



Volume 2006/Issue 1
February 2006



The GROUND SHEET

The Official Publication of
The Royal Westminster Regiment Association

*'Dedicated to the ideals and comradeship
we knew in wars and peace in our
services both home and abroad.'*

'Pro Rege et Patria'

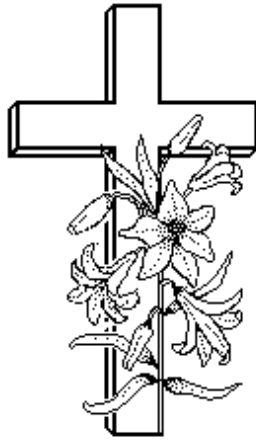
P.O. Box 854, New Westminster, BC. V3L 4Z8

**Come Join the Melfa Italy Trip in May! Be Part of the
Celebration and Historical Occasion! See Inside!**

**Melfa Weekend Moved to June This Year!
See Inside For Details.**

**Get Your Westie Regimental Association Accoutrements!
Ties, Blazer Crests, Hat Badge and More.**

**Your Regimental Association is now the Official 'Sponsor'
of an Army Cadet Corps!!!!**



In Memoriam

Harry C. ALBERS, July 2005, Wetaskiwin AB.*

William A. BLACKWELL, March 2005, Princeton BC.*

James LEWTHAITE, January 2005, Maple Ridge BC.*

Russell J. MCKAY, February 2005, Port Coquitlam BC.*

Harold J. MOGGIE, November 2004, Manitoba.*

Jack RESCH, March 2005, Surrey BC.*

Peter ADLEM, January 2006, Victoria BC.

*(*Courtesy RC Legion Magazine Last Post)*

Health & Welfare

Word was received that Len **Bailey** from Nanaimo suffered a heart attack while down in Arizona this past November. Len is back at home and apparently recovering well. All the best to you Len! Get well soon!

Again, if anyone has reports of our members in need of a visit due to health reasons, please send us a note, email or call one of the Executive and we will ensure they get a well deserved visit.

Vision for a Modern-Day Veterans Charter

The following article was extracted from the Veteran Affairs web site. If you would like to learn more about the proposed New Veterans Charter go to <http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/general/>

The proposed New Veterans Charter is the result of the continuing effort by Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence (DND) to work together to provide CF members with an improved quality of life.

"Our new Veterans Charter represents a pivotal investment in the futures of future veterans. In this Year of the Veteran, we will be delivering the tools and opportunities for veterans to build better lives for themselves and their families." - Minister Guarnieri

Introduced immediately following the Second World War, the existing Veterans Charter developed programs and services for war service veterans. Over the years, these programs have evolved to meet their changing requirements. However, for today's younger Canadian Forces (CF) veterans, the existing services and benefits offered by the Department do not adequately meet their unique needs.

Over the years, Veterans Affairs Canada has been a world leader in providing care and support to war service veterans. The Government of Canada's decision to introduce a New Veterans Charter will not change any of the benefits war service veterans currently receive and rely upon. However, an additional benefit of these upcoming changes will see existing clients qualifying for some of the new programs.

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I Saw Jimmy Hoffa Driving a G Wagon!

Well not really. I just used that to attract you to my column. I write this just as December is approaching. Remembrance Day has past and the **Year of the Veteran** is coming to an end. I believe the Year of the Veteran is every day of every year. I was proud to be the Chairman of the City of New Westminster's Remembrance Day Committee again this year. The fact the day was a lousy cold and rainy one did not deter the many who arrived at the Armoury and took in the service. Most then braved the elements and marched to the cenotaph. Thank you all for attending.

It is a sad day as well as today I watched the casket of Private Braun **Woodfield** come off the CF Airbus after it landed at CFB Trenton. One thing really annoyed me the other day when my Province paper arrived. The front page was all about the Grey Cup. Certainly a big event but buried three pages in was the news about Pte. Woodfield. I would like to meet the insensitive editor who made the decision to place the news of a football game ahead of a Canadian soldier killed overseas. Idiot!

Christmas 2005 has just gone by and we on the 'wet coast' are really getting wet aren't we? I hope you and your family had a good Christmas. Yes CHRISTMAS! Not 'Holiday Season' or anything else that some think is more politically correct. Glad to see enough have spoken up about that issue and it seems the 'Merry Christmas' group have won. We certainly respect all faiths and denominations but lets be reasonable. I think this country does and pretty good job celebrating everyone's holidays and special events. That's what makes this country what it is - Canada!

Do I have a New Year's resolution? Nope! I never do that. I know I need to loose weight and a few other things but making a resolution this time of the year is more apt to fail than succeed. The odds are against it. My only wish is that when I am looking over the obits each morning in the paper that my names doesn't appear. That would surely disappointment me to see it!

Don't you wish that when a Federal election is on and the candidates promise the world when it comes to defence (and other areas) spending that you only wished they would keep it? In today's (Dec 28) Province an article about what the Harper government would do for the Navy and Air on the west coast. That is great but what the heck about the Army? We need a regular army back in BC. Our Reserve force needs that support as well as it helps build a better bond between the two not to mention the use of the resources and support. You can't do that from 750 kilometres away. By the time you read this the election will be a thing of the past and who knows what group will be in charge. Lets hope whoever it is looks after the CF.

As you can see the dates of the Melfa Weekend have changed to June 17 and 18. That is to accommodate those that will be heading to Italy and can still attend the weekend here. It is also planned that when the contingent returns from Italy they will conduct a nice presentation to the group at the Melfa Weekend. Something to look forward to.

It is now 21 January and two days before the Federal Election. I decided to volunteer my time that day to work at a polling station as a Poll Clerk. Sort of a community spirit duty. I am looking forward to it and so far the coordination and training I have received from Elections Canada has been great. It is going to be a long day (13-14 hours) but you do receive a small stipend in return. I will let you know how it goes in the next issue. My day that is, not the election! That you will no doubt hear about yourself.

I write this editor's column somewhat like a diary and my thoughts in hopes that people enjoy whatever dribble I have to say. I've never been one to 'soapbox' but since publishing a book and writing a few articles, I enjoy the opportunity. I don't try to be offensive or show much attitude, I just write what I am doing or what I think people would enjoy reading about. Pretty simple! And anyone from this Association has the same opportunity to send in their 'dribble' if they choose and as long as it isn't offensive or overly political, we can publish it. I encourage any of the active soldiers to write about their experiences so far in their career as a PRes member. A few paragraphs is all we need. This newspaper goes around the world to about 450 members. Why not inform them of what you, today's soldier is doing in the day to day training and exercises you are involved in. It would make some interesting reading.

In closing this issue, as you can see we have lost more former serving members of the Regiment. As the months goes by we will see more and that is a fact of life. ***We will remember them!*** Ted Usher

Are Your Dues Up To Date?

The Royal Westminster Regiment Association depends on your dues and donations. Yearly dues are \$15 and a Life Membership is \$100. How about a tax deductible donation? You can identify where you want the donation to go. The Future Fund, Cadets, Health & Welfare, or whatever you feel is worthwhile. Whatever you support, it is appreciated. Send in your dues today. Thanks.

**MELFA WEEKEND
NEW DATE**

16, 17, 18 JUNE

DETAILS IN MAY ISSUE!

News Flash!

News Flash!

Where the Heck Are They?

These people are missing their Groundsheet because they have moved and not told us where they are now. If you know them, please have them contact us and let us know their new address.

Olive Rogers - Maple Ridge

T.G. Clemas - Richmond

Larry Beckett - Port Moody

Ken Knipstrom - Maple Ridge

Peter Kosh - Richmond

Aubrey Coutts - Surrey

W.E. Jeffrey - Edmonton

Douglas Franklin - Comox

Walter Kearsley - Lindsay Ontario

Jack Laing - Bellingham Washington

Rob Brandreth-Gibbs - Vancouver

Presidents Report

HAPPY NEW YEAR!! Holly and I extend good health and prosperity to all the Regimental family for **2006**. I don't know about you but we had a great celebration. Far tooooooo much fun!

Your executive is having it's first meeting for 2006 February 6th. The new CO, LCol Matthew **Haussmann** was in attendance at the last meeting in December and is very excited about working with us. It is wonderful to see he has an obvious commitment to the Association. Always appreciated in a new CO.

We are looking for all those interested Association members interested in going to Italy this May. You must make sure the coordinator of this trip, Jerry **Gangur**, knows of your intention. Any Cadets from our 5 affiliated army cadet corps need to forward their essays and applications in order to win the seat to Italy. (This should have been done by 15 Jan.)

Shane **Michalowski** is working on the next fund raising event for the Association. I believe an Hawaiian Luau will be the theme. Any other ideas can be forwarded to Shane.

Len **Wohlgemuth** tells me the new accoutrements are just about ready for production and we are waiting on orders. If you intend to purchase any of these items, please send in a cheque ASAP. Our Bursary at the New Westminster Secondary School (NWSS) is rapidly coming up. Anybody within the Regimental family (including nieces, nephews etc.) are encouraged to apply. The secretary at NWSS will have all the details.

The executive will be discussing the move of the Melfa weekend celebration from May to June. This is due to the overwhelming response of members attending the Italy trip in May. You will be notified in the May issue of the Groundsheet as to the changes and what we are planning for that special weekend. Perhaps a change of time for the dinner to an afternoon event will help some of the more senior members an opportunity to attend during the day time hours. We know that driving at night is not easy when you are a senior. We will see what we can do.

Remember WE are always looking for the "Lost" members of the Regimental family. If you know of anyone who was in the Regiment and not a member of this association, tell him/her to join up! I hope to see you all at the Melfa celebrations. Please keep in touch.

PRO REGI ET PATRIA

Brian Knipstrom, President

News Release, December 16, 2005 (Veteran Affairs web site)

Canada Mourns the Passing of One of Canada's Few Remaining Veterans of the First World War

Ottawa - On behalf of all Canadians, the Honourable Albina Guarnieri, Minister of Veterans Affairs, today expressed her condolences to the family of a Canadian First World War Veteran, William "Duke" Procter, 106, who died December 15, 2005.

"The passing of Mr. Procter reminds us of how important it is to honour and remember those who have served our nation," said Minister Guarnieri. "Too soon, sadly, our country will no longer have Veterans from the First World War. The Year of the Veteran is coming to an end but our debt of gratitude

Continued on page 6

The Regiment

A quick update to all current and former Westies out there. I hope you are all well and I hope to see as many of you as possible out for the Melfa festivities. This year has been a particularly busy one with the Regiment running two courses in the fall (machine gun and junior leadership) and then switching gears to prepare for a high-tempo, week-long brigade exercise over spring break. Needless to say the unit NCOs and officers have been particularly busy but as always have risen to the challenge. In the middle of this, we have received a preliminary call for volunteers to augment a battalion-sized task force based on 3 PPCLI that is preparing to deploy overseas in February 2007. While a theatre hasn't yet been specified at time of writing, the two likeliest are Haiti and Sudan. So far 42 Westies have stepped forward which, if they all deploy, would make this the largest deployment of Westies since the Second World War. I'm extremely proud of every soldier that has volunteered.

Since taking command in September, I have been working to emphasize three of my priorities: physical fitness, marksmanship and Regimental identity. At the Soldier's Christmas Dinner, Pte P.J. **Brinson** was recognized as the Regimental PT Champion for 2005 and Cpl A. **Richards** was recognized as the Regimental Marksman for 2005. Our current training and operations tempo has been so high that we have neglected Regimental history for a number of years. To rectify this, starting in January every soldier eligible for promotion will have to pass a test of Regimental history before being recommended.

With these measures in place, Westies will continue to set the standard within 39 Bde and we're well poised to lead 39 Bde into the future. On a final note, we're in the middle of a big push for recruits. If any of you know of suitable young men and women, encourage them to call recruiting at 604-666-4282 to learn more about how to become a Westie.

M.P. Haussmann LCol, Commanding Officer

Continued from page 5

continues and we will never forget. "William Procter was born on his father's homestead at Mable Lake, British Columbia on August 18, 1899. As a child, he learned the trade of logging, which would become useful during his stint in the Armed Forces.

Mr. Procter enlisted in March 1916 and was sent to England later that same year. Too young for active duty in the battlefields of France, he helped the war effort by working in a bush camp, cutting timbers for the tunnels at Vimy Ridge and elsewhere. Mr. Procter remained in England for three years. At the end of November, Clarence (Clare) Laking, one of Canada's few remaining Veterans of the First World War, passed away at age 106.

With the passing of Mr. Procter and Mr. Laking, Canada has only three known surviving Veterans of the First World War:

Lloyd Clemett, Toronto, ON, P. Dwight Wilson, Oshawa, ON, John F. Babcock, Spokane, WA

(Editor's note - I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Proctor at the Vernon Army Cadet Summer Training Centre in 2004. Mr Proctor was brought to the camp to watch our Drumhead Service. It was truly a memorable moment meeting someone who had experienced so much. **Ted Usher**)

The Cadets

A significant milestone passed recently. The Royal Westminster Regiment Association became the official Sponsor for the 2316 The Royal Westminster Regiment Army Cadet Corps. This corps is housed in the armoury and for eons was Sponsored by the Regiment.

What does a Sponsor do? You can look at it like a guardian for the cadet corps. DND and the Army Cadet League of Canada (ACLC) are responsible for the Army Cadet Program in Canada. DND supplies the funds for Officers, Staff, most training and a variety of other things. The ACLC through it's Provincial branch offices provide support through Sponsors and Sponsoring Committees. A Sponsor can be any group like the Royal Canadian Legion, Lions, or other associations. The Sponsor is basically responsible to provide accommodations for the corps. They can also assist in providing funds and recruiting staff for the corps. The Sponsoring Committee is made of people from the community (parents and other interested individuals) who form a committee to help support the CO and corps with recruiting and fund raising.

The Vice Chief of Defence Staff instructed all army cadet corps sponsored by Reg Force and Militia units to break away from being Sponsors. As a result, the process began last year to have the Association become the Sponsor. Official documents were completed by the Executive and sent through the chain and DND recently announced that the Association is now the official Sponsor of 2316 RCACC in New Westminster. Does that mean the CO of the Regiment can evict the cadets from the Armoury and no longer support them. No! The Association is obviously part of the Regimental Family and everyone associated to the Regiment knows how important the cadet movement is. Matter of fact it makes it easier for the CO and Regiment to support the cadet corps. The main reason for the change is that Primary Reserve units do not receive funds to support cadets. There is however, a common commitment that all CF units must support cadet units when possible. Matter of fact the new CO, LCol **Hausmann** has gone out of his way very early in his tenure to show his support for his affiliated cadet corps.

So what does this mean to you, the Association member? The cadets need support financially. When the call goes out for support, please provide it in whatever form you can. Any funds donated are subject to a tax deductible receipt. The present Executive is in full support and are committed to fulfilling the responsibility as the Sponsor for the cadet corps. At this time, 75 young Canadians are dressed in the cadet uniform sporting the Westie shoulder patch. From time to time the cadet corps will holding fund raising initiatives and your support will certainly be appreciated.

It is also important to mention, as many of you know already, the Regiment has four other affiliated army cadet corps wearing the Westie patch. 1922 Aldergrove, 1838 Maple Ridge, 2822 Surrey and 2947 in Agassiz. All cadet corps are looking for support in your community. If you can help them out with equipment, funds, manpower, or anything else, please do so. **They are our future!**

Speaking of cadets, the Association is going to send one Army Cadet from one of the Regiments affiliated cadet corps to Italy. A small competition will be conducted to choose the candidate. The Association will pay the almost \$3000 bill to send the cadet. If you would like to donate some money to help off set this wonderful opportunity for one of Canada's youth, then please do so. We're sure they'd appreciate it.

Melfa River Crossing Commemorative Project (Italy)

May 21 – 1 June 2006

Committee Chairperson Jerry Gangur

The Royal Westminster Regiment Association and The Royal Westminster Regiment in cooperation with the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) and the Strath's Association will participate in an historic project commemorating the successful crossing of the Melfa River in May 24, 1944. Joining us in Italy will be the Italian organization that itself celebrates the Melfa Crossing. It is our plan to unveil the plaque on anniversary of the battle which occurred some 62 years ago.

In the following pages you will find the inscription that will be placed on the commemorative plaque at the Melfa Crossing location in Italy. It must be communicated and known by all our members that the final wording on this plaque was the result of input and efforts from a number of sources. Special thanks must go to Walter **Tyler**, Basil **Morgan**, Hon Col. Leslie **Deane** and the current commanding officer LCol. Matthew **Hausmann**. Help in the suggestions made by the commanding officer of the Lord Strathcona's, LCol. Paul **Fluery** and his staff must also receive high praise. Not to be forgotten is the assistance offered by the Colonel of the Regiment (LdSH), Colonel Mark **Egener**.

As members are aware, plans to place a commemorative plaque at the Melfa Crossing have been discussed over the last few years. Plans for an unveiling in 2004 and 2005 had to be postponed. In both instances, shortage of funds proved to be the main obstacle. When this fact was published in the Groundsheet, Bus **Morrison** of Montlairy Cottage, By Alvah Banffshire, Scotland AB4 3X0, forwarded a donation sufficient to cover the costs related to construction and placement of the plaque. For this our Association will remain forever grateful. Acknowledgement must also be made of Doug **Morgan's** financial assistance in moving forward with this project in years 2004 and 2005. We continue to have other costs associated with this project and donations for this specific endeavour will always be appreciated. Following our return from ceremonies in Italy, names of all donors will be published as an historical record and filed with the Historical Society for display in the museum. Should anyone have questions regarding the financial side of the project, do not hesitate to contact me at jgan@telus.net or 604.984.4515.

Advance Parties 2004 and 2005

In 2004 and 2005 representatives from our Association went to Italy and met members of the Italian association that celebrates the Melfa Battle. The Westies include George **Dominick** and Len **Bailey** and from the Regiment Capt. Ben **Pong**. All came back with glowing reports of their reception by the Italians. The Melfa veterans report that the site where the plaque is to be placed is within 500 yards of the actual Melfa Crossing.

**News Flash: Melfa Crossing Commemorative Ceremony:
We have confirmed with our Italian hosts that the Commemorative
Plaque unveiling ceremony will be held on the 25th of May 06.**

The Melfa River Crossing Commemorative Project (Italy)

Travel Itinerary May 21 – I Jun 06

Those wishing to participate in this historic tribute are asked to make travel arrangements through
Special Travel International 3503 East Hastings Street Vancouver, BC V5K 2A8
Tel: 604-291-1332 or 1-800-665-0998 Fax: 604-291-1378 Email sti@intergate.ca

Presented here is a abbreviated travel itinerary and program arranged for the Melfa River Crossing Commemorative Project. Parts of the schedule below may see minor changes as our Italian hosts have indicated they would like to have special tours.

Time Line: Italy and Return to Canada:

Day 01	Sun May 21: Depart Canada for Rome.
Day 02	Mon May 22: Arrive Rome transfer to Casino. Check into hotel and dinner.
Day 03	Tues May 23 Visit Rome/Vatican/St Peter's Basilica etc.
Day 04	Wed May 24: All day in Cassino Melfa. River Crossing ceremonies at Roccasecca.
Day 05	Thu May 25: Melfa Commemorative Crossing ceremony.
Day 06	Fri May 26: Cassino/Ortona. Morning Montecassino Abby/Polish Cemetery. Lunch then Ortona.
Day 07	Sat May 27: Ortona, Moro River War Cemetery. Casa Berardi.
Day 08	Sun May 28 Ortona – Rimini. After breakfast we 'climb' up to the mountain Republic of San Marino for lunch and in afternoon visit Rimini.
Day 09	Mon May 29: Rimini.
Day 10	Tues May 30: Rimini.
Day 11	Wed May 31: Rimini, Venice. Watertaxi into city centre and enjoy area around Piazza San Marco and the Basilica. Check in, farewell dinner.
Day 12	Thu June 01: Venice to Canada.

Costs per person:

from Vancouver:	\$ 2,990.00
from Toronto:	2,790.00
single supplement:	430.00
Calgary/Edmon/Saskatoon/ Regina/Winnipeg/Halifax	3,690.00
Montreal/Ottawa	3390.00

The costs above include:

- Air fare Canada-Rome-Venice-Canada
- Private bus and guide throughout.
- Accommodation in superior tourist class. hotels based on double occupancy.
- Breakfast and dinner every day.
- Special visits and commemorations, sightseeing and entrance fees.
- Portorage & local taxes and service charges.

Not included:

- Lunches, Insurance, Departure taxes.

For those who may make their own way to Italy, you can arrange to have a **Land Only costing.**

For those planning join us in Italy, the enclosed flyer can be used to make your reservation and purchase insurance coverage.

Production Version Melfa Plaque Inscription

Date 15 January 2006

Committee Chairperson Jerry Gangur

THE BATTLE OF MELFA RIVER CROSSING

Successful attacks by First Canadian Corps in May 1944 against the heavily defended Gustav and Hitler Lines allowed the Fifth Canadian Armoured Division to advance along the Liri Valley, to the Melfa River, a major tank barrier and the final approach to Rome.

On the afternoon of May 24th Lt. E.J. “Perky” Perkins, commanding the RECCE Troop of Lord Strathcona’s Horse (Royal Canadians), managed to cross the Melfa River with 3 tanks and 16 men at this location. They were immediately attacked by several German tanks and accompanying infantry, but managed to hold the position until reinforced by 80 men of “A” company of The Westminster Regiment(M) commanded by Major J.K. “Jack” Mahony. Mahony quickly consolidated this bridgehead. For five hours under constant heavy fire and counter attacks by German infantry and tanks, “A” company held until reinforced by “B” and “C” companies of The Westminster Regiment(M). Major Mahony, wounded in the head and twice in the leg, refused to leave his command and continued to direct and defend this bridge head. On the 25th of May, battalions from the 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade passed through this bridge head and into the Liri Valley. For his courage in this battle, Major J.K. Mahony was awarded the Victoria Cross and Lt. E. J. Perkins was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his part in this action.

The taking and holding of this position allowed the Allied Forces to continue their drive toward Rome. The Westminster Regiment (M) lost 23 killed and the Strathcona’s lost 24 killed in this battle.

The British Columbia
RESERVIST
 Published periodically by authority of the Commander, Militia Area Pacific,
 for members of the Land Reserves in British Columbia



The photo above appeared in the BC Reservist Special Recruit Edition that came out in 1977 or 78. At the time our very own Association and Museum stalwart, then BGEN **Herb Hamm** was the Commander Militia Pacific. This photo was taken as Herb, MWO F **Rossi** and Col L **Basham** were observing training during MilCon at Fort Lewis Wash. Ah - remember those days at Fort Lewis?

In the same edition, our member now living in Williams Lake - **Glen Holling** (below) shows off a museum piece, or was it part of the unit's arsenal at the time Glen!!!! The image accompanied a full page article about Glen's career in the banking world.



Captain Glen Holling, otherwise Assistant Manager Personal Loans at New Westminster Main, holds World War II Bren Gun at The Royal Westminster Regiment Armoury where he serves as a senior administrator.

Accoutrements

We have essentially finalized the accoutrements the Association will have available for purchase. We will be receiving shortly the wire badges for our approval. We are trying to make a bulk initial purchase of 200 of each item. To set this up we are looking to do 2 things. First, have members place orders for items and second have some items remaining as part of a kit shop. To do this, members can place orders for what they would like and/or make a donation to the Accoutrements Fund. So far have received to date \$1,600.00 dollars towards the Accoutrements Fund. From this \$1,600.00, \$100.00 is for a purchase and the remainder has been donated to setup the fund. We are now ready to take orders. To place the order for a quantity of 200, we will need to raise a little over \$17,000.00. We need only to put half of this down when the order is placed and the rest on delivery. We are aiming at placing the order in December. Once the order is placed we would receive the items within 4 to 6 weeks. Below is the price list.

Forest Green Beret:	\$33.00
Wire/Embroidered Cap Badge	\$20.00
Cap Badge Sewn To Beret	\$ 3.00
Wire/Embroidered Blazer Badge	\$25.00
Woven Royal Blue Tie With Cap Badges	\$26.00
Total:	\$107.00

The pricing accounts for PST, GST, setup charges, and shipping. Please make your cheque payable to The Royal Westminster Regiment Association (Accoutrements Fund). Also include the items you would like to purchase with your beret size and your address. If you are making a donation to the fund please ensure this is noted and your address is included for your tax receipt.

Len Wohlgemuth, Accoutrements Committee

Note: The sample came in for the hat badge and blazer crest and they look great. It is important you place your order quickly. Send you check to the Association today!

Would you like to read past issues of the Groundsheet? They have been posted on a web site on the internet and go back to the October 2002 issue. Here is the web site URL (address).

<http://members.shaw.ca/captain66/docs/Groundsheet/groundsheet.htm>