Fort Lewis in Washington State. Duke Sherritt, an artillery relayer for "A" Battery of the 1st Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, received his regular training in Shiloh, Manitoba along with

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<sup>6</sup> Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Strange Battleground: The Operations in Korea and Their Effects on the Defence Policy of Canada* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1966), 40.

<sup>7</sup> John Melady, *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1983), 43.

<sup>8</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 21.

<sup>9</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 23.

<sup>10</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 24.

specific parachute training in 1951.<sup>11</sup> Gord Hryhoryshen, a member of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, received training in Valcartier, Quebec as well as in Germany while he was a part of the Canadian 27<sup>th</sup> Brigade prior to being sent to Korea in 1954.<sup>12</sup> Robert Stewart, a Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps Assistant, was initially sent to Petawawa with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment, and later received his medical training at Camp Borden.<sup>13</sup> All three of these men received very different training for their specific roles in the Canadian Army. But in terms of the quality of this training in preparing the thousands of Canadians for battle in Korea, it is important to assess it from the combatants' perspectives as well as from the view of post-war historians.

With respect to the quality of training given to Canadian soldiers prior to commitment in Korea, William Johnston, author of *A War of Patrols: Canadian Army Operations in Korea*, mentions the efforts of General Rockingham in weeding out inadequate members from the Special Force as well as his attempts to acclimatize the soldiers to the rough battlefield conditions they would soon encounter. Prior to his departure to visit the 2<sup>nd</sup> PPCLI which was already overseas, Rockingham suggested that the remaining units of 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade be trained in "hill climbing, forced marches, and general conditioning for the rugged terrain of Korea."<sup>14</sup> Clearly, Rockingham understood the distinct differences in combat between what the Canadian Army had experienced on the battlefields of Northwestern Europe and what they were about to experience in the much harsher mountainous landscape of Korea. Training was not without its hiccups

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<sup>11</sup> Duke Sherritt Interview (3:50), 26 October 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Gord Hryhoryshen Interview (2:45), 22 October 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Rob Stewart Interview, 30 October 2008.

<sup>14</sup> William C. Johnston, *A War of Patrols: Canadian Army Operation in Korea* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 52.

according to Johnston. He highlights the large number of desertion cases that were present during the training of the Special Force, which tallied very close to 25% of the total force recruited.<sup>15</sup> Despite these brief insights about the quality of training, Johnston fails to look at the broader picture of the overall image of Canada's preparedness for war during 1950-51.

Brent Watson, author of *Far Eastern Tour: Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-53*, summarized the Canadian training as inadequate for the job at hand in Korea.<sup>16</sup> He cites the inability to change tactics from a predominantly Northwest European mentality to the type of tactics required for the mountainous terrain of Korea much like what had been experienced in Italy by the Allies (1943-1945), as being a root cause for the ill-preparedness of the Canadian Army.<sup>17</sup> Another detrimental aspect of Canadian infantry training, which Watson highlights, was the lack of individual weapons training because of the generals' confidence in the overwhelming power of combined arms operations instead of the individual rifle and its fire on the battlefield.<sup>18</sup> In keeping with the theme of ill-preparedness of the Canadian Army during 1950-51, Watson puts forward that two of the most important skill sets required for proper warfare in Korea were neglected in the beginning and these were the art of defensive fortifications and patrolling.<sup>19</sup> In his book, Watson clearly identifies just a few of the many aspects of Canadian training which

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<sup>15</sup> William C. Johnston, *A War of Patrols: Canadian Army Operation in Korea* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 50.

<sup>16</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 18.

<sup>17</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 18.

<sup>18</sup> William C. Johnston, *A War of Patrols: Canadian Army Operation in Korea* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 25.

<sup>19</sup> William C. Johnston, *A War of Patrols: Canadian Army Operation in Korea* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 25-7.

were lacking or non-existent prior to the landing of Canadian troops during the latter part of 1951 in Korea.

David Bercuson, author of *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War*, argues that the hurried nature of training which was given to the Special Force, along with the separate training of officers from their lower ranks, served to hinder the cohesiveness of units.<sup>20</sup> Clearly this was a very negative move as it would impact the units performance when the two components finally came together prior to departure for Korea. It is very important to keep both the officers and lower ranks together as it would help to improve not just unit's capability in battle, but the camaraderie between officer and soldier as well. Bercuson mentions 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the PPCLI and their predicament with the separation of training between officers and the lower ranks.<sup>21</sup> In contrast with what Watson stated regarding the lack of individual marksmanship, Bercuson states that there was, in fact, an emphasis on individual "aimed fire" techniques during training instead of adopting the process of "mass fire" now available with a new generation of semi-automatic rifles and submachine guns.<sup>22</sup> With the weapons that the Canadian Army utilized, like the battle-tested Lee-Enfield bolt-action rifle and magazine-fed Bren gun, it is of no surprise that "mass fire" was not emphasized during weapons training. The Canadian Army lacked what the American Army had in terms of quality semi-automatic and fully automatic small arms, such as the Garand and Carbine rifles, as well as the Thompson submachine gun. Despite these setbacks in training, the Canadian Army,

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<sup>20</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 52-3.

<sup>21</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 53.

<sup>22</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 54.

specifically the Special Force battalions, would be sent to the battlefields of Korea where they would learn much more practical skills that would allow them to fight the Chinese and North Koreans more effectively.

Medic Robert Stewart felt the training he had received was the same as had been given to medics during the Second World War and that recent advancements in the medical field such as helicopters and fresh frozen plasma were not taken into careful consideration.<sup>23</sup> Indeed Korea was a new war in many respects, especially when considering the role of the helicopter in evacuating wounded personnel to safer positions for treatment. Robert Stewart also referred to the training he had received as not being practical for the battlefield.<sup>24</sup> Duke Sherritt, on the other hand, had no problems with the artillery training he had received and felt it was sufficient for the job that was required in Korea.<sup>25</sup> Gord Hryhoryshen was confident that the training he had received would serve a purpose somewhere down the line and found no aspects of it lacking.<sup>26</sup> Envisioning the Canadian military as capable of providing training of a more advanced nature than what was provided during the Second World War, for troops destined for the Korean battlefield, was not realistic. This was because the extensive postwar demobilization limited the ability of the Army to finance and develop, or purchase, new weapons, equipment and tactics for possible future use.

Preparation for the Korean battlefield involved hands on training with the equipment that would accompany the army upon completion of the required skill sets. Robert Stewart received much of his medical training through such hands on experience.

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Stewart Interview (6:40), 30 October 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Stewart Interview (13:40), 30 October 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Duke Sherritt Interview (2:45), 26 October 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Gord Hryhoryshen Interview (13:25), 22 October 2008.



Though he had received medical training in the militia prior to his enlisting in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, Stewart also worked as a lab technician before being transferred to the Royal Canadian Regiment.<sup>27</sup> Physical fitness was also taught to Stewart in the form of drills such as carrying “live” victims on stretchers after removing them from vehicles or vehicle mock-ups.<sup>28</sup> This was meant to prepare the combat medics for the physically demanding requirements of battlefield medicine. Duke Sherritt, who engaged in artillery training, received valuable hands on experience as well. For his job as a relay, he practiced laying communication wire for the possibility that it may be cut by enemy fire while on the battlefield.<sup>29</sup> Also practiced by Sherritt and his unit was the art of entrenching and digging in the “25 pounder” for protection.<sup>30</sup> Both of these training activities were well suited for what the fighting in Korea was like, especially in preparation for counter-battery operations.

In the years following the end of the Second World War, the equipment of the Canadian Army did not change drastically. For example, still residing in Canadian arsenals and serving with the Active Force and militias were the British-designed Lee-Enfield bolt action rifle, the Sten submachine gun, the Bren light machine-gun and the Vickers heavy machine-gun. All of these weapons had seen service with the Canadian Army during the Second World War. The Lee-Enfield and the Vickers, however, had also been utilized by much of the Commonwealth forces during the First World War. Both weapons had proved their worth in the bitter and static fighting on the Western Front and seemed ideally suited for the static conditions present on the mountainous

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Stewart Interview (11:15), 30 October 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Stewart Interview (11:15), 30 October 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Duke Sherritt Interview (8:15), 26 October 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Duke Sherritt Interview (10:00) 26 October 2008.

battlefields of Korea. The bolt-action Lee-Enfield, though very reliable and accurate, suffered a slow firing rate when compared to the American Garand or Carbine weapons because of its lack of semi-automatic capability. Despite its inability to send masses of fire at target in a quick succession, one characteristic that elevated itself about the American Garand was its lack of jamming.<sup>31</sup> Battle dress had not changed drastically from what it had been during the Second World War and as well, the First World War-era Mark II helmet made its way onto the heads of Canadian soldiers once again.<sup>32</sup>

Herbert Wood, author of *Strange Battleground: The Operations in Korea and Their Effects on the Defense Policy of Canada*, argues that the reasons behind refusing to adopt American equipment was that it would prevent returning veterans of the Second World War from settling into their roles easily and would significantly increase the amount of time required for training new recruits.<sup>33</sup> Here, it is evident that the Canadian command preferred to mobilize their troops as quickly as possible, forgoing the re-equipping of the thousands destined for the Korean battlefield in an adequate fashion. Also lacking in the Canadian Army, according to Wood, was proper battle attire. Wood cites the inability of the Canadian Army to adopt combat uniforms from the British or American armies and the stop-gap solutions embarked upon only served to add to the growing list of supply problems facing the Canadian Army prior to the first commitment of troops.

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<sup>31</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 40.

<sup>32</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 37, 34-5.

<sup>33</sup> Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Strange Battleground: The Operations in Korea and Their Effects on the Defence Policy of Canada* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1966), 37.

Watson mentions the desire of Lieutenant-General Foulkes, Chief of the General Staff of the Canadian Army, for the equipment to be compatible with British supply lines in order to ease logistics within a Commonwealth Division and reduce costs in the process.<sup>34</sup> In agreement with Woods, Watson cites the returning of Second World War veterans as well as the already present British-style command and control structure as determining factors in leaving the Canadian Army relatively unchanged since 1945.<sup>35</sup> As mentioned, another item still present on Canadian soldiers was the World War One-era Mark II helmet. Simply observing the helmet, one could see that its protection was severely limited. It had been originally designed to protect soldiers from the devastating effects of airburst and ground burst shrapnel during the First World War.<sup>36</sup> But Watson argues that since the Chinese and North Koreans lacked heavy mortars and artillery during the first year of the war, the helmet was completely unnecessary.<sup>37</sup> Watson quotes a Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell with regard to the Mark II helmet that it “is the most poorly designed, uncomfortable, useless, stupid-looking, and unpopular piece of equipment issued to Canadian soldiers.”<sup>38</sup>

In terms of weapons utilized by the Canadian Army, Watson found the Bren light machine-gun was inadequate for the type of fighting seen in Korea, but that the Lee-Enfield rifle’s saving grace was its lack of jamming in the sometimes harsh winter

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<sup>34</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 32-3.

<sup>35</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 33.

<sup>36</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 34-5.

<sup>37</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 35.

<sup>38</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 35.

conditions when compared to the American M1 Garand rifle.<sup>39</sup> Despite this lack of jamming, the ineffectiveness of the Lee-Enfield while in close quarters or on patrol lay in its inability to fire semi-automatically.<sup>40</sup> The British-designed Sten gun also had its share of problems while in the hands of Canadian personnel. Prior to the Korean War, during the Second World War, it had severe jamming issues. One example of this problem occurred when Czech resistance fighters attempted to fire a Sten gun into the staff car of Reinhard Heydrich, but had it jam and thus a grenade had to be utilized instead. Jamming, along with other issues, was common for the Sten gun and one Canadian soldier summarized it as a “piece of crap.”<sup>41</sup>

Bercuson goes into great detail about the performance of Canada’s small arms during the Korean War. He saw the Lee-Enfield as totally inadequate for combating the Chinese “hugging tactics” such as close-quarters night fighting.<sup>42</sup> When comparing the Lee-Enfield with the American M1 Garand, Bercuson targets the misconception regarding the unreliability and jamming of the American rifle. Response to the M1 by Canadian soldiers, who managed to acquire it, was generally negative because of the unreliability and jamming.<sup>43</sup> However, Bercuson sees this negative view as actually resulting from the lack of familiarity and training the Canadian infantry had with the

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<sup>39</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 38-9.

<sup>40</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 40.

<sup>41</sup> Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 42.

<sup>42</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 164.

<sup>43</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 165.

weapon as the main reason.<sup>44</sup> The shorter and lighter M2 carbine became a more popular alternative, despite its tendency to jam and misfire at a rate of thirty percent.<sup>45</sup> For the Sten gun, a visiting Lieutenant-Colonel Waldo, who was a deputy director of armament development, found that “the weapon had a poor psychological effect on the men and they had no confidence in it” and as a result, left the Sten gun behind in favour of the Thompson submachine gun whenever possible.<sup>46</sup>

Gord Hryhoryshen, who trained with the Lee-Enfield extensively before his departure to Korea in 1954, found it to be a very easy weapon to use.<sup>47</sup> He also enjoyed the ease of cleaning the rifle and its lack of jamming compared to the American M1 Garand rifle.<sup>48</sup> The wool battledress, according to Hryhoryshen, wasn’t uncomfortable and kept heat very well.<sup>49</sup> With respect to the Mark II helmet, Hryhoryshen preferred to wear the combat cap while not on alert and felt the Mark II could not stop a bullet.<sup>50</sup> Robert Stewart, though a medic, also received training with small arms. Looking back upon his experiences during the Korean War, he felt the weapons utilized by the Canadian infantry were very inferior to what the American infantry possessed.<sup>51</sup> He referred to the Sten gun as a “pipe-fitter’s nightmare,” but managed to achieve marksmanship with the weapon.<sup>52</sup> Because of his role as a combat medic, Stewart still had to carry a weapon with him. Instead of carrying around the cumbersome and heavy

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<sup>44</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 165.

<sup>45</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 165.

<sup>46</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 167-8.

<sup>47</sup> Gord Hryhoryshen Interview (8:20), 22 October 2008.

<sup>48</sup> Gord Hryhoryshen Interview (8:20), 22 October 2008.

<sup>49</sup> Gord Hryhoryshen Interview (30:40), 22 October 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Gord Hryhoryshen Interview (30:40), 22 October 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Stewart Interview (26:40), 30 October 2008.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Stewart Interview (26:40), 30 October 2008.

Lee-Enfield rifle, he managed to acquire an American M2 Carbine automatic rifle and found it was a much better weapon.<sup>53</sup> Duke Sherritt also received small arms training to compliment his artillery training. He did not find the small arms with which he trained obsolete in any respect and quite enjoyed learning to use them.<sup>54</sup> According to Sherritt, the battledress early on in the war was inadequate, but some equipment items were ingenious, including winter gloves which left one finger exposed so the trigger could be pulled on a weapon.<sup>55</sup> It is hard to come by a solid conclusion when talking about the effectiveness of Canadian equipment and weapons during the Korean War. Post-war historians unanimously agree that the Canadian weapons were obsolete by 1950 and that better weapons should have been acquired. From the perspective of some veterans, it is harder to judge the effectiveness of these weapons on the battlefield. They did not have access to the superior American weapons during training and thus were only exposed to the weapons already tried and tested from the two world wars. To suppose what might have happened if the Canadian Army had access to better weapons during training does not change the fact that, regardless of quality of the equipment and weapons, the Canadian forces in Korea utilized them to great effect.

The medical aspect of the Korean War is often overlooked, especially when focusing on the Canadian Army Medical Corps. Robert Stewart offers interesting insight into what the situation was like for Canadian medics during the final year of the war. He was satisfied with the medical equipment he utilized while on the frontlines of Korea in 1953 and felt that during the first two years of Canadian involvement, the equipment was

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<sup>53</sup> Robert Stewart Interview (26:40), 30 October 2008.

<sup>54</sup> Duke Sherritt Interview (23:00), 26 October 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Duke Sherritt Interview (47:30), 26 October 2008.

battle tested and improved upon substantially.<sup>56</sup> Like the weapons utilized by the Canadian Army, front line medicine was not without its share of problems. Stewart mentioned several times, how the American Army medical staff were far better supplied and equipped than the Canadian Army Medical Corps. Interestingly, if there were any shortages of equipment or medicine, the Americans readily supplied these items with no questions asked.<sup>57</sup> Also surprising was the difference in quality he saw at the American medical facilities as compared to what he had seen in the Commonwealth medical facilities. He found the British facilities in Korea “terrible” and mentions the time he had brought more supplies over from the Americans for the British.<sup>58</sup> Clearly the logistics required to access supplies quickly, was more of a issue than the actual equipment itself.

Duke Sherritt, though a relayer, trained with the British-made “25 pounder” artillery piece. He found it to be a very good weapon and had no problems with its accuracy, rate of fire or firepower, and that the men in his unit were also very pleased with the weapon.<sup>59</sup> According to Sherritt, an impressive rate of fire could be achieved by an experienced gun crew. Though he could not independently confirm this, five 25 pounder shells could be fired in quick succession, with the final shell being sent into the air well before the first shell had reached its target.<sup>60</sup> If this were confirmed, it would mean that the Canadian artillery crews had a very easy to use piece of equipment. During the Battle for Hill 355, Sherritt’s “A” Battery of the 1<sup>st</sup> RCHA distinguished itself admirably. The battery’s artillery fire assisted in breaking up the second phase of the

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<sup>56</sup> Robert Stewart Interview (1:12:40), 30 October 2008.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Stewart Interview (17:00), 30 October 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Stewart Interview (45:50), 30 October 2008.

<sup>59</sup> Duke Sherritt Interview (16:50), 26 October 2008.

<sup>60</sup> Duke Sherritt Interview (16:50), 26 October 2008.

Chinese attack, thus ensuring victory in the battle.<sup>61</sup> Despite the 25 pounder's origins during the Second World War, "A" Battery showcased that old technology, with expert training, was still capable of winning battles.

With the cessation of hostilities on 27 July 1953, the first war that Canada had fought in as a member of the United Nations came to an end. Though not a triumphant success, as was the Second World War, Korea had seen the Canadian Army prove yet again it could do the task it was assigned. There were some obvious shortcomings in training and preparation for the war, especially when training the Special Force, but Gord Hryhoryshen, Duke Sherritt and Robert Stewart all felt the training they had received for their specific roles was adequate. When discussing the equipment and weapons utilized by the Canadian Army, it is difficult to come to a general conclusion when comparing what historians and veterans have to say on the subject. Historians generally agree that better equipment and weapons should have been acquired in order to improve the effectiveness of the Canadian Army on the battlefield. The veterans, on the other hand, do not come to such a general consensus. Robert Stewart acquired an American M2 carbine instead of his Lee-Enfield while Gord Hryhoryshen enjoyed the simplicity of maintenance and ease of use of the Lee-Enfield rifle. Regardless of training, equipment and weapons, there is no denying the Canadian Army fought extremely well in the Korean War, just like it had in the Second World War. The famous Canadian actions at Kapyong, Hill 355 and Hill 187 are prime examples of this. More attention must be given to this significant world event and the title of the "forgotten war" must be forever

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<sup>61</sup> Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Strange Battleground: The Operations in Korea and Their Effects on the Defence Policy of Canada* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1966), 210.



cast aside so the veterans who fought and died there receive the respect and honour they so richly deserve.

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