

Well it has come time for Major Tony Thornhill to get those ponies moving and to take his life in a new direction. As of 8 April 2008 after 33 years and 7 months, he will be releasing from the Regular Force and continuing his military adventure with the Air Reserves. He will be working for the Wing Logistics and Engineering Officer at 14 Wing Greenwood. Coincidentally, 14 Wing is the area of this country where Linda and Tony have selected to be their final home.



To say that he has had a colourful career is probably a gross understatement. There will surely surface many stories that will start with “Do you remember when Tony....”. While he will not and probably cannot deny the event, he is sure that the circumstances surrounding these precious events have become slightly skewed over the passage of time.

Unlike many traditional bios that I have read over the years, his will be slightly different – somewhat like Tony himself. Of course I will include the traditional lines of where he has served and what interesting jobs (read challenges) that he has had over the course of his career.

While he does not have any great stories stemming from the recruiting process, it was not long before the repertoire of stories started. Recruit training at Cornwallis introduced him to many of the characters that he would interact with over the years. The one recruit who would be in and out of his life was Jeff Carlisle, who incidentally was the “Most Improved Recruit” and I will permit Jeff to explain how that honour came to be. Suffice to say, it was well deserved. Most of the other firefighters that were at “Boot Camp” with Tony have moved on to other interests outside the CF.

The QL3 course was his first real introduction to the firefighting world and of course, as it is today, each member had his or her own idea of how training should be done in order to get the best product. On QL3, he was exposed to the kinder, gentler leadership style (NOT) of folks like Glen Herman and Robbie Nye. Outside of the fact that the instructors would reignite the POL fire behind him during extinguisher training and that the traditional hosing down in the back of the deuce and a half by the Sicard led to a rear end collision that resulted in a shortened version of the deuce and 19 students slightly rattled, he and the other graduates were sent to the field ready to save the world.

Well the reality of the world came home to roost when he was posted to CFB Summerside and was made i/c of the mop. All the great skills he gleaned from his training went South quickly. As a new private he was not permitted to drive/operate the vehicles and really had nothing to offer other than filling a pair of boots. Of course, this was not the case with all his supervisors and Ben Murray was one that gave him the opportunity to learn. And learn he did. At the time, the G13 was today's version of the QRV and of course as a new private, Tony was allowed to perform weekly checks but not operate. That was until his fingers got him in trouble and he inadvertently or stupidly, your choice, charged the 1000 lb Dry Chemical tank. Sgt Murray advanced his training by permitting him to complete the recharge procedures all by his lonesome. Remember the two 400 cubic foot nitrogen cylinders – well he sure does.

After his quick learning in Summerside the Career Manager felt that despite his desire for a sea posting (he felt that Tony was unduly influenced) the Career Manager felt that Tony was better suited to help the free world as part of the NATO forces stemming the flow of Communist aggression in Baden, Germany. Off to Germany he went and was a very quick learner in the way that the firefighters acted in Baden. Within two weeks on the ground, he had two recorded warnings for dress & deportment and tardiness. Alcohol was in vogue at the time so that part was left off the R&W. Of course there was the experience of the "stolen" Jeep, the all night patio parties, the Monday morning raking from the Deputy Chief (John Kuruliak) – the only thing that changed on the Monday was who went into the DFC's office first – Ron Pennell or Tony. Maybe Ron can elaborate on their time as coaches of the girls Softball Team and their tournament in Lahr. The investigation must be completed by now. There are many other events from Germany and Tony is sure they will surface over time. Of course, it was in Germany that he truly started to develop both personally and professionally. There are few people that truly influence us enough to cause change and in Baden, Tony was fortunate enough to have two – Sgt Bill Rogers and CWO Peter Keough.

From Germany, it was off to sea onboard HMCS Athabaskan and the adventure continued. There was of course the case of Tony being promoted to PO2 in the flats of HMCS Fraser so that he could enter the Chiefs' and PO' Mess for a cool one and being introduced as Terry Muldoon. Apparently, Terry and Tony looked alike because it was only a short time later that the Career Manager (John Daley) also thought that Tony was

Terry and Tony had Terry's career opportunities presented to him. As it turns out, both paths have served them well. And who could forget the shutting down of the ship's radar as the Athabaskan steamed along at 23 knots down the St. Lawrence river in December – more finger problems. Tony was banned from the bridge area for a short time after that incident. Then there was the armed boarding of the two Spanish fishing vessels where the troops had the guns but the XO (Admiral Buck) had the bullets. There was always Jeff Carlisle to keep Tony's life interesting. There were the BBQs in Jeff's backyard, the cold ham supper on New Year's Day and their wonderful afternoon learning to play the piano at the Sackville legion as well as their mattress on the roof of the car and the fence-building event.

After his sea adventure, which he thoroughly enjoyed, Tony was off to North Bay. It was here that his aspiration for Commissioning was fuelling and obviously supported. In the short time at North Bay, he was presented with many opportunities to excel and show his abilities. It was thanks to folks like WO Don Roy and MWO Don Armstrong that he was selected for tasks that members that were more senior desired. Tony hopes that he did not disappoint them.

Commissioning brought about more opportunities and challenges than even Tony could fathom. Of course, the greatest gift that came with commissioning was the friends and colleagues that he made within the Engineer Branch. However, while he was participating in the training he did not always see it that way. It was only years later that the friendships that he made in Chilliwack paid dividends. If Tony has a message for our junior members and future fire service leadership, it would be to covet the Military Engineer Branch and embrace all the opportunities that it offers.

As a Military Engineering Officer, he had the opportunity to gain experience in a wide field of endeavours. He has gained experience as an Instructor at CFSME, CE operations officer, requirements officer, and acting WCEO. He was also provided with the opportunity to be a member of an EOD team and the EOD Centre chief. No pun intended but according to Tony, that job was a blast. In addition to these wonderful challenges, he was also provided with two deployment opportunities – one to Bosnia and the other to Afghanistan. After many years of preparing and waiting, he took to these tasks with great enthusiasm. It was the culmination of all his skills within the Officer classification.

He would like to think that he has become a hybrid of all the people who have had a positive influence on his military life and that he has taken the best of their character and developed his own. The people who have had the most influence upon his being who he is today have covered the span of his whole career. From the early days in Germany where Bill Rogers and Peter Keough provided him with great guidance and sound advise to the Navy where Dennis Moore played a very positive role in his future. Once into the Officer world, his moulding continued and through the leadership and guidance of such fine Officers as LCol Darlene Quinn, he was able to hone his Military Engineering skills and advance. To those folks he will be forever grateful for their guidance, influence, and faith in him and his abilities. He thanks them all and will not forget their contribution to his success. His only hope is that he has not and will not disappoint them.

Tony and Linda will be residing in the Greenwood area at a residence not yet determined until the HHT is finished. Best wishes, anecdotes (all humorous – it is Tony) and tales that should not be recounted can be sent to CWO Bruce Paradis at the following addresses:

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