

## Canadian Military Oral History

### Baker, Albert Dennis : My Queens Own Rifles of Canada recollections - Part 1

Part of the Caroline Duncan collection

[Caroline Duncan interviewing Albert Dennis Baker, year?]

00:00

Caroline Duncan: My name is Caroline Duncan, I'm working on an oral history project for the Queen's Own Rifles. Today is Monday April 19th and I'm at the meet and greet for the 150th anniversary celebration.

I'm speaking to Albert Baker and his wife Asa Baker.

[I hope?] I said that right. So I'm just going to leave this here and we can sort of forget that it's on.

Are you from Victoria?

Albert Dennis Baker: I live in Victoria now yeah.

CD: Yeah, so you haven't had to travel far. I think some people have traveled..

ADB: I just heard about it yesterday.

CD: Oh, is that right? And how did you hear about it?

ADB: Ah, I saw a bit on T.V. and then she came over and told me.

CD: Is that right?

ADB: [inaudible]

Asa Baker: I have a friend that her husband is in it and he's quite involved in the..

CD: Okay.

AB: ..so.

[inaudible crosstalk, background noise]

CD: So are you not active in the association throughout the rest of the year or just, just didn't happen to hear about it.

01:00

ADB: [Well?] I just heard about it, thought I'd come out, see if I knew anybody.

CD: Yeah, oh good.

ADB: See all old people!

CD: [laughs] So when, when were you in the Queen's Own Rifles?

ADB: In 1955..

CD: yes?

ADB: ..to 1958.

CD:OK. And so did you ever, were you ever at the Gordon Head Army Barracks?

ADB:At Gordon Head?

CD:Yeah

ADB:Yes, I was stationed there in 1955 and [and the end of?] 1955 we came here, after basic training and, and ah, I left in ah 1957 [inaudible], to ah [MFM?] and we opened up a [Western command?] in Edmonton and I represent the senior [inaudible] there.

CD: OK. What do you remember about the Gordon Head Camp?

ADB: Well - the Gordon Head Camp itself?

CD: Yeah.

ADB: I remember lots of [mess?] when I was there.

CD:Did you?

ADB:Ah, but [what I remember], it was a nice place. They'd [inaudible] in the middle ah [inaudible]

02:00

CD:How many ah people were stationed there do you think when you were there?

ADB:[I don't know] a 120.

CD: Was it that many?

ADB:It was that many.

CD:OK.

ADB: [Where] the university is now we used to use that, that field as [inaudible] for tank machines and things like that [around there yeah?]

CD:Was any, ever an air field there?

ADB:No.

CD:There was a communication ah..

ADB:There was a communication thing there, ah and ah I'm just trying to think of his name there [inaudible] but ah, whether or not he's is still on the radio ah...oh...I knew him so well!

AB:Oh yeah, on the radio.

CD:You'll think of it in a minute.

ADB:Yeah, I'll think of it in a minute, yeah. Yeah, but he's still an announcer here. But I can go there and talk to him, he said [out the back gates?] we went past the little station there yeah?

CD:right

AB:Joe Easingwood.

ADB:Joe Easingwood!

AB:Yeah.

CD:OK, Joe Easingwood.

ADB:Yeah, he was there at that time, yeah?

CD:OK

ADB:Yeah.

03:00

ADB: And I, we had ah, ah German Sheppard dogs at that time and so did he and we used to go to basic - you know to the dog obedience classes like that yeah?

CD:OK. What were the living quarters like at Gordon Head?

ADB:Well they were large huts, H huts with the showers and that in the middle and then you'd go on to the next hut and ah the officer's mess building is still there the one I run, [it's still there]

CD:Is that right, know there were two or three buildings..

ADB:[inaudible]

CD:That's one of them eh?

ADB:Yeah, and the [men's inaudible] to go [head?] to the beaches is the officer's quarters, that's the one I run yeah?

CD:OK. So what kind of duties did you have?

ADB:Well I was in charge of the whole mess there, the [size?] of the mess? Ah, ordering food, ordering liquor. And in charge of the [?] and the officers - I had authority over the officers.

CD:And then I guess the Queen's Own Rifles was the last regiment to be stationed there wasn't it?

ADB:[inaudible] the last regiment was there, yeah.

CD:And in [19]'57..

04:00

ADB:In [19]'57 I got married and ah the 2nd Battalion went to Germany, and I, three days after they left I went to ah, Edmonton to open up [? command] in Edmonton.

CD:And so when did you leave the Queen's Own Rifles?

ADB: I left in October of 1958\.. And I was [transferred?] to Calgary at the time.

CD:So what do you, what do you, what are your expectations over the three days coming up here?

ADB:What are my expectations? I'm just totally shocked! I figured I'd meet somebody I know, ah, I knew a couple of people in town ah, I haven't seen in a long time. I was hoping to meet some more people that I know. They walked away? - not me!

CD:It happens to some people..

ADB:Not me!

CD...not everyone.

[laughter]

CD:And, do you remember John Dirkson? I think he was the, he may have been the commanding officer at Gordon Head? I think he'll be here over the few days.

05:05

ADB:Yeah, OK, I recognize his name but I don't, yeah. You see we know everybody by their last name.

CD:Right.

ADB:Not by any first name. So that makes it hard.

CD:What other events are you going to attend? Are you going to go to the ah [inaudible]

ADB:I'm going to attend them all. I'm going to attend them all.

CD:yeah?

ADB:And see if I know anybody and see what's up.

CD:Excellent

ADB:[inaudible] retired [check that out?]

CD: And Mrs. Baker are you excited to ah, have you heard stories about..

AB:Yeah, yeah.

CD:...Queen's Own?

AB:Yeah, I didn't even know he had a thing then! ha

ADB:We've only been married for 8 years, ah..

AB:7

ADB:...yeah, say 7, I call it 8 or longer.

[laughter]

ADB:Yeah, my wife of 44 years was killed by a doctor.

CD:Oh.

ADB:[cancer? -inaudible]

CD:[What did you do then?]

ADB:And then I got stuck with her [inaudible]

CD:Looks like you're on to a good thing.

ADB:Oh yeah.

06:04

CD:Yeah. And I just want to ask, what are your happiest memories from being in the Queen's Own?

ADB:The Queen's Own Rifles?

CD:Yeah

ADB:I don't know, the people are fantastic ah, I don't know about happy memories [inaudible]. I loved ah, [CFB] Wainwright - when we'd go to [CFB] Wainwright for the training there - I loved that. Ah, I don't know. People are fabulous, they had that good [energy?]

CD:What do you think makes it unique as a regiment?

ADB:Well, it's an old, old regiment. And what makes it unique for me?

CD:Mhm.

ADB:My grandfather was in it.

CD:Was he?

ADB:Yeah. So that's my mom's dad was there - so that makes it unique.

CD:Is it that what motivated you?

ADB:No, I wanted to go in [The] Black Watch [The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada] but they gave me 3 choices when I joined up and I joined up 4 days after my 17th birthday. And they gave me Queen's Own Rifles, Queen's Own Rifles or Queen's Own Rifles.

07:06

CD:OK, it was a tough choice [laughter]

ADB:Yeah.

CD:Well it's nice that you have the history with your grandfather as well.

ADB:I've got lot's of things like on the epitaph in Edmonton, ah in November 1955\ . I got ah, lot's of pictures of the, the parliament buildings [Legislative] [because?] I was in parades ah. I had them, I was digging them out and ah, I didn't find them I don't know where the heck they are, but I got 'em.

CD:Were you ever involved in the band?

ADB:No, no. So I was in ah, boxing. I was [at the] up top of Mount Douglas when there was nothing up there. There on the other side were just farms?

CD:Yeah?

ADB:And now it's all..buildings and..

CD:Yeah, a lot of development.

ADB:Yeah.

CD:Well, thank you so much for talking to me. Thank you.

ADB:OK, take care.

07:59

## Canadian Military Oral History

### Baker, Albert Dennis : My Queens Own Rifles of Canada recollections - Part 2

Part of the Caroline Duncan collection

[Caroline Duncan interviewing Albert Dennis Baker, year?]

00:00

[inaudible crosstalk - possible group conversation]

Unidentified Male Voice 1: [What's?] your name here?

Albert Dennis Baker: Baker?

UMV1: Were you in..?ADB: I was in the officer's mess

UMV1: OK, yah, I, Bruce MacDonald anyway yeah.

ADB: MacDonald! OK, yeah.

UMV1: Yeah, yeah.

ADB: You turned you old see?

UMV1: I'll be 80 in June the 2nd.

ADB: Yeah, yeah. None of us are the same, you don't recognize anybody.

UMV1: No, well..

ADB: For heavens sakes eh?

UMV1:..well you were lean and mean, just a young guy.

ADB: Yeah, 169 pounds.

UMV1: And your hair was different eh?

ADB: And never been kissed!

[laughter]

UMV1: And ah, like me, all the guys used to go downtown drinkn'?

ADB: Not me!

UMV1: I sat home every night and wrote my mother a letter you know?

ADB: I'm the guy to stayed in camp..

UMV1: yeah!

ADB: ..and, and I'd wash coveralls for 25 cents a piece..

UMV1: yeah!

ADB: ..and I used to loan out money at 100 percent interest for 3 days.

UMV1: oh Scotty boy!

Unidentified Male Voice 2: You're serious?!

[cross talk]

ADB: Yeah! And I'd get a cheque first, three days later come pay day - pay me or else double the cheque. I'd stay'd here all the time instead of chasing them damn girls.

UMV2: That's the same as, we used to, every Friday night - downtown that eh? Westholme Hotel was the first stop and then the [C&C Club?].

01:01

ADB: Yeah, [C&C Club?].

UMV2: ..in China Town.

ADB: I worked at the Douglas Hotel. I waited in Douglas Hotel in my spare time.

UMV2: OK then after C&C closed we all had to leave - no taxis, no buses, no nothing..

ADB: No! no, no, no.

UMV1: No money either!

UMV2: ..a 14 mile route march back up to camp here.

ADB: Yeah, that's it. I used to go right from Naden [Esquimalt naval base?] - had a girlfriend there - and go right downtown to Louis Cafe for a 25 bowl, ah, 25 cent bowl of clam chowder and then walk all the way out here. Nobody'd pick you up in them days.

[inaudible crosstalk & laughter]

UMV1: That's it!

Unidentified Male Voice 3: I guess the last [person to have?] that was it eh?

ADB: Yeah, and I used to buy your, your pants, your dress pants were 5 bucks..

UMV3: uh huh.

ADB:.. and you give me back 10 at payday - yeah.

UMV3: Jeez are worth a 150 now.

[inaudible crosstalk & laughter]

ADB: Yeah

UMV3: Imagine, imagine the difference!

ADB: They're probably worth, they're probably worth 30 bucks at [one time] am I right?! With the 43 [c's?] and the [cuffs?]?

[inaudible cross-talk]

ADB: Yeah, yeah I was here after [Cosens?] [Sgt. Aubrey Cosens - the regiment's seventh VC?], yeah.

01:54

Caroline Duncan: So the road that's, I guess this is, that's Finnerty Road now. So this, that, road ran..

ADB: Yeah, Finnerty Road, yeah it went right through, right through and turned, turned right at the corner there.

CD: OK

ADB: OK, and it [never went? then it went?] past that, yeah.

CD: Yep

ADB: And then the old radio station was behind camp here..

CD: Right

ADB: ..where, where Joe Easingwood in it. I knew Joe Easingwood very well, yeah? At that time, yeah?

CD:Great. And ah, what, do you remember what the neighborhood was like at that time? You said there were open fields across from the gates?

Unidentified Male Voice 4:It was farms..

ADB:This was a farm right here..

Unidentified Male Voice 4:all farms.

ADB: ..this was a farm right here.

UMV4: And this farmer here had cows..

ADBv:Yep

UMV4:...all cows. And at night..

ADB:...and he had a tower, and he had the, remember the tower?

UMV4: The tower is still there! Its still there.

ADB: Yeah, yeah! It's still there is it?

CD: The water tower. Is it the water tower?

ADB: I haven't been there for years.

UMV4: Oh, I don't know what kind of town [tower], it's still there. But here, this is where we used to have to crawl and practice our ground craft and all that stuff and the cows were out there first in the morning and during the daylight and they made us go in the night crawling in the muck.

ADB: And the back-fill over there too. We used to go all [nuts back there?].

UMV4: Yeah, yeah.

CD: And that was that farmer's field over there?

ADB: That was a, it was a vacant field that I remember but ah..

Unidentified Male Voice 5:[inaudible]..bird gun tower..



ADB: Yeah where you'd drive tanks and stuff and all of it around there ah..

UMV4: Bird guns..

ADB: Bird, yeah, yeah.

CD: And were there houses on that..

ADB & UMV4: No, no

CD: Just all farm land..

03:00

UMV4: This was all farming country.

ADB: This was all farming right through Mount Douglas throughout the top of the [Denier?], you see the farms over top ah the - there were very few along Shelbourne [Street] there and that it's ah..

CD: And you say, do you remember going down to Cadboro Bay, did you ever spend time down there?

ADB: Oh for sure.

UMV4: The best part of that was, we just came here in ah 1956, the end of 1956\.. Alberta was 40 below and 4 feet of snow, eh? And then they come, we came here; green grass and everything, and we started our depot training or our allied training. And early January they used to get us up at 6 o'clock, PT gear on, run down to Cadboro Bay Road into the bay, around in the water, slosh back up, up the hill, and back in the camp and ready for breakfast.

CD: Is that right?

UMV4: Yeah, and then every Friday used to have CO's [parade?], eh? You used to get dressed up, marching order - all our pack, all our gear and rifles and everything. You used to march from here, up Mount Tolmie, up Mount Tolmie! Down over the side and in to Oak Bay sort of thing and then back here to work on [inaudible].

04:02

CD: And would it be the fast march that you'd do?

UMV4: Well, our normal pace.

ADB: Normal pace, yeah.

CD: Which is a hundred and..

UMV4: 140, a hundred and forty

ADB: And I used to go the opposite way to Mount Douglas because I was in boxing, and used to have to run all the way. We used to run part way and rest, part way, rest. And then at the end you got to run all the way up and all the way back - you'd have a 10 minute rest up there and run all the way back.

Man 4: And then every Thursday or Friday, Thursday that used to have double day here.

ADB: Yeah, double day - that's right! I forgot about that.

UMV4: You'd double all the time.

ADB: Yeah!

UMV4:No, we wouldn't, we weren't allowed to walk...

ADB: We weren't allowed to walk..

UMV4:...we had to double.

ADB: You didn't march, you'd doubled all that..

CD: And that's your double pace at 180?

UMV4:oh, 180.

ADB: yeah

UMV4: yeah

ADB: You had to run [everywhere?]

UMV4: Every once, every week

ADB: I forgot about that see, yeah?

[inaudible crosstalk & laughter]

UMV5: I was a company runner, had to go up to your mother and all the way up in there and back..

[inaudible cross-talk]

ADB: Them were the days eh?

UMV5: Unreal.

CD:Thanks for talking with me.

04:51

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