

Major HJ Berghuis, CD



Henry John Berghuis enrolled in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in London, ON as a Direct Entry Officer on 7 September 1988. At the age of 26, he was single and looking for a vocation that would stretch him mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Releasing exactly 30 years later, by God's grace he is now married with four teenaged children, and grateful to the CAF for opportunities that exceeded those desires.

The first two years of shaping Second Lieutenant Berghuis as a MILE officer were mostly effected in Chilliwack, at CFOCS and CFSME. There, the purple vistas of Mount Cheam or the stunning array of blossoms surrounding the parade square made the drudgery of drill tolerable. Between CFOCS and CFSME, he relished a season of French language training at ELFC in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, despite the trials of living in The Mega.

In August 1990, Lieutenant Berghuis joined 25 Engr Regt, British Army of the Rhine, in Osnabruck, Germany as the Comd of 2 Tp, 12 (Nova Scotia) Fd Sqn RE. By January 1991, he was en route to the Gulf War on Op GRANBY as the first Vehicle Launched Scatterable Mine System (VLSMS) Tp Comd. Experiencing the multi-national capability development that NATO now calls smart defence, his troop travelled to Bourges, France to train on the GIAT Minotaur mine launching system, and to Coventry, England to train on the ALVIS Stormer vehicle. Eventually, his troop went into battle with three VLSMS, the third one arriving in theatre one hour before the ground campaign began. He returned to Germany in March 1991. Serving for two years as a single Canadian officer with the British Army in Germany provided numerous life-enriching experiences, as well as many learning-from-mistakes opportunities.

In August 1992, Captain Berghuis was posted to 1 CER in Chilliwack, and in October deployed to Daruvar, Croatia on Op HARMONY as the Int Offr. Returning to Chilliwack in April 1993, he was 2IC and then OC 11 Fd Sqn until the unit stood up 17 Fd Sqn in January 1994. He deployed as 2IC 17 Fd Sqn on Op CAVALIER to Visoko, Bosnia in May 1994. There, God's plan for his life took a dramatic turn. On leave in June, he joined a group on a tour of Holy Land sites in Egypt, Israel, Turkey and Greece. He fell in love with a young lady in the group, Heather Rooks, and by August they were engaged. He returned to Chilliwack in November, topped Phase I of the ATO Course at RMCS Shrivenham, England from January to June 1995, and was posted to CFSME in July. He and Heather were married that same month.

From July 1995 to June 1998, Captain Berghuis was the Mine Warfare and Demolitions Tp Comd, moving with CFSME from Chilliwack to Oromocto in January 1998. As difficult as it was to move from the panoramic legion of greens overlooking the Slesse Demolition Range to the plains of Gagetown where no mountains block the view, the honour of leading some of the best combat engineering instructors in the world endured. He remained with CFSME from July 1998 to July 2001 as the Field Engineering Standards Officer. His children Peter and Hannah were born in Fredericton in 1999 and 2000, respectively.

In July 2001, Captain Berghuis was posted to CFJHQ in Kingston as J Engr Plans. By the end of his first week, he was landing in Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as the TF Engr on Op FORAGE, his third tour to the former Yugoslavia. He returned to Kingston 45 days later, the 30-day mission complete. He fulfilled two other short deployments while at CFJHQ, Op APOLLO A/TF Engr in Tampa in April 2002 and Op GRIZZLY Duty Officer in Calgary in July 2002. His fourth CFJHQ tour was from June to July 2003 on Op ATHENA in Kabul, Afghanistan as Engr Ops on the Theatre Activation Team.

In August 2003, Major Berghuis was posted to RMC, where he completed a Master's degree in Environmental Engineering. In Kingston, his family grew to its current size, with Sarah arriving in 2002 and Lydia in 2004. In December 2005, he was posted to DGE in Ottawa. His time at DGE was terminated after only eight months when he was posted to the nascent CANSOFCOM HQ as J3 Engr Plans in August 2006. In February 2007, he deployed on Op ATHENA to Kandahar, Afghanistan as the Deputy TF Engr. He completed his tour in August, content to have been chained to a desk as a Deputy, with four young children at home.

From July 2008 to July 2010, Major Berghuis was the BCEO at CFB Wainwright. Wainwright was a highlight for the privilege of leading and working with highly professional civilians and soldiers, for seeing his family flourish in a small yet comprehensive community, and for exploring the vastness of "big sky" country and the Canadian Rockies.

From July 2010 to July 2014, A/WSE Lieutenant-Colonel Berghuis served as the Staff Officer (Environmental Management) at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium. At various times instructor, custodian/co-author or working group Panel Chair, he left his fingerprint on NATO's environmental protection and military engineering doctrine and terminology, organization and personnel, and training and education. Immersion with his family in a kaleidoscope of European cultures and communities magnified the posting's richness.

In July 2014, Major Berghuis returned to Canada as the CJOC J Engr Environment, where he savoured two years of furthering his NATO work and providing environmental protection support to Canadian operations. Six years of supporting NATO and Canadian operations more than compensated for, and far exceeded the pleasures of, the minimal payback in 2005 for the DGE-sponsored Environmental Engineering degree. In July 2016, he changed roles at CJOC to J Engr Infrastructure, with a focus on CJOC's domestic real property requirements.

Since July 2017, Major Berghuis has served in his present position as the CF RP Ops Gp HQ Coord. He is looking forward to joining CJOC on 7 September 2018 as a public servant in the position of Corporate Infrastructure and Real Property Engineer. With two children in university and two in high school, retirement from the working force is still a distant ambition!

You are cordially invited to a celebration of Major Berghuis' career on 30 August 2018 at the RCAF Officers' Mess in Ottawa. Reflecting on 30 years, it's people who have contributed most to the images, impressions and influences collected on these two pages. Major Berghuis is particularly grateful to those (too many to mention) COs, OCs, RSMs and SSMs who mentored, admonished or otherwise guided him. Chimo!