



Lieutenant-Colonel DS(Pal) Mann, CD, P.Eng

With a start as a Militia Sapper in 1982 solely to earn some summer money, little did Lieutenant-Colonel Mann know he was embarking on what would become a 33 year-long journey with the Canadian Military Engineers. After innocent reflection on what a military future could hold, he successfully applied for and attended RMC Kingston. Shortly after graduation, he started “living the dream”, receiving the Military Engineer Training Squadron’s stamp of approval to join Canada’s NATO Brigade in Germany - a young, keen, observant, but occasionally unpredictable, subaltern.

Serving with the field force as ACORN, field troop commander, field squadron SUNRAY MINOR, SEAGULL, field squadron commander, and a Regimental DCO, spanning 12 years of service with both 4 CER Lahr, 33 FES Calgary, and 1 CER Chilliwack and Edmonton, he has fond memories of the FNC1A1, SNOWBALLS, the Donau River, peace time prepared targets (the Vollmeisters’ Daughters), the Lynx recce vehicle, camouflaged tubes, sportsplatzs, mine dumping programs, the M577 Queen Mary command post, changing track, the 524 set, Militia Squadron exercises with only six sappers, the Sarcee Training Area, The Jolly Miller, the Battle River, MLC 60 overbridges, shower runs, Regimental smokers, MEATCO beef jerky, and Sappers of every shape and description.

But life is not all FOA, FE Camps, bridge gallops, rum rations and veal track pads, and he has done his time serving as a staff officer at the strategic and operational levels with both the Canadian Army Staff and the Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Command. In these posts he learned that the cubicle-dwelling, paper-pushing, bus riding, oxford-wearing, DEU 3B bedecked crowd plays a crucial role in setting the conditions for the Canadian soldier’s success on operations and training. So, sufficiently motivated (for a Staff Officer), he developed a resiliency for fighting against the green wave dashing to catch public transport to the suburbs as he and his Army G3 cube-mates were left to deal with the all-too-common Friday afternoon operational urgency or MINQUIRY. As a “mirthless officer with a heart made of feldspar”, he used his operational experience, forged from two operational tours, to shape the operational readiness plans to deal with the multitude of lessons identified during NATO operations in Bosnia and Afghanistan.

All this experience provided a platform on three different occasions from which to practice what became his professional passion – training and educating the young men and women of the Armed Forces: first as the Senior Instructor Tactics responsible for training aspiring young Army Engineer Officers and strengthening experienced Sapper NCOs; next setting the conditions for the development of all Canadian Military Engineers as Commandant of the Canadian Forces School of Military Engineering; and, finally as the Engineer Directing Staff, the Dean, and the Deputy Commandant at the Canadian Army Command and Staff College. Throughout his very rewarding time in Training Systems, he worked hard to prepare officers and NCMs for the challenges of military careers and the business of managing violence on behalf of the nation. While all positions provided great challenges and equally large frustrations, the great reward of mentoring students and watching graduates excel at the business of leadership and command was more than worth the considerable effort.

Interspersed throughout Regimental and Staff tours were fantastic opportunities to serve overseas: as the 41 Field Squadron 2IC with 4 CER in Vukovar, Croatia as part of UNPROFOR in 1992; as the Field Engineer Squadron Commander with the 2 PPCLI Battle Group, SFOR in Zgon, Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1997; and finally as the CEFCOM/CJOC LO to the UK’s Permanent Joint Headquarters on the outskirts of London from 2009-2012. As the LO he helped inform and shape Canada’s war efforts in Afghanistan, counter-piracy operations in the Horn of Africa, and effected coordination with Allies and partners for several non-combatant evacuations in the wake of the Arab Spring, and during the RCAF combat operations in Libya.

Other career souvenirs included questions such as “What’s brown and falls from the sky?” [reference to 1990’s unfortunate FIBUA rappel], Slivovitz and Orange Fanta as a morning libation, a fantastic last Regimental tour as DCO 1 CER including the infamous “sabre and mountain bike” incident, the underwater combat diver graduation, and countless hours of unequalled camaraderie at the super-sized, mega-Sapper Tables in both the Edmonton and Gagetown Officers’ Messes, all the while solving the world’s problems amidst the wails of “Jug in!” and “Jug out!” and the occasional Daily Occurrence Book entry.

Lieutenant-Colonel Mann leaves the Royal Canadian Engineers, the Canadian Military Engineers, the Army and the Canadian Armed Forces with countless stories and fantastic memories, tremendous experiences, hard earned proficiencies, and an innumerable multitude of friends, mentors and good influences. He is off to Edmonton to pursue opportunities with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA). Both he and his wife Sue hope that the welcome shadows of the CAF, Army, and Engineer families cross their threshold regularly to share stories and partake in a wee dram of Sapper merriment.

Ubique, Ductores Docemus, Tam Marte Quam Minerva, Chimo!