

GORDON HANSFORD

Age 96, passed away peacefully in Valley Regional Hospital on February 5, 2020. Born in Wolfville, he was the son of the late Cecil and Cora (Balcom) Hansford. In 1940 he joined the 2nd Battalion, of the West Nova Scotia Regiment and later the Infantry Training Centre Pipe Band at Camp Aldershot as a drummer. In 1942 he transferred to the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps and went overseas in early 1943 later joining the Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RCEME). Upon his return from military service he attended Acadia University, graduating in 1953, and had a 30-year teaching career. From 1947 until 1963 he served in the Militia in the 146th Battery (47th Anti-tank Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery); the 1st Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery, Halifax attaining the rank of Major on discharge, and received the Canadian Decoration. A distinguished career serving his country in the military and as an educator, was expanded with work on the volunteer front. He was a member of the Kings County Retired Teachers Association, the West Nova Scotia Regiment Memory Club and the Atlantic Branch of the RCEME Association. He had been a member of Royal Canadian Legion, Dr. C. B. Lumsden Branch 74 in Wolfville for 72 years (where he also served as President). He was a charter member of the Kings Historical Society (where he was also a past President) and an honorary member of the Fieldwood Heritage Society of Canning. Gordon enjoyed storytelling, music, painting, carving, writing, and was an avid reader of historical and military events. He was also a military badge collector. Gordon designed the Annapolis Valley tartan, inspired by his beloved Annapolis Valley. Gordon is survived by his wife, Helen; brother-in-law, Jerry, Qualicum Beach, B.C.; several nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews. Cremation has taken place and there will be no visitation, by request. A Royal Canadian Legion service will be held at 7 p.m. on Sunday, February 9th in White Family Funeral Home, Kentville. Burial will take place at a later date. Donations in memory may be made to Valley Regional Hospital, Kings Historical Society or a charity of choice.

1945-2020



75

YEARS YOUNG!

NEWSLETTER

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THE PANDEMIC CLOSES LEGIONS ALL OVER CANADA

In December 2018 a Legion newsletter appeared, celebrating the re-birth of our Branch, after it had nearly collapsed a year earlier. We had a lot to celebrate. We had sold our land off Highland Avenue, and used some of the proceeds to repair and repaint the Legion facade. We had erected a new sign, installed a wheelchair-accessible front door and a new flagpole and redecorated our hall - all of this in time for Remembrance Day that year. And our membership had started to climb.

It was hoped at that time to make the newsletter a regular feature, appearing two or three times a year. But it's only now that we have found the time to put some words together and catch up with ourselves.

This is particularly important at this moment, because since March 22 the Legion has had to be closed, as we respond to the pandemic lockdown. All our events have had to be cancelled, and worst of all, we have had no opportunity to meet up with our fellow comrades, and no possibility of executive or general meetings. Now, in June, the lockdown and self-isolation continues, and though restrictions are easing, we seem unlikely to be able to open our doors and meet for several months yet.

This letter, then, is being put together to get you up to date with Legion news. Because, believe me, a lot has been going on! Read all about it.

Michael Bawtree Editor

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE - TO RENOVATE!

For the last year and more, members have been aware that their Executive Committee has been planning renovations. This began as early as 2017, when we invited the architect Mike Harvey to do a walkabout and report back to us on the state of our century-old building. It was clear that there were many problems, and that a lot of work needed to be done. Mike's wife Therese became involved as our design consultant, and soon both of them signed up as members of the Legion, and helped us with our early face-lift, both inside and out. When they realized that there were no plans or drawings of the building, Mike offered to put his office onto the job, and months later we were rewarded with a fine set of architectural drawings, all created *pro bono*: if we were to undertake renovations in a professional way, it was essential that we have these plans and drawings to start from.

Meanwhile we formed a Renovations Committee, made up of Paul Murphy, Michael Bawtree, Donn Miles, Terry Butler and Therese Harvey, and began thinking what form the renovations could take. It was clear that a lot of the plumbing and electrical infrastructure needed to be upgraded. But it was also clear that we were not able to use much of the building's space. The basement flooded during storms, and showed signs of damp everywhere. The washrooms in the basement and on the main floor were not wheelchair-accessible. The floor of the main hall was not structurally sound and bounced up and down at our dances. The second floor, which was full of junk and barely used, was reached by a flight of stairs which was not to code. And the roof still had charred beams from a fire many years back.

While keen to develop our role as a community hub, we were also aware of our vital need to attract and care for veterans, especially including those from recent conflicts suffering from PTSD. To serve them we needed a counselling room, and a large space separate from

our main hall where meetings and workshops could be held.

There were many other basic requirements. The structure of the whole building needed to be strengthened. To be fully accessible, the building needed an elevator. To make the main floor washrooms wheelchair-accessible we needed to move the kitchen (which anyway needed upgrading). And on the second floor we had the opportunity to extend the north-facing room, which was unused but which faced out onto Cape Blomidon and the Minas Basin - one of the most glorious views in Canada - to become a fine meeting-room with a cathedral ceiling.

Slowly a plan developed. Mike and Therese persuaded electrical, mechanical and structural engineers to work *pro bono*, re-designing the building's basic systems. Mike and his fellow architects, in discussion with the Renovation Committee, created plans for the renovated building. And by the end of 2019 the basic vision was complete, and shared with the Executive Committee and then with a General Meeting of Legion Members.

So the vision was complete. But how on earth were we going to pay for all this?

APPLYING FOR GRANTS

The Branch was not without funds. When we sold our land off Highland Avenue, we had set aside some \$25,000 for renovations, and had placed \$100,000 into an investment fund, redeemable after one year. But clearly the restoration of our building, with the vision we had of adding to its facilities, was going to cost a great deal more. The Renovations Committee estimated that the work would have to stretch out over 3 or 4 years, and in any case could only be achieved if we were successful in raising a considerable amount of money from granting agencies - most of them government-supported. So the Committee began the laborious task of locating the various possibilities for funding, and then the even more laborious task of completing application forms for the grants we thought we might be eligible for. In doing this, we were keen to emphasise the Legion's role as a community hub for the

Town and our new policy of welcoming all community members for our events, with a special interest in offering a social place for seniors.

Now, several months later, we have already had some successes. In February we were awarded \$25,000 by the federal Seniors Horizons



Program, with the Federal Minister for Seniors flying down from Ottawa in person to announce the grant. We were able to muster some 75 members and friends for this fine event, including MP Kody Blois, MLA Keith Irving and Mayor Jeff Cantwell.

Minister Deb Schulte addresses the gathering

Meanwhile, we also secured a commitment of \$10,000 from the Town of Wolfville's 2020 budget, and \$4,500 from the Legion Capital Assistance program. We have also applied for grants from the Kings County Vision Grant program (\$50,000), from the Nova Scotia Access-Ability program (\$50,000), and from the FCC AgriSpirit program (\$25,000).

With the grants that had already been awarded, and with the funds we had set aside in our Renovation Fund and Poppy Fund, we called for bids for our remedial phase, and eventually awarded the basic structural work project to Access Contracting of Berwick. They moved in at the end of March, coinciding with the time that we had to close the Legion because of Covid-19. Within a day they discovered that the west wall of our building had no foundation, and this would have to be remedied by raising the building and inserting footings, before the structural strengthening could be completed. But there was a lot of work that could still go ahead. New footings had to be placed for the supports for our new main floor central beam, and for the uprights that would have to extend to the second floor to support 5 cross-beams. The basement floor was dug out and several walls removed. An elevator

well and sump-pump pit were excavated.



View of the basement facing North. Elevator well in foreground

But clearly the major deficiencies of our building would need a whole different scale of funding. We were aware that the Province provided major assistance for the superb *L'Arche* building just up the road from us, and that the Flower Cart's expansion in New Minas has also received support of several hundred thousands. We therefore asked for a meeting with our MLA, Keith Irving, laid out our plans, and asked whether the Province could help us. We heard from Keith that when the Covid-19 pandemic was more or less under control in Nova Scotia, and the Province was able to start opening up for business, there was general recognition that there would need to be some major economic stimulus from the Province, and that they would be looking for 'shovel-ready' projects.

OTHER NEWS

The Renovations Committee meeting in early May -- two metres apart



Keith felt we had at least a chance of being eligible for such assistance, and subsequently told us that the Provincial and Federal governments were in fact planning to collaborate to offer infrastructure grants of this kind when the time was right. We therefore went ahead with a letter of application to both Kody Blois and Keith Irving, and because of the splendid work prepared by harveyArchitecture and their engineering and surveying colleagues, we were able to put a price tag on the entire renovation project. The cost estimate came to \$1.8 million. Keith advised us that we would have to provide up to \$400,000 of this total, and by a combination of grants, our own funds, and a projected fundraiser to bring in \$100,000, we were able to cobble a commitment of \$455,000 together to complete the application.

SO THIS IS WHERE WE ARE:

We have awarded the project of raising the building to Access Contracting, who offered us by far the lowest bid, at \$29,000. This has been given the go-ahead, and we expect to see it go forward in the next week or two;

We eagerly await a responses to our applications to Kings County, the NS Access-Ability program, and the AgriSpirit Fund. If these are successful we shall be able to proceed with the next phase;

We eagerly await movement on our application to the Provincial and Federal governments. If this is fully or partially successful, we shall be able to continue with the major portion of the renovation.

Our Executive Committee met on June 4th, and reviewed and approved the plans for our renovations and our grant applications.

Wolfville Legion Web Page

Paul Murphy has spent many hours during the lockdown on renewing our Legion web page, and it should shortly be ready for viewing. This is a project we have been trying to complete for years: it is an important part of any organisation's identity these days, and we will have to be sure to keep it up to date. Special thanks to Judith Smith and James Jeffrey for their assistance.

A Home from Home

With the construction work in progress at 310 Main, we have been actively exploring the possibility of finding a temporary home elsewhere. so that we can continue to get together at coffee hours, and also hold our regular meetings, which have been so disrupted by construction and corona virus. If our major fundraising is successful we may be out of our home for as much as a year. But what a place it will be at the end of it all!

A Tour

We are working with our architects and contractors to find a good time that we can offer a tour of our Legion building to Members, so you can see the work being done, ask any questions you may have, and make your suggestions.

Presentation Postponed

As you may remember, we were given an award last year for our work in removing VLTs from our building. The presentation was to be made in March, but of course was cancelled because of Covid-19. The presentation will be rescheduled, we hope for some time in the Fall.

A Sad Loss

In February we lost one of our oldest and most distinguished members: Gordie Hansford. His obituary, on our last page, is re-printed from the Chronicle Herald. We miss his stories, his songs, his laughter, and his generous interest in our Legion, which he served as President and helped in many ways. We send our deep sympathies to his widow Helen.

Gordie Hansford with the Annapolis Valley tartan which he designed

