

PREFACE: GENESIS

about the time they had spent with Flying Boats on British Columbia's west coast. Letters arrived from across Canada and the United States, and even Hawaii, containing hundreds of precious photographs, mementoes, and wonderful anecdotal stories. For most of these men it was a "time of a lifetime" and their memories infused the drab palette of recorded history with living colour, and reinstated the human element in the historical data I was gathering.

Viewed in isolation, every event is historical data, but when the data is arranged in sequence and connected by an examination of cause and effect it becomes history; as traceable as footprints in wet cement; the stuff we should carefully analyze, applying the conclusions wisely to plan our future. Recent Federal government decisions regarding the downsizing of Canada's military forces lead me to believe that we have not done our history homework. Once again we are caught up in the old economy-driven mania that supports the irrational theory that destruction creates efficiency.

Seventy-five years, and billions of taxpayers' dollars, have gone into building the valuable resource of our military forces: an established strength of proud and productive men and women whose wealth of experience cannot easily be replaced. In British Columbia we have already lost a big chunk of this investment, and we are about to lose more with the departure of Land Forces personnel who are being displaced as, one by one, the remaining buildings at Jericho Beach are razed. Once the "battle for Jericho" is over and development of the land, in whatever form, is complete, the "footprints" of the past will be totally obliterated.

Ironic? I doubt Major MacLaurin, Air Commodore MacLeod or Air Vice-Marshal Godfrey would see it that way.

Two years ago, when I began researching the history of Jericho Beach and the West Coast Flying Boat Stations, I discovered the unswerving focus and enthusiasm of the early British Columbian Air Force pioneers and the Officers and Airmen who joined them in peacetime and war. Manning the Flying Boat Stations, I found a large group of tenacious, loyal Canadians who carried on, under difficult conditions, doing the job that needed to be done.

I can only hope that the "life and times" that I have attempted to record in this book meet the hopes and expectations of the men who lived them.

Chris Weicht - November, 1996