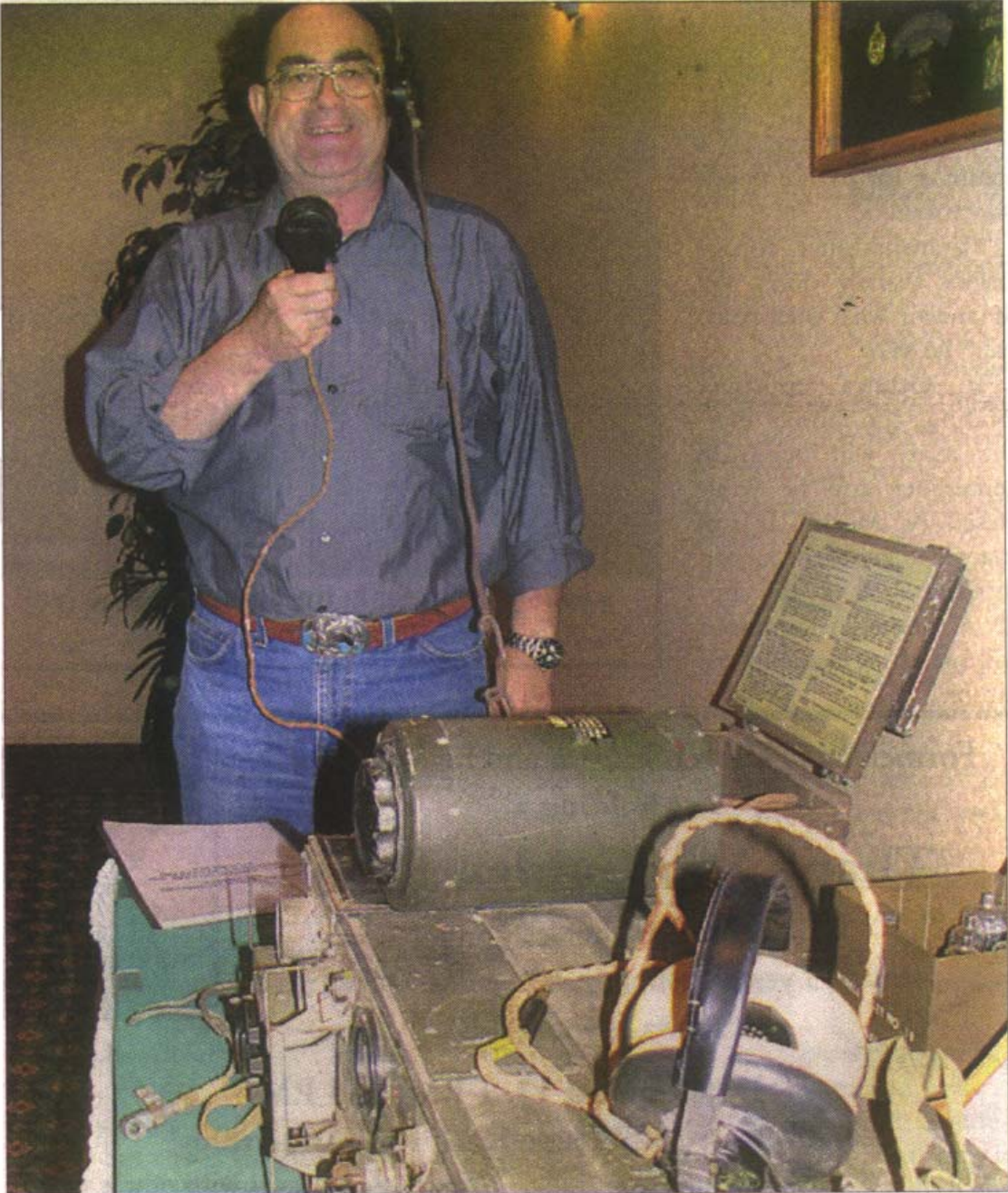


8TH RECCE 19TH NATIONAL REUNION

Best Western Vernon Lodge
July 30 to August 2, 2006

The Vernon Morning Star Newspaper Article:

TESTING, TESTING



JENNIFER DYCK/MORNING STAR

RICK CRAWLEY, from Sherwood Park, Alta., toys with his display of a Second World War No. 19 radio transmitter during the 8th RECCE National Reunion at the Best Western Vernon Lodge Monday.

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BY JENNIFER DYCK
MORNING STAR STAFF

Looking around at the aging faces of his band of brothers, Len Beck was hit with an emotional punch knowing this would be the last reunion.

Every year the number of the veterans, including these 8th Recce members, declines as time and illness takes its toll.

Even he now carries a cane in the hand that once held a rifle as he fought in the Battle of Normandy with the 8 Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment (14th Canadian Hussars), commonly known as the 8th Recce.

Beck recalls some of the first reunions where 200 veterans and wives and little children would attend.

But at this 19th National Reunion at the Best Western Vernon Lodge July 30 to Aug. 2, a mere 20 veterans were able to attend, and, combined with the families and guests, a total of 88 people came.

"It can be very emotional, we're getting down in numbers," said Beck, dressed in his original Second World War uniform. "We're all in our upper 80s now and this is the last hooray," said the Sidney resident.

"But it's been great. It's been very good for every one of my brothers here. We could let our hair down and

talk," said Beck of the event that includes a memorial service.

Tom Mason, 8 Recce Association president, said there was quite a somber feeling knowing this would be the last reunion.

"It breaks them up knowing they can't travel anymore. They're still alive but dammit they can't travel."

Rick Crawley may not be a veteran, but he too was saddened, and shocked, to hear this would be the last reunion.

Crawley and his wife were invited to the reunion to display a portion of their approximately 425-piece collection of war-time items.

"It brought back memories to these fellows," said Crawley, of Sherwood Park, Alberta.

"They've been walking by and saying, 'oh I remember this,' and, 'oh I had one of those.'"

Crawley has been collecting since 1966, and has everything from communication devices and weaponry to standard issue items such as razor kits and soap containers.

He uses the items, along with history and stories he receives from such veterans as those of the 8th Recce to educate children in schools.

"The kids are fascinated by this stuff," said Crawley of his "grunt" collection.

Crawley also lends his collection to one of his hometown museums, where he said they bring back strong memories for veterans passing through.

"I've seen the veterans with tears in their eyes."

And he enjoys being able to ignite memories and educate with his collection that is strictly hands-on.

"I felt this does not deserve to be in boxes."

But another satisfaction that Crawley receives by setting up such displays, is admiring the bond of the veterans that has stood the test of time.

"I've seen the movie *Band of Brothers*, and these are truly a band of brothers," said Crawley of the 8th Recce. "One fellow summed it up nicely and said, 'we have a love for one another,' and you can see that."

Crawley also feels fortunate that he was able to take part in the last reunion, as he knows all too well how valuable the veterans' stories are.

"My father was one of these fellows who wouldn't talk about anything and he was one of five men in the Crawley family who all served in the army.

"They all survived, but here's the tragedy, they're all gone today.

"If I could, I'd go back in time and get each and every one of their stories, because now they're lost."