



CMEA Last Post Content & Style Guide

Introduction

1. The CMEA records the deaths of CME Family members to pay tribute for their service to their Country. This task requires attention and rigour to ensure the factual integrity of our published information.
2. This document provides general guidance on style and content. Someone new to this area would also benefit from a review of the more recently posted items in the Last Posts feature to help understand the tone and of our efforts to provide consistent and appropriate entries. One will notice that there is considerable difference among the entries in terms of content as the content often depends very much on the substance in the published obituaries and the results of our subsequent research. Nonetheless, we strive to present that content in a standard format. This guide outlines how each entry is drafted to fit that standard format.

Scope

3. This document includes the following topics:
 - a. Basic Structure
 - b. Content Guide
 - c. Writing Guide
 - d. Images
 - e. Document Control

Basic Structure

4. Two examples of well-written Last Post entries are shown below. A Last Post entry has the following parts depending on available information:
 - a. An introductory paragraph giving the basic details of Who, When and Where. Writers should do their best to restrict the length of the introduction because the first 225 characters (about 40 words) will be used as a thumbnail on the Last Post home page;

- b. Service details of the person;
- c. Post-service career details; and
- d. Funeral, memorial, and burial arrangements as applicable.

Example 1:

We regret to advise of the death of Kenneth I. S. Harper on Wednesday, 24 June 2020, at Sunnybrook Veterans Centre in Toronto ON in his 99th year. Ken was a Second World War veteran of the 16th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, who landed in the initial Normandy assault on D-Day.

Example 2:

We regret to advise of the death of Chief Warrant Officer Mushrow, CD (Ret'd) at Langley Memorial Hospital in Langley BC, on 24 December 2020 at age 84 years. Peter served the Canadian Military Engineers as a Combat Engineer for 35 years.

Peter was born and raised in Port aux Basques NL. He joined the Royal Canadian Engineers in 1956 in St John's and completed his basic Sapper training at the Royal Canadian School of Military Engineering (RCSME) in Vedder Crossing BC. Promoted to Corporal in 1958, he was posted to Demonstration Troop at RCSME for what was a short tour as he was posted to 3 Field Squadron in Chilliwack BC the following year.

Peter was posted to 4 Field Squadron in Werl, Germany a year later. When he returned to Canada in 1963, he became an instructor at RCSME for four years with Recruit Training Squadron. After this RCSME tour, Peter returned to Germany with 4 Field Squadron, where he was promoted to Sergeant.

Peter returned to his home province in 1970 when he was posted to the Regular Support Staff with 56th Field Engineer Squadron in St John's NL. Promoted to Warrant Officer in 1973, he was transferred to 1 Field Squadron in Petawawa ON, for a three-year tour. Upon completing this tour, Peter was posted to a Technical Staff position in National Defence Headquarters responsible for Field Engineer equipment.

Peter was promoted to Master Warrant Officer in 1979 and returned to Germany with 4 Combat Engineer Regiment for his third tour. Promotion to Chief Warrant Officer saw his return to Canada and appointment as Regimental Sergeant Major of 1 Combat Engineer Regiment.

Notification of Death

5. The CMEA receives notification of a death in several ways, as outlined below:
 - a. Serving Members: The CME Adjutant will notify the CMEA when a serving member dies;
 - b. Friends or relatives will notify the CMEA when a past member of the CMEA dies; and
 - c. The CMEA team will regularly scan newspapers, media and news feeds for recent and past deaths.
6. Announcing the death of a serving member should be coordinated between the CME Adjutant and the CMEA. The CME Adjt has the lead in such cases. In the best-case scenario, the CMEA will have enough information to draft an initial Last Post entry that the CME Adjutant can incorporate in a CMEA-wide announcement that includes reference to the CMEA Last Post entry. As more information becomes available, it will be added.
7. Once a recent death has been announced on the CMEA website, references will be placed on social media platforms.

Content Guide

8. **Privacy & Family Contact:** We will be cautious and protect the privacy of the family. We will avoid contacting them directly during the immediate period of their grief and rely on information provided by open sources, colleagues, and research. If a family makes contact, we prioritize ensuring that our Last Post meets their wishes. We will not provide contact details for the NOK but can refer inquiries to the funeral home.
9. **Accuracy:** All facts must be accurate. Our posts are available to Internet audiences and can form the starting point for family research enthusiasts. We do not want to be the source of any inaccuracies. Where there is uncertainty in any information, a general statement will often suffice. For example, if we know a person completed one or more UN tours but are not sure they were in Cyprus, we have to say 'served in UN missions'. If we see a soldier's campaign medals showing a France and Germany Star, we cannot say 'served in Holland' without supporting evidence. Soldiers wounded and evacuated from Normandy have the same medal. Instead, we say 'served in Northwest Europe'.
10. While obituaries tend to focus on what an individual was like, we concentrate on what the individual did and accomplished. While occasional opportunity exists to include comments on character, it must be used judiciously. Character descriptions are very subjective, and the dealings across obits are very inconsistent. Also, obits often deal with areas outside the individual military life....that most of our audience will not be familiar with.

11. **Character Traits:** Writers need to exercise caution when integrating the content of public obituaries into Last Post entries, especially when they describe the deceased's character. Such descriptions tend to be subjective and are very inconsistent as they are not included in every obituary. Last Post entries will focus on accomplishments, military and civilian. While there is occasional opportunity to include comments on character, be judicious in their use.
12. **Anecdotes:** Similarly, we avoid repeating the 'anecdotal stories' that are occasionally seen in obituaries unless a neutral observer or source substantiates them. Many such stories can be 'tall tales' or exaggerations; some are untrue. We cannot perpetuate material that we cannot verify.
13. **The Canadian Military Engineers:** The CME Adjutant and CME CWO are usually the first source of accurate information and career details for persons who die while still serving. That office has the lead in providing notification of the death of a Serving Member. We usually request they pursue the matter with the unit, request suitable facts, and secure appropriate photos. Once we have that information, we will endeavour to post a Last Post entry that incorporates the information that is in the CME Adjutant's CME-wide notification.
14. **Cause of Death:** Details of the cause of death that may be seen in obituaries should be minimized in our posts. Neutral but descriptive expressions such as 'peacefully', '...after a long illness', '...suddenly at home', etc. are acceptable. Any indication that a person may have taken their own life is forbidden. This is a clear invasion of privacy and may attract unwanted attention from curious bystanders and journalists.
15. **Audit Codes:** Writers will use our standardized Audit Codes to track requirements from further research and improvement.

Writing Guide

16. Our style is best described as a compromise between what is practised within the CF and what is accepted in modern Canadian English usage. Common sense will often prevail, and we give priority to simplicity and being easily read for the facts. We aim for the 'average' reader being at the high school level.
17. The title of the Last Post should contain the rank, full name, nickname (in quotation marks), and post-nominals of the person. Appointments (as opposed to Rank) such as "Sergeant Major" will be avoided in the title but can be used generously within the body.
18. The rank will be abbreviated using the convention of the day (i.e. LCol for those who served after Integration, but Lt-Col for people who retired before 1970; Warrant Officer Class I, or CWO as appropriate). For example: Lt-Col Alan Webster, MBE, MiD, CD (Ret'd).
19. In addition to the standard practice of starting new paragraphs based on content, authors should pay additional attention to the visual impact of the published Last Post. As a guide, a first paragraph

should be limited to about 50 words, and subsequent paragraphs should generally not exceed 100 words. The following guidance refers to “first” and “next” paragraphs, etc. This does not need to be slavishly followed as it depends on the type and extent of material available and incorporated in the final text.

20. Formatting the first paragraph is often the biggest challenge. We aim to present the key details for visibility in the ~40-word panel that is employed on the Front Page of the Last Post feature. In the introductory sentence, ranks will be spelled out, in full, but post-nominals will remain abbreviated. Example: We regret to advise of the death of Lieutenant Colonel Alan Webster MBE, MiD, CD (Ret'd) at age 96 on 5 January 2004.

21. If we know a person’s rank when they left the service, “(Ret’d)” will be added after the name - both in the title and in the introductory sentence. To indicate a person died while still serving, their full name, name, etc., will be presented without the “(Ret’d).”

22. Always minimize abbreviations in the body of the Last Post. In cases where an abbreviation might help the reader and improve the layout when long titles are repeated, use the Military Writing practice of using the long form followed by an abbreviation in parenthesis. Provinces are abbreviated using the Canada Post 2-letter convention without a comma separating the two.

23. The next paragraph should include:

- a. Place and age or year of birth (no exact dates, as these can assist in identity theft)
- b. A few details on life before enlisting, if known.

24. The next paragraph should provide a focus on the person’s military career details. In some cases, these can extend over several paragraphs. Stick to the facts and avoid making subjective statements. Develop a sequential and easily read narrative of career highlights focusing on the What, When and Where.

25. See the website: <http://www.gg.ca/document.aspx?id=14979&lan=eng> for guidance on precedence. Significant honours and awards should be mentioned, preferably with some detail behind the award. While campaign and commemorative medals need not be mentioned, they should be for those where we know the justifying circumstances. Last Post entries will be linked to citations articles published on our site when appropriate. This is best accomplished by a discrete note at the foot of the Last Post.

26. If there is sufficient information available, a paragraph (or more if appropriate) covering the person’s post-military career will provide interesting and relevant content. As with service details, this should focus on accomplishments and contributions in academic, athletic, business or community service. If a person is a member of the Royal Canadian Legion, the name of the Branch should be mentioned - the Branch number is not needed. Personal life details like travel and hobbies may also be included if significant. The final part of the Last Post should include details of visitation and funeral

details. To maintain consistency throughout the Last Post feature, this information is presented in the present tense, even if these have already occurred.

27. Also, include any information on:

- a. In Memoriam donations that the family has identified, as well as where to send online condolences, and
- b. Where to send condolences.

Images

28. At the minimum, every entry will be posted with the last hat badge worn by the person. When the information we have is incomplete, or the person was a civilian employee, a CME badge will be used. When photos are available, the most recent image will be posted in the first position (with a preference for a good picture in Legion dress, if applicable and available), followed by the appropriate badge. A second picture is desirable and could be a photo of the person in uniform, from an earlier era, or something that illustrates a highlight of the individual featured in the body of the text.

29. Separate details are available on the technical requirements, but this can be summarized by understanding that to display nicely on the website requires uploading an edited JPG image of size 2" X 2" (+/- 10%) at a resolution of about 250 DPI. A cropped JPG photo of size about 200-250 KB will generally work well.

Document Control

30. To aid control and document management, the Subject Line in emails should embody the same practice used in creating a Subject Line in good military writing practice. For the bulk of the routine, work-up email communications, applicable combinations of the terms "Last Post" and "Name" in the Subject Line will suffice to locate and archive the material in the PC and facilitate any discussions. For final submissions, in particular, we should use the form: [Subject: Last Post: Lt Col Alan Webster, MBE, MiD, CD \(Ret'd\)](#), where the file name is the same as the title of the Last Post entry.

4 October 2023