

THE PACIFIC COAST MILITIA RANGERS, 1942-1945

By

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## Abstract

For Canadians the Second World War traditionally evokes images of the invasion of Normandy, the Falaise Gap, and the ill-fated raid on Dieppe. Over the years Canadians who served overseas have been recognized but, at the same time, soldiers who served on the home front have been overlooked. This is because many of Canada's home defence soldiers were conscripted under the National Resources Mobilization Act, and were unwilling to go overseas. Thousands of Canadians, however, were denied entry into the regular forces because they were too old, too young, or classified as medically unfit. In British Columbia during the Second World War, these men were given the opportunity to enlist in a unique home guard unit called the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers (P.C.M.R.).

The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were organized in response to public pressure, and because existing coastal defences were inadequate. Composed of unpaid volunteers trained in guerilla tactics, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were a home defence force peculiar to British Columbia. The Rangers were not a typical military organization. Rather, they were a distinctively North American fighting force in the tradition of previous Ranger formations. A sense of historical tradition was evident in the designation of "Rangers" for British Columbia's Second World War guerilla home defence volunteers. In North America, since the 1700s, men born in and acquainted with the hinterland-frontiersmen, hunters, cowboys, and trappers proficient in the use of firearms—have been formed into irregular Ranger units in times of emergency. There is a long list of these North American Ranger organizations: Rogers' Rangers in the French and Indian War; Butler's Loyalist Rangers, the East Florida Rangers, and the Queen's Rangers in the American Revolution; the Frontier Battalion of the Texas Rangers in the revolution against Mexican

authority; Mosby's Rangers in the U.S. Civil War; and the Rocky Mountain Rangers in the Northwest Rebellion. The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were the twentieth century revival of this Ranger tradition. Throughout history, all Ranger units have used the same tactics: they employed guerilla warfare with an emphasis on surprise attacks, they operated in small units which were highly mobile, and they focussed on rifle training. A lack of formal military discipline has also been characteristic of all Ranger formations. The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, then, were not an innovation in the Canadian military experience. They were part of a distinct military tradition of irregular troops adapted to suit North American frontier conditions.

The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers reflected the character, fears, and internal conflicts of British Columbia's society. British Columbia was a predominantly white community and the P.C.M.R. mirrored the widespread white ethnic prejudices in the province. Ethnic groups were largely excluded from the Rangers and Native Indians, who were accepted as valuable recruits, were treated in a paternalistic manner.

Militant trade unionism has been an important facet of B.C. history, and trade unionists were prominent in the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. Trade unions fully supported the P.C.M.R. and Ranger membership was dominated by the working class. The labour movement's influence in the P.C.M.R. can be seen in the anxiety over the possible employment of Ranger units to break strikes.

The role of war veterans in the P.C.M.R. also reflected the composition of the larger society. First World War veterans were a well-defined group in B.C. society, and their values and outlook were revealed through their Ranger participation. The veterans' zeal and rivalry with younger Rangers indicates that their patriotism was, at times, misguided, but it was rooted in a personal need to play a visible role in the war effort.

The P.C.M.R. operated in a democratic manner: if the commander of a Ranger company was disliked by his men, he could be voted out of his position. Similarly, if Rangers

disagreed with directives from P.C.M.R. headquarters they were quick to express their displeasure and threatened resignation. This would have been impossible in the regular army, but in the P.C.M.R.—composed of citizen-soldiers—it was a commonplace pattern. The social equality between ranks, and the egalitarian way in which the P.C.M.R. operated expressed the New World frontier values of British Columbia in the 1940s.

The wartime fears and phobias of British Columbians showed in the actions of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. Life in British Columbia during the early years of the Second World War was, for the most part, as secure as life in other regions of Canada. This was changed, however, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. The aggressiveness of Japan and the stunning success of her war machine, caused panic in the Pacific Coast province about the vulnerability of B.C. to an attack. In addition, the war sharpened the already existing white racial animosity against the Japanese, and provided a socially acceptable outlet for its expression. White British Columbia has had a history of fear of Asians and, subsequently, anti-Orientalism has been a current in the province's culture. In much the same way that anti-Japanese sentiment forced the federal government to intern and evacuate British Columbia's Japanese population, so too did public outcry prompt the formation of local home guard units. These two problems—the defence of British Columbia and anti-Japanese sentiment—became manifest in the history of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers.

From the Dominion government's viewpoint, the P.C.M.R. was a valuable organization. The Rangers provided military protection at a low cost, but they also comforted a frightened population which demanded protection from a Japanese invasion. It will be argued here that while the main purpose of the P.C.M.R. was home defence, the organization became much more than that to both the government and the people of British Columbia. Quite apart from its defence role, the P.C.M.R. provided reassurance, sustained the morale of a population at war, and acted as a means to indoctrinate civilians

with military propaganda.

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## Chapter 1

### The Ranger Tradition

The Canadian military tradition depends upon irregular citizen-soldiers as much as it does upon a regular professional army. The legacy of the amateur soldier in Canada extends back to New France, and the militia units raised in the seventeenth century to protect the new colony. Within this tradition of the part-time soldier, lies a distinctive group of irregulars known as Rangers. The name "Ranger" is an historical term that surfaces time and time again in the annals of North American military history. Visions of the intrepid Ranger frontier fighter overcoming great odds and superior forces are common to novels, comic books, movies, television and, in general, to the mythology of the New World. For example, the fictional work of Kenneth Roberts, and the dramatic historical narratives of Francis Parkman have romanticized the exploits of Rogers' Rangers.<sup>1</sup> In like manner, the Texas Rangers were immortalized through dime novels and Saturday movie matinees of North American society in the 1930s.<sup>2</sup>

The story of the Rangers in colonial British North America usually begins with Robert Rogers and his famous band of irregular wilderness fighters. The term "Ranger," however, did not originate with Rogers. Ranger companies, in fact, had existed ten years before Rogers raised his first unit in 1755. The earliest Rangers were active in the northern British colonies to protect the settlements "against the skulking parties of the enemy."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1962); Kenneth Roberts, *Northwest Passage* (Toronto: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1937).

<sup>2</sup>For more on the Ranger myth as it pertains to the Texas Rangers see Julian Samora et al., *Gunpowder Justice: A Reassessment of the Texas Rangers* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

<sup>3</sup>H.M. Jackson, *Rogers' Rangers: A History* (n.p., 1953), 8.

At the same time, Gorham's Independent Company of Rangers served in Nova Scotia.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, according to Stewart Bull, Robert Rogers perfected the "organization and methods" that made Rangers a distinctive frontier fighting force.<sup>5</sup>

The creation of Rogers' Rangers was, in part, the result of the disastrous defeat of a British force, led by General Edward Braddock, at the battle of the Monongahela. In this battle, at the outset of the French and Indian War in 1755, Braddock's column of regular infantry was ambushed by a combined force of French and Indians. Half of Braddock's men were killed which led many later writers, including Ernest and Trevor Dupuy, to conclude that the "rigid linear formations of European warfare" were ineffective against "the elusive individualism of wilderness combat."<sup>6</sup> Lord Loudoun, Braddock's successor as British Commander, quickly realized that scouts were required "to act as advance guards, to procure intelligence of enemy movements, and to protect working parties or baggage trains from surprise attacks."<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, this task—that of acting as the eyes and ears of the regular forces—fell to Rogers' Rangers. Furthermore, the Rangers were at home in the wilderness and, under Rogers' leadership, they became experts at guerilla warfare. As skilled bushfighters, the Rangers were able to venture deep into enemy territory and successfully carry out raids on their encampments.<sup>8</sup>

Several important characteristics set the Rangers apart from the conventional army. Firstly, they were tactically aggressive and carried the fight to the enemy, but they would retreat in the face of a superior force. Secondly, they were expert woodsmen

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.; Stewart H. Bull, *The Queen's York Rangers: A Historic Regiment* (Erin, Ontario: The Boston Mills Press, 1984), 22.

<sup>5</sup>Bull, 22.

<sup>6</sup>R. Ernest and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History from 3500 B.C. to the Present* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 706. See also John K. Mahon, "Anglo-American Methods of Indian Warfare, 1676-1794," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45 (June 1958 to March 1959) : 265.

<sup>7</sup>Stanley M. Pargellis, *Lord Loudoun in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933), 301.

<sup>8</sup>For more information on the raids conducted by Rogers' Rangers see Jake T. Hubbard, "Americans As Guerilla Fighters: Robert Rogers and His Rangers," *American Heritage* 22 (Aug. 1971) : 81-86.

and, according to John Cuneo, could survive in the "wilderness under the most adverse circumstances, including the rigorous limitations imposed by warfare."<sup>9</sup> An example of the endurance of Rogers' Rangers is the famous raid on the Abenaki Indian village of St. Francis. In 1759, Rogers led a force of about 200 Rangers through swampy, uncharted territory, with orders to burn the village and end the threat of Abenaki raids on New England settlements. The Rangers were harried by French troops but Rogers pressed on and attacked St. Francis during the night. The village was destroyed and some 200 Indians were killed. Rogers and his men then retreated, using a different route, and embarked on a gruelling march which lasted twenty-five days, and took them through more than 200 miles of wilderness. In the end, seventeen Rangers were killed by the enemy and thirty-two starved to death.<sup>10</sup> Thirdly, unlike regular soldiers, the Rangers were lightly equipped and highly mobile. The cross-country mobility of the Rangers was necessary because of the wooded terrain, and lack of roads which rendered cavalry useless.<sup>11</sup> In addition, their uniforms were practical for the woods and enabled them to blend with the wilderness. They usually wore short green tunics, buckskin breeches, brown or green leggings, a Scotch bonnet, and moccasins.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, the British regulars were encumbered by heavier arms and equipment, and wore scarlet red tunics which provided visible targets for enemy ambushes.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the Rangers were an undisciplined lot and eschewed parade square drill for more practical combat training.

In 1757, Rogers produced "a short manual of forest fighting" which outlined his methods of guerilla warfare.<sup>14</sup> Among other things, Rogers' rules of discipline required

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<sup>9</sup>John R. Cuneo, *Robert Rogers of the Rangers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 30.

<sup>10</sup>See Bull, 29-30; Cuneo, 100-116; Isabel Gomez, "Rogers' Rangers at St. Francis" *Vermont History* 27, no.1 (Jan. 1959): 313-318; Hubbard, 83-84; Jackson, 102-109.

<sup>11</sup>Jackson, 7.

<sup>12</sup>See Bull, 22; Cuneo, 74-75; Robin May, *Wolfe's Army* (Reading: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1974), 36-37.

<sup>13</sup>Jackson, 7-8. See also Jane Bennett Goddard, *Hans Walthimeyer* (Cobourg, Ontario: Haynes Printing Co., 1980), 118 and 120.

<sup>14</sup>Bull, 25.

his troops to fall down when being fired upon; to disperse and rendezvous later if they were in danger of being surrounded; to retreat on rising ground; to avoid the usual fords when crossing rivers; and to circle back and ambush their pursuers. John Cuneo contended that Rogers had "compressed the shapeless mass of backwoods fighting experiences into a simple exposition of small unit tactics soundly based on timeless principles: mobility, security, and surprise."<sup>15</sup>

The response of the British Army to forest warfare in the French and Indian War marks a turning point in modern military tactics. The success of Rogers' Rangers, at defeating the Indians in their own style of warfare, prompted the training of regular soldiers in Ranger methods. Instruction in guerilla warfare was supervised by Rogers himself,<sup>16</sup> and a new regiment of light infantry was formed under Colonel Thomas Gage in 1758. These light infantry brigades were trained in both regular and irregular, tactics thereby combining the "unorthodox techniques of Indian and ranger warfare with the discipline of regulars."<sup>17</sup> While light infantry troops had existed previously in the British Army—mainly Highlanders—this innovation gained acceptance through the success of Rogers' Rangers in their response to the demands of warfare in the New World.<sup>18</sup>

Shortly after the outbreak of the American Revolution, the Ranger tradition was once again revived. In 1776, Robert Rogers was empowered to "raise and command a provincial corps of Loyalists to be known as the King's (later Queen's) Rangers."<sup>19</sup> Rogers, however, was not the leader he once was and his fondness for alcohol led to his eventual replacement by Major John Graves Simcoe. Simcoe, later promoted to lieutenant-colonel,

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<sup>15</sup>Cuneo, 59.

<sup>16</sup>Robert Rogers, *The Journals of Major Robert Rogers* (Dublin: J. Potts, 1770), 52.

<sup>17</sup>Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), 26. See also Edward P. Hamilton, *The French and Indian Wars* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), 191; Pargellis, 304-305.

<sup>18</sup>Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army 1509-1970: A Military, Political and Social Survey* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1970), 177; Frederick Myatt, *The British Infantry 1660-1945: The Evolution of a Fighting Force* (Poole, Dorset: Blandford Press, 1983), 57; Pargellis, 305.

<sup>19</sup>Bull, 34.

was familiar with the advantages of light infantry and proceeded to model the Queen's Rangers along these lines. It was Simcoe's purpose, as he noted in his journal, "to instill into the men, that their superiority lay in [a] close fight, and in the use of the bayonet."<sup>20</sup> Much like Rogers' Rangers, Simcoe's men were to "protect supply depots and convoys, ... to carry out operations against the enemy's lines of communication as well as to make raids and take prisoners."<sup>21</sup> Simcoe also had little use for parade ground drill and believed that "the most important duties, those of vigilance, activity and patience of fatigue, were best learned in the field."<sup>22</sup> Much attention, however, was paid to the use of the bayonet and musketry. In the tradition of Rogers' Rangers, Simcoe also refused to outfit his men in the red tunics of the British regulars. For his light corps, and its forest campaigns, where concealment was important, Simcoe chose dark green uniforms.<sup>23</sup>

The Queen's Rangers participated in many campaigns, mainly as the advance or rear guard for a larger force, and were involved in several major battles including Monmouth in 1777. The Queen's Rangers also carried out many successful raids on enemy encampments. On one such raid Simcoe led his Rangers on a twenty-four hour, fifty mile march, attacked a rebel post, captured several men including their commanding officer, Colonel Thomas, and marched back to safety.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to the Queen's Rangers, the American Revolution produced several other Loyalist Ranger units. For example, the Orange, Jessup's, King's Carolina, East Florida, King's Georgia, and Butler's Rangers all fought for the British Crown in the revolution; and, at the same time, a band of rebels, known as Herrick's Rangers, campaigned against the British.

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<sup>20</sup>J.G. Simcoe, *Simcoe's Military Journal* (New York: Bartlett & Welford, 1844), 28.

<sup>21</sup>Bull, 40.

<sup>22</sup>James Hannay, "History of the Queen's Rangers," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* (1908): 137.

<sup>23</sup>Hannay, 131 and Bull, 41.

<sup>24</sup>Bull, 48.

Butler's Rangers were perhaps the most effective, and feared, of the Loyalist Ranger units. Led by Colonel John Butler, this group was composed of American Loyalists and Indians experienced in the ways of the woods. Unlike the Queen's Rangers, who primarily acted as a "flying column in support of the regulars," Butler's Rangers were assigned to long range scouting expeditions, to harassing the enemy and rebel back settlements, and destroying as much of their food supply as possible.<sup>25</sup> Butler's Rangers spread fear among the rebels of the northern colonies by plundering and burning their settlements.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, American historians have labelled Butler's Rangers a cruel, inhuman band of marauders.<sup>27</sup> In any event, Butler's Rangers, in both their tactics and disposition, were directly influenced by Rogers' Rangers. They were irregulars who possessed an intimate knowledge of the local countryside. They were proficient marksmen and were capable of enduring "privation and fatigue" which they would encounter in the forest.<sup>28</sup> The men also had "little knowledge of drill or military discipline" but, according to Ernest Cruikshank, these were unnecessary skills for the operations undertaken by Rangers.<sup>29</sup> This neglect was explained by Governor Frederick Haldimand of Quebec:

Rangers are in general separated, and the nature of their service little requires the forms of parade or the manoeuvres practised in the field. It is the duty, and I am persuaded will be the pleasure, of every captain to perfect his company in dispersing and forming expeditiously, priming and loading carefully, and levelling well. These, with personal activity and alertness, are all the

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<sup>25</sup>Hazel C. Mathews, *The Mark of Honour* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 48.

<sup>26</sup>Philip Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 125.

<sup>27</sup>Howard Swiggett, *War Out of Niagara: Walter Butler and the Tory Rangers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), 3-5. The "Cherry Valley massacre" of 1778 is the event that is most often cited as proof of Butler's Rangers' alleged barbarity.

<sup>28</sup>Ernest Cruikshank, *The Story of Butler's Rangers and the Settlement of Niagara* (Welland, Ontario: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1893), 43.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

qualities that are effective or can be wished for in a ranger.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time, in the colonies of the deep south, the East Florida Rangers were actively fighting for the Loyalist cause. Led by Thomas Brown, the East Florida Rangers were composed of Loyalist refugees from Georgia and Carolina. Typically, Brown's company of mounted Rangers engaged in reconnaissance duties as well as defending East Florida from the rebels. In addition, the East Florida Rangers "constantly raided into Georgia to gather cattle to feed East Florida's swollen refugee population."<sup>31</sup> The men under his command were, according to Brown, "traders and packhorsemen" who were "expert woodsmen capable of swimming any river in the province... the best guides in the southern district."<sup>32</sup> Brown's Rangers, like previous Ranger units, were disdained by the British military. Aubrey C. Land effectively argues that the British could have better employed men like Brown to suppress the rebellion:

Accustomed to European warfare carried on in a theatre with an established road net and key cities, not to mention a passive population, the British could have used the first-hand knowledge of men like Brown, accustomed to the terrain and connected with the local people.<sup>33</sup>

In short, the British Army was primarily employed in combat while the Loyalist regiments were largely shunned. Had the liaison between the British Army and the Loyalists been more effective, as Land suggests, it is likely that the British would have enjoyed greater success against the American rebels.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 78-79.

<sup>31</sup>Gary D. Olson, "Thomas Brown, the East Florida Rangers, and the Defense of East Florida," in *Eighteenth Century Florida and the Revolutionary South*, ed. Samuel Proctor (Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1978), 20.

<sup>32</sup>Edward J. Cashin, *The King's Ranger: Thomas Brown And The American Revolution On The Southern Frontier* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 49.

<sup>33</sup>Aubrey C. Land, "Commentary," in *Eighteenth Century Florida and the Revolutionary South*, 32-33.

When Simcoe became Governor of Upper Canada in 1791, he raised yet another version of the Queen's Rangers. The duties of this new corps were to defend the colony, construct roads and bridges, and act as a nucleus for new settlements. Patterning these Rangers upon his previous unit, Simcoe trained them in backwoods fighting with an emphasis on marksmanship. Unlike regular soldiers, however, the Queen's Rangers were to "spend two days a week on military exercises, two on public works, and two for their private advantage."<sup>34</sup> In adapting to the Canadian frontier, the Queen's Rangers allowed soldiers to "cultivate and develop their own lands without having to leave them to give military service."<sup>35</sup> The Loyalist Ranger units of the American Revolution, and the Queen's Rangers in Upper Canada, perpetuated the tradition established by Robert Rogers in the French and Indian War. The tradition, however, suffered a hiatus in British North America when the Queen's Rangers were disbanded in 1802. It would be almost a century later before another irregular Ranger unit was raised north of the forty-ninth parallel.

In the United States, on the other hand, the Ranger tradition was kept alive in the south. The Texas Rangers, formed in 1835 at the outset of the Texas "Revolution," are a further example of the use of irregular troops on the frontier of settlement. This paramilitary force of mounted troopers was assigned the task of guarding the borders of Texas from "Indians, Mexicans, and border outlaws."<sup>36</sup> Unlike the regular army, the Texas Rangers "furnished their own horses and arms; they had no surgeon, no flag, none of the paraphernalia of the regular service."<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, as with all Ranger units throughout history, the Texas Rangers lacked formal discipline. W.P. Webb has described the Rangers' lack of military discipline as a result of the frontier:

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<sup>34</sup>Bull, 69.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>36</sup>Walter P. Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1935), 452.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 24.

the very qualities necessary for a Texas Ranger made him impatient of discipline. The natural turbulence and independence of the frontiersman made obedience distasteful to him.<sup>38</sup>

The early Frontier Battalion of the Texas Rangers was very much a part of the Ranger tradition. By 1881, however, the unsettled frontier in Texas had disappeared and the Texas Rangers were left with "no battle front, and therefore no program or plan of campaign."<sup>39</sup> The Texas Rangers no longer had an enemy to fight, and were transformed into state police, which ended their association with the Ranger tradition.

By the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War, the North American Ranger tradition was well established. In 1862, the Confederate States passed the Partisan Ranger Law which authorized bands of mounted irregulars to engage in guerilla warfare. The most effective of the many Ranger units organized was led by John S. Mosby. Mosby's Rangers followed the military tactics of wilderness warfare perfected by previous Ranger troops. They raided the enemy, trains, wagon trains, and provided valuable intelligence for the regular army. Indeed, their military successes, wrote Patricia Faust, "branded them the greatest menace to Union troops in northern Virginia."<sup>40</sup> The Union army, in fact, raised and equipped a special unit, known as Blazer's Scouts, to "hunt and destroy Mosby's band." Their mission ended in failure; the Rangers killed or wounded all but two of Blazer's men in an ensuing battle.<sup>41</sup>

Mosby's force exhibited the many time-tested virtues of Rangers. They were skilled woodsmen, guerilla fighters, and marksmen. Moreover, Mosby's Rangers were an irregular formation with a notable lack of discipline. V.C. Jones has expanded upon this

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 79.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 425.

<sup>40</sup>Patricia L. Faust, ed., *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 514.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

theme:

It was his [Mosby's] aim to be irregular . . . . His operations were built around his ability to be different, to baffle his enemies through his refusal to follow the routine prescribed by the military academies.<sup>42</sup>

Again, the influence of Rogers' Rangers is apparent in Mosby's group. His volunteers exhibited Ranger traits born in the French and Indian War, and effectively applied them to warfare over a century later. For example, in 1863, Mosby and twenty-nine Rangers ventured well into enemy territory, past several infantry and cavalry regiments. Upon reaching the Union encampment at Fairfax Court House, the Rangers captured fifty-eight horses and thirty-three men, including Brigadier-General Edwin Stoughton, and successfully led them back through enemy lines via wilderness trails.<sup>43</sup>

North of the border, an armed rebellion against the government provided the impetus for the revival of Ranger units. When, in 1885, Louis Riel returned to lead the Saskatchewan Métis in the Northwest Rebellion, the conflict extended westward into what is now Alberta. There was a fear that Indians south of the border, as well as the Blackfoot, would join the uprising. Prompted by this fear, the Rocky Mountain Rangers were raised at Fort Macleod to, as Hugh Dempsey wrote, "guard the 200-mile frontier between Lethbridge and the Cypress Hills; protect the cattle herds from thieves and rustlers; and act as a buffer to keep warlike American Indians from surging north to join their Canadian cousins."<sup>44</sup> Captain Jack Stewart, a rancher, was authorized by the Minister of Militia and Defence, to raise this Ranger battalion composed of "Montana and Alberta cowboys" who had "immediately volunteered for service."<sup>45</sup> Each Ranger

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<sup>42</sup>Virgil C. Jones, *Ranger Mosby* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 109.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 89-99.

<sup>44</sup>Hugh A. Dempsey, "Rocky Mountain Rangers," *Alberta Historical Review* 5, no.2 (Spring 1957): 3.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

supplied his own gun, horse, and uniform which consisted of "practical, everyday western dress."<sup>46</sup>

Parade square discipline was virtually unknown to this band of frontier cowboys. As Hugh Dempsey has noted, "the cowboys were fighting men, and would not take to the rigid discipline expected of them."<sup>47</sup> Another feature which separated them from the regular military—especially the British Army—was the social equality between all the ranks. William Rodney contended that "the rigid deference which marked the division between officers and other ranks in the British Army did not exist" in the Rocky Mountain Rangers.<sup>48</sup>

In each of the above cases, frontier circumstances produced a group of men who had the experience to deal with rugged, mostly uncharted, terrain. These men knew the local territory, but they were also intolerant of the authority and discipline desired by military organizations. To take advantage of their fieldcraft, irregular Ranger units were formed from these frontiersmen. The fact that the units lacked discipline did not detract from their effectiveness in the field. In essence, Ranger units have been moulded to fit the frontier in North America.

The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were yet another formal response, within a long tradition, to the prospect of irregular warfare. The fact that this Second World War home guard unit was given the name "Ranger" was no accident. Although contemporary military thought was influenced by the trench warfare of the First World War, the Canadian Army's Pacific Command drew on the Ranger tradition and organized the P.C.M.R. In British Columbia, a sense of military history was shown by the choice of the name "Ranger," and it was acknowledged by Major-General G.R. Pearkes when he proclaimed

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<sup>46</sup>William Rodney, *Kootnai Brown his life and times 1839-1916* (Sidney, B.C.: Gray's Publishing Ltd., 1969), 146.

<sup>47</sup>Dempsey, 5.

<sup>48</sup>Rodney, 145.

that

The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers are the Rogers' Rangers Mark 1942 . . . . They are faced today by an enemy just as cunning, cruel and crafty as ever was any Shawnee or Delaware Indian brave. The forests of British Columbia are just as trackless today as the Ohio wilderness was a century ago [*sic*]. The border needed men of high courage then, and their sacrifices were made for the benefit of future generations. Canada can still produce the same type, and there will be plenty of opportunity for the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers to show that they are worthy of the name of Ranger should any Jap invader ever dare to set his foot on British Columbia soil. The troops who are now guarding our shores come from all parts of Canada—from the cities and the prairies; they are not all familiar with the bush, and they will, therefore, need the help of those who have lived in the various types of bush in this province.<sup>49</sup>

The P.C.M.R., like its predecessors, was part of a long military tradition. There are several characteristics shared by every irregular unit that has borne the name "Ranger." They all practiced or were trained in the art of guerilla warfare, with an emphasis on the ambush. Unlike the regular troops, they were composed mainly of skilled woodsmen who knew their part of the country well enough to wage guerilla war effectively. Mobility, marksmanship, and reconnaissance were also important in their type of warfare. Finally, a distinct lack of parade square discipline and military decorum have been characteristic of Ranger organizations. The fact that they were volunteer citizen-soldiers gave them a sense of freedom not enjoyed by those in the regular army.

There was, without doubt, a continuity of tradition extending from the eighteenth

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<sup>49</sup>A.G. MacDonald, "Men of the P.C.M.R. Reviving Frontier Tactics," *British Columbia Lumberman* 26, no.11 (Nov. 1942): 53-54.

century Ranger units to the P.C.M.R., but there was also a significant change. The twentieth century was certainly worlds apart from the 1700s and the men of the P.C.M.R., unlike their eighteenth century counterparts, were not frontiersmen. Granted, many of them were skilled hunters, trappers, loggers, and outdoorsmen, but their way of life was nothing like that of frontiersmen in colonial America. Members of the P.C.M.R. were, for the most part, wage labourers—both white and blue collar—for whom the urban environment was always close at hand. In short, society had changed and so had the men who enlisted as Rangers. Nevertheless, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers shared in the historic mystique attached to the term “Ranger.” Ranger units throughout history have been military formations designed to suit North American frontier conditions. This Canadian and American tradition of the Ranger unit was basically a response to the forested and rugged landscape which made conventional military tactics impractical. Traditional military tactics were suitable for battle in open terrain, but the rough landscape in North America precluded this sort of warfare. North American warfare required men accustomed to the territory and terrain and, as a result, irregular military organizations were created to patrol the areas familiar to these men. The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, “designed by western men to suit western conditions,” were, in part, the result of a carryover of British North American colonial history into Canadian folklore.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>A.G. MacDonald, 53.

## Chapter 2

### Formation

In the aftermath of the bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, Japanese military victories in the Pacific increased British Columbians' fears that their province could be invaded next. Hong Kong, Malaya, Burma, and the Phillipines were all unprepared for a Japanese invasion. Their armed forces were not large enough and weapons were in short supply.<sup>1</sup> Even the "impregnable fortress" of Singapore could not repel the Japanese Army. Fifth Columnists were also active in these countries. For example, in Hong Kong, Chinese Fifth Columnists acted as snipers, incited riots, spread rumours, sabotaged equipment, and informed the Japanese of gun and pill box positions.<sup>2</sup> Japan's militarism, as Peter Ward noted, "had roused anxiety on the coast by stirring up the region's traditional fears of isolation and vulnerability."<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising, then, that British Columbians appealed in panic to Ottawa for reinforcement of the coastal defences.

The concern of British Columbians was reflected in the newspapers of the time. Letters to the Editor columns frequently contained pleas for the formation of home guard units. For example, a letter to the editor of the *Victoria Daily Colonist*, on 6 January 1942, claimed that

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Bateson, *The War With Japan* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1968), 91-92 and 126.

<sup>2</sup>Oliver Lindsay, *The Lasting Honour: The Fall of Hong Kong, 1941* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), 28 and 76. See also Ted Ferguson, *Desperate Siege: The Battle of Hong Kong* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1980).

<sup>3</sup>W.P. Ward, "B.C. and the Japanese Evacuation," *Canadian Historical Review* 57 (September 1976): 672.

There are many thousands of men in civil life—war veterans, loggers, miners, farmers, fishermen, shipyard workers etc., who are hunters and capable marksmen, who could form the nucleus of such an organization.

These men, between the ages of sixteen and sixty-five, could be organized on a voluntary or, better still, compulsory basis, in their several districts, and with very little training and a minimum of equipment be ready to act as a guerilla force . . . .

The people of British Columbia, realizing the danger, are ready for such a movement. Don't let it be said of us: 'Too little and too late.'<sup>4</sup>

Five days later, another letter to the editor voiced the opinion that in the "sparsely populated province" of British Columbia

the incorporation of men of all ages in the defence of the immediate localities in which they live, and with which they are intimately acquainted, would undoubtedly be of great use in providing just that delaying action which would enable the regular forces to be employed to the best advantage, and would furnish advance information of great value.<sup>5</sup>

Newspaper editorials also urged the federal government to bolster West Coast defences. For instance, as the editor of the *Cowichan Leader* proclaimed in February 1942:

That the people of B.C. must organize and prepare 100 per cent for defence is the growing feeling of an increasingly large number of residents of this province, particularly on the coast . . . .

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<sup>4</sup>D.M. Baillie, Letter to the Editor, *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 6 January 1942.

<sup>5</sup>H. Lee Wright, Letter to the Editor, *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 11 January 1942.

...it is easily possible to visualize thousands of residents trained and equipped in various ways for service in the case of invasion—for it is very evident that the urgency is realized and that the will has developed.<sup>6</sup>

Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor the *Vancouver Sun*, in response to calls from “all parts of the province” for improved defences, conducted a survey of “informed civilians and former military officers” to determine how British Columbia could be better defended. Their survey, which proposed the “immediate organization of a Civilian Defence Corps in every town, city and village in B.C.,” undoubtedly placed further pressure on the federal government for action.<sup>7</sup>

Yet more pressure was placed upon the federal authorities by several service clubs, trade unions, and other organizations in British Columbia. Various groups such as the Royal Canadian Legion, International Woodworkers of America, Co-ordinated Veterans' Association, and even the Housewives' League, all passed resolutions calling for the formation of a civilian defence corps.<sup>8</sup>

Citizens' committees were formed and meetings were held in communities throughout the province to discuss the organization of home guard units. On 7 January 1942, the Victoria city council requested that Prime Minister King authorize mandatory “civilian defense service.”<sup>9</sup> Less than two months later the Mayor of Victoria, Andrew McGavin, sent a telegram to J.L. Ralston, Minister of National Defence, advising him that

There is great uneasiness in Victoria and district about inadequate defence measures for Vancouver Island. I am being deluged with requests for mass meetings to discuss the subject. To allay public anxiety I urge you to come

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<sup>6</sup> *Cowichan Leader* (Duncan), 19 February 1942.

<sup>7</sup> *Vancouver Sun*, 31 December 1941.

<sup>8</sup> *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 15 January 1942; *Comox District Free Press* (Courtenay), 2 April 1942; *Vancouver Sun*, 30 December 1941, 7 January 1942, and 25 February 1942.

<sup>9</sup> *Vancouver Sun*, 7 January 1942.

to Victoria without delay and address a public meeting on steps being taken for our protection.<sup>10</sup>

Much of the distress expressed by British Columbians was directed against the distant federal government in Ottawa. "Western alienation" was alive and well in wartime British Columbia. Given Japan's military victories in the Pacific, inhabitants of British Columbia were justifiably concerned about the possibility of a Japanese invasion, and warnings in the press only served to strengthen their fears. For example, in February 1942, the *Vernon News* expressed the view that

the Pacific coast of Canada is not properly prepared to meet the kind of Japanese attack that might now be launched. This is partly due to the monumental folly of the King government in failing to appreciate the part played by sabotage in modern war. It is even more due to the changed general picture in this whole Pacific theatre of war. The Japanese have now obtained all but one or two of their main objectives in Indonesia. They not only now can turn in this direction, if they so desire, but they are more likely to do so now in order to head off North American counter-offensives against them . . . .

If they so desired—in order to establish an air base from which they could attempt to destroy the Boeing aircraft factory at Seattle—or to cloak a serious attack on Alaska—the Japanese could certainly land on Vancouver Island.<sup>11</sup>

Soon after Pearl Harbor was attacked, blackouts were ordered for the coastal areas of British Columbia. In announcing the blackouts, Western Air Command reasoned that "the war situation is such that an attack by Japanese forces on the Pacific Northwest is

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<sup>10</sup> *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 6 March 1942.

<sup>11</sup> *Vernon News*, 19 February 1942.

imminent.”<sup>12</sup> Military and civic leaders further warned the public that Japanese raids were a serious possibility, and the Mayor of Victoria stated that the Japanese were positioned in the Aleutian Islands and “we expect them here any time.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, on 5 March 1942, Lieutenant-Governor W.C. Woodward was reported as saying that “he regarded this province as now in the war zone, and that he was expecting Jap raids at no distant date.”<sup>14</sup> Jack Blain, who was a Ranger in Number 89 Company (Burnaby South), recalled the effect the attack on Pearl Harbor had on the province:

The war seemed quite far away in Europe for us on the West Coast at that time, but as soon as that [Pearl Harbor] happened it brought urgency to the whole thing...the West Coast here was probably the least prepared for anything in Canada or [in] the United States. <sup>15</sup>

In this atmosphere of uncertainty, the hysteria over a possible Japanese invasion grew as each day passed. Pressure was increasingly placed on the government in Ottawa for improved defences and, at the same time, for the evacuation and internment of British Columbia’s Japanese population. Anti-Ottawa sentiments were expressed by many people, including one First World War veteran, in February 1942:

Too long have we waited for apathetic Ottawa, that is a thousand miles from possible danger, to understand the position of British Columbia. Apparently the lessons of France, Greece, Hong Kong and Singapore mean nothing. We are misrepresented by a government that only exists by coddling pacifistic Quebec ....

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<sup>12</sup>*Prince Rupert Daily News*, 9 December 1941.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>*Grand Forks Gazette*, 5 March 1942.

<sup>15</sup>Interview with Jack Blain, Burnaby, B.C., 29 November 1988.

We demand that every possible fifth columnist is immediately moved east of the Rockies . . . .

That adequate anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns, planes, troops, etc., are stationed here. Not a skeleton force with obsolete equipment, as now.<sup>16</sup>

British Columbia's representatives in the House of Commons in Ottawa also pressed the government for greater defence measures. Howard C. Green, Conservative Member of Parliament for Vancouver South, explained to the House of Commons, on 20 January 1942, that "Canadians on the Pacific find themselves closer to war than any other Canadians." Furthermore, as he explained:

on the Pacific Ocean there is no island fortress of Great Britain between Canada and the enemy. There is as our only protection a crippled United States fleet. There is an enemy—not without a fleet, as the German Reich, but an enemy with a first-class navy; an enemy with a first-class and very strong merchant marine, an excellent air force, and an army that has had experience in warfare for the last ten years.<sup>17</sup>

Green further warned that British Columbians knew full well that West Coast defences were "hopelessly inadequate to deal with an attempted invasion."<sup>18</sup> As such, he urged the government to bolster defences through, among other things, the organization of "home guards."<sup>19</sup>

Thomas Reid, Liberal Member of Parliament for New Westminster, advised the Minister of National Defence, in early February 1942, that "the people on the Pacific coast

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<sup>16</sup>Alexander Page, Letter to the Editor, *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 22 February 1942.

<sup>17</sup>Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 20 January 1942, 152.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

are greatly perturbed with respect to Pacific coast defences."<sup>20</sup> Reid also expressed the uncertainty felt by many British Columbians when he asked the House of Commons:

If Singapore falls—and who can say with any certainty that it will not?—where, I ask, will Japan strike next? For in that event it will then control almost the entire Pacific.<sup>21</sup>

Reid expressed the anxiety of British Columbians. People were uncertain where and when Japan would strike next in the Pacific. Without the modern communication techniques of today, the public was imprecisely informed about world events which led to an even greater degree of uncertainty. To be sure, a climate of danger existed, but in light of the long distance to Japan these fears were exaggerated. As opposed to the East Coast of Canada, which was much closer to hostile forces, the panic on the Pacific Coast was disproportionate to the real danger. Nevertheless, Lloyd Cornett, who was a teenaged Ranger in Number 89 Company (Burnaby South), remembered the anxiety and tension that prevailed in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor:

A lot of people don't recognize now, looking back on it, how vulnerable people felt out here on the West Coast. At first, after Pearl Harbor, we had no military forces here of any significance . . . the Japanese had control of the Pacific virtually and they could have done pretty much what they wanted to do so it seems ludicrous to think now that we were worried about a Japanese invasion, but we had no reason not to . . . and we didn't know if we were going to be invaded. So those concerns were there, and it's difficult for people who weren't around at the time to reconstruct the atmosphere that existed which is what gave rise to the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 2 February 1942, 226.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Interview with Lloyd Cornett, Burnaby, B.C., 29 November 1988.

The military authorities realized that Japanese raids or even an invasion were possible and that Pacific defences were inadequate.<sup>23</sup> There were, however, simply not enough active force troops in British Columbia to provide full protection for the province. For example, at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the infantry troops in British Columbia made up the "equivalent of two brigades."<sup>24</sup> Much more disconcerting was the lack of anti-aircraft guns on the Pacific Coast. The naval base at Esquimalt had only two Bofors anti-aircraft guns for protection, and the R.C.A.F. station at Patricia Bay had one Bofors and two 3.7 inch anti-aircraft guns.<sup>25</sup> While the inadequacy of the defences was a primary reason for the formation of the P.C.M.R., public opinion played an equal, and possibly a greater, role. In much the same way that anti-Japanese sentiment forced the federal government to intern and evacuate British Columbia's Japanese population,<sup>26</sup> so too did public outcry prompt the formation of local defence units. On 31 January 1942, a letter from the Canadian Army's General Staff in Ottawa was sent to Major-General R.O. Alexander, the commander of Pacific Command, advising him that "in the present situation it is considered most important that everything possible be done on the West Coast to satisfy public opinion in respect to military security, provided it can be done without prejudice to our major war effort."<sup>27</sup> In this case, the major war effort referred

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<sup>23</sup>Intelligence, Pacific Command, "Appreciation of Possible Japanese Action on the Pacific Coast," 16 February 1942, Department of National Defence, Directorate of History (hereafter D. Hist.), file 322.009 (D594).

<sup>24</sup>C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments, The War Policies of Canada 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 47.

<sup>25</sup>C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), 168. For further study of artillery units see Peter N. Moogk, *Vancouver Defended: A History of the Men and Guns of the Lower Mainland Defences, 1859-1949* (Surrey, B.C.: Antonson Publishing Ltd., 1978).

<sup>26</sup>For examinations of the impact of racism on the Japanese evacuation see W.P. Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes And Public Policy Toward Orientals In British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1978); Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); and Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1981).

<sup>27</sup>Brigadier, for Chief of the General Staff, to General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Pacific Command, 31 January 1942, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D298).

to the European theatre of war and the fight against Nazi Germany. As the General Staff explained:

There are a number of coastal points on Vancouver Island and some on the mainland including Prince Rupert and Prince George where the organization of Home Guard platoons or detachments as part of the Reserve Army would meet the public demand for some form of local protection.<sup>28</sup>

Lieutenant-General Stuart, the Chief of the General Staff, was of the opinion that "action on these lines would be very popular on the West Coast and would not interfere with our major effort."<sup>29</sup> He further urged that the formation of home guard units be undertaken as soon as possible.

Major-General R.O. Alexander replied to National Defence Headquarters that he had been under considerable pressure to form home guard units, and Pacific Command was giving it serious consideration.<sup>30</sup> General Alexander noted that in certain coastal areas the British Columbia Police, without aid from the Department of National Defence, had already attempted to form auxiliary units. In any event, Alexander believed that home guard units "would be of considerable value" to compile intelligence reports, defend against enemy raids, and "alleviate public uneasiness."<sup>31</sup> Alexander, on 3 February, met with eight Members of the Legislative Assembly (Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, Liberal, and Conservative) representing coastal ridings. The idea of home guard units was explained to them and they unanimously supported any such scheme. The premier of British Columbia was also informed and he too gave his approval.<sup>32</sup> General Alexander

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Secret Memorandum, Lieutenant-General Stuart to A.C.G.S., V.C.G.S., 31 January 1942, D. Hist., file 112.1 (D35).

<sup>30</sup>Major-General R.O. Alexander to the Secretary, Dept. of National Defence, 7 February 1942, D. Hist., file 159 (D1).

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

believed that there were "about fifteen places where such organizations would be of value," and he further suggested that they be named Coastal Defence Guards. This was preferred to the designation "Home Guard" because of "the large number of requests that" would "come from places in the interior to have similar organizations organized."<sup>33</sup>

On 23 February 1942, the Department of National Defence issued a press release which announced intentions to form home guard units in "every B.C. coast town and strategic point in the interior."<sup>34</sup> The initial name of "Coast Defence Guards" was replaced by the designation "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," and the corps was officially formed on 14 March 1942. Major T.A.H. (Tommy) Taylor was appointed as commanding officer. Taylor, who was subsequently promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel, was chosen, in part, because he was familiar with the province through his past work as a timber cruiser in the logging industry .

The response from volunteers was prompt and overwhelming. Ranger detachments were organized in the areas of greatest concern—Vancouver Island and the coast—but were also spread throughout the province. Ranger units were located as far north as the Yukon and east to the Rocky Mountains. Originally the Rangers were organized as a reserve militia unit, but on 12 August 1942 they became a part of the Active Militia of Canada.<sup>35</sup> This shift to the active militia required the Department of National Defence to compensate men injured in training. Even though the Rangers were a part of the Canadian Army, they received no pay because they served voluntarily. Should they have been called into active service, however, Rangers would have been paid, and granted the same rights as regular soldiers. Within four months some 10,000 recruits had enlisted in the P.C.M.R. and, by August 1943, the corps reached a peak strength of 14,849 men.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>*Vancouver Province*, 23 February 1942.

<sup>35</sup>Special PCMR Circular Letter, 2 October 1942, HMA; "Rangers Now Join Non-Permanent Force," *Vancouver Province*, 14 November 1942.

<sup>36</sup>C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 174.

At its height, the P.C.M.R. consisted of 128 companies, and when the Rangers were disbanded in October 1945, the corps consisted of 122 companies.

Meetings were held in communities throughout the province to endorse the formation of local Ranger units. Remote logging and mining camps as well as fish canneries also submitted requests for Ranger companies. For example, the Britannia Mining and Smelting Company applied for the organization of a Ranger detachment identifying thirty to fifty men who would join such a unit.<sup>37</sup> In like manner, the manager of the Bones Bay Fish Cannery, near Alert Bay, applied to have a Ranger detachment formed:

We have a crew of twenty white men, several of whom saw service in the last war, and this is the kind of spot any invasion force would likely pick to attack, unless we were organized and had the right to defend ourselves we would be helpless should such an attack take place.<sup>38</sup>

Several communities, such as Grand Forks, Stewart, Courtenay, and Victoria, had organized their own unofficial home guard units even before the Pearl Harbor attack. Members of Victoria's Fish and Game Club patrolled the surrounding area six months before they were officially organized as Number 1 Company, P.C.M.R.<sup>39</sup> Three prominent members of the Victoria Fish and Game Club, George Beck, Gordon Sword, and Charles Burr, formed this unofficial home guard with the goal of protecting the Sooke Lake pipeline and the Jordan River power station. The men who made up this home guard unit were typical of later P.C.M.R. companies. As George Beck Jr. recalled:

Dad, Charlie and Gordie decided to bring the idea to the membership of the Fish and Game Club, whose members, more than a hundred, were made up

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<sup>37</sup>C.P. Browning to Col. T.A.H. Taylor, 29 April 1942, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D89).

<sup>38</sup>J.G. Dorman to Captain George Baldwin, 28 April 1942, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D82).

<sup>39</sup>*Victoria Times*, 5 July 1978; Donald G. Sword, unpublished draft of Gordon Sword's biography.

of men who were too old or [had] some other physical factor that kept them out of 'active' service. Yet they were all eager hunters and anglers who knew that region like the back of their hands. They instantly saw what a good job they could do in the protection of these important life lines.<sup>40</sup>

From the outset, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers clashed with other home defence organizations. Air Raid Precautions (A.R.P.) and reserve army units were already established and, in some cases, they resented the competition for recruits. Shortly after the P.C.M.R. was formed, disputes arose with the A.R.P. regarding whether or not a member of one organization could belong to the other. More specifically, the disputes were over which organization would get preference in the event of hostilities. Colonel Taylor realized the problem and issued a circular letter, in May 1942, to clarify the Ranger-A.R.P. relationship. Taylor reasoned that the P.C.M.R. should have preference over recruits in unsettled areas, because they were primarily a guerilla force. The A.R.P., on the other hand, should have preference over recruits in urban areas where they would be needed more than Rangers.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Taylor advised that Rangers should not hold key positions in the A.R.P., and any Rangers enrolled in the A.R.P. would, "in an emergency, remain on A.R.P. duty."<sup>42</sup>

Taylor's directives cleared up many of the difficulties with the A.R.P., but the animosity between members of the two groups lingered on. This resentment boiled over at an A.R.P. meeting in Courtenay on 6 October 1942. Sergeant R. Haybrook, a member of the London Auxiliary Fire Brigade, was the guest speaker at the meeting which was attended, upon invitation, by several Rangers. During the course of his lecture, Haybrook took some nasty verbal shots at the P.C.M.R.,

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<sup>40</sup>George Beck, personal letter, 1 December 1988.

<sup>41</sup>Col. Taylor, P.C.M.R. Circular Letter No. 11, 26 May 1942, D. Hist., file 159 (D1).

<sup>42</sup>Ibid; Col. Taylor, P.C.M.R. Circular Letter No. 33, 5 October 1942, D. Hist., file 159 (D1).

referring to them as "these people who run around in uniform calling themselves Rangers and who attempt to put out incendiary bombs with shot guns."<sup>43</sup>

The Rangers present at the meeting took offence to Haybrook's remarks, and contended that in the event of an "incendiary raid" the threat would

come not from fires within the city but from the general conflagration in our adjoining forests and bush lands. "Who" we asked "would have to fight the greater menace?" Definitely not the local A.R.P. with their stirrup pumps, but rather the loggers who are 90% Rangers, and they would not fight the fires with shot-guns but with modern machinery and methods.<sup>44</sup>

Captain A. MacDonald, of Number 23 Company (Courtenay), believed that Haybrook was "ignorant of the general situation."<sup>45</sup> Haybrook's derogatory comments were not premeditated but, according to MacDonald, he was "primed by an individual... from within our community."<sup>46</sup> In this case, Captain MacDonald was referring to A.R.P. members as those who prompted Haybrook's demeaning remarks.

Following the incident, Haybrook was scolded by the editor of the local newspaper for his words. The editor was then, in turn, lambasted by a supporter of the A.R.P. On 15 October 1942, in a letter to the editor of the *Comox District Free Press*, Tom Pearse questioned the Rangers' ability to defend British Columbia:

I cannot visualize any definite military function that the Rangers might fulfill, and that I would prefer to see men enlisted in some service where, if occasion arise, they can be of definite use, and for which they can prepare themselves,

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<sup>43</sup>Captain A. MacDonald to Col. Taylor, 6 October 1942, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D80).

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

rather than in a service whose aims may sound more romantic and warlike, but are questionable in their possibility of realization . . . .

There was a lot of sentimental exaggeration at the inception of the Ranger idea. One had only to be on the payroll of a logging company to find oneself, ipso facto, a first class rifle shot, able (however unwillingly) to live off one's gun, endowed with a knowledge of "every inch of the country," and with an ill-defined faculty known as "individual initiative." One Eastern journalist was eagerly quoted by the "Daily Province" as saying that B.C. is inhabited by a people accustomed to living off their guns.<sup>47</sup>

Pearse believed that Haybrook was rightly trying to deflate the myth of the Rangers as intrepid frontier fighters. Pearse's letter to the editor shows the tension between the P.C.M.R. and the A.R.P., but it also reveals that some doubted the combat ability of Rangers. In some respects Pearse was correct in his assessment of Rangers; certainly they were not all expert woodsmen, and there was a degree of mystical romance and adventure associated with the P.C.M.R. Nevertheless, Pearse underestimated the fighting ability of many Rangers who, despite their youth or old age, knew their areas and were capable with their rifles. In the 1940s, British Columbia was home to many skilled hunters and outdoorsmen, and a good many of them ended up joining the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. Indeed, the P.C.M.R. intentionally sought out, and recruited those men who knew "every inch of the country." As already noted, many P.C.M.R. recruits were not woodsmen, but those who were provided a solid base with which to build a formidable guerilla force. The men of the P.C.M.R. may not have looked like well trained soldiers but, for the purpose required of them, they were capable modern "frontier fighters."

The relationship between the P.C.M.R. and the reserve army was also strained at

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<sup>47</sup>Tom W. Pearse, Letter to the Editor, *Comox District Free Press*, 15 October 1942.

times. Competition for recruits prompted Pacific Command to issue a directive stating that in localities where reserve army units existed, only men suitable as scouts and guides should be enrolled as Rangers.<sup>48</sup> The directive failed to resolve the P.C.M.R.- reserve army conflict. In March 1943, Colonel Taylor received a "vigorous complaint" from the 13th (Reserve) Ambulance R.C.A.M.C. [Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps], located in Victoria. The commanding officer of the reserve unit claimed that he was unable to bring his corps to strength because most of the eligible recruits "he encountered were enrolled in No. 1 Coy., P.C.M.R."<sup>49</sup> Colonel Taylor asked Captain C.W. Burr, of Number 1 Company (Victoria), to clarify his recruiting methods. In reply, Captain Burr advised that he had turned down more applicants than he accepted. Moreover, as Captain Burr explained:

All men enrolled in this company are first required to complete a detailed questionnaire, then are given a personal interview by four members of the Headquarters Staff. Then only those men who are deemed suitable to work in the bush country are enrolled.

Present strength of the unit is two hundred ninety-seven, of which seventy-five per cent or approximately two hundred twenty-five are residents of out-lying districts, leaving only seventy-two enrollments from the City of Victoria. These seventy-two men were highly recommended by individuals and authorities for their usefulness as Rangers.

Speaking generally and in view of the population of Victoria, it is difficult to appreciate that seventy-two men enrolled in this Company could so absorb all eligible persons that it is not possible to recruit the Reserve Medical Unit

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<sup>48</sup>J.E. Lyon, Brigadier, General Staff, Pacific Command to Col. Taylor, 28 September 1942, D. Hist., file 159 (D1).

<sup>49</sup>Col. Taylor to Captain C.W. Burr, 4 March 1943, D. Hist., file 159 (D1).

to strength.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, Captain Burr informed Colonel Taylor that men enrolled in reserve army units had asked him for transfers to his Ranger company. In every such case, Burr informed them that their "proper place" was with the reserve army, and he refused to consider such transfers.

Despite the competition that existed between the P.C.M.R. and the reserve army, there were cases of good relations between the two. This was the situation in Penticton, as Ranger instructor Dean Miller reported to Colonel Taylor:

Good co-operation with the local reserve unit is certainly apparent. Not only have the Dragoons made their armouries available to the Rangers, but they have loaned their instructors willingly . . . Rangers have access to the Dragoon's outdoor and indoor range.

An intelligence officer of the 19th Infantry Brigade, Vernon, sought the help of this company in the matter of getting information about lines of communication in the Southern Okanagan. Working in co-operation with the B.C. Public Works Office at Penticton, Capt. Atkinson supplied detailed information about roads—kind, surface, drainage; bridges, capacity and type; abandoned roads, by-passes, detours; protection from aerial observation; turning points. Thus liaison between the nearest active army formation has been established.<sup>51</sup>

Overall relations, however, were poor enough to prompt Colonel Taylor to issue another directive on the P.C.M.R.-reserve army relationship. In Circular Letter Number 51, of 2 April 1943, Taylor outlined the differences in training and purpose of the two

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<sup>50</sup>Capt. Burr to Col. Taylor, 18 March 1943, D. Hist., file 159 (D1).

<sup>51</sup>Corporal Dean Miller to Headquarters, Pacific Command, 2 April 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D85).

groups. According to the circular letter, Rangers were trained in guerilla tactics and were designed to fight only in their local area, whereas the reserve army was trained along orthodox military lines. This training would enable the reserve army, "when called out, to take the place of Active Army Units."<sup>52</sup> In addition, while the reserve army's role was to defend their local area, they could be required to fight anywhere in Canada. Colonel Taylor further advised P.C.M.R. captains not to interfere with reserve army recruiting, and only to enrol those who, "due to their experience and knowledge of the bush, are very specifically qualified to act as scouts or guides."<sup>53</sup> Yet again in June 1944, Taylor made it clear that Ranger recruits had to be bush-wise, and those who were not were better suited for the reserve army.<sup>54</sup>

The rivalry between the Rangers and the reserve army was exacerbated by workers in essential industries, such as loggers, who preferred enlistment in the P.C.M.R. At a union meeting, in March 1942, loggers of the Ladysmith district decided to form a Ranger unit. Apparently, a reserve army officer was present at the meeting, and he told the loggers that they could not join the P.C.M.R. because they were "all fit to join the Reserve force."<sup>55</sup> Frank Weir, a game warden at Ladysmith, wrote to Colonel Taylor and informed him that the loggers would not voluntarily join the army, but they were eager to join an irregular unit. Weir reasoned that the loggers would be valuable Rangers because they "could travel the hills where the army would find it impossible to go."<sup>56</sup>

In February 1943, the chairman of the Mobilization Board instructed the British Columbia Pulp and Paper Company that men in their employ, who were given postponement from military service, must join a Ranger company where no local reserve army

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<sup>52</sup>P.C.M.R. Circular Letter No. 51, 2 April 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D90).

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Col. Taylor, memorandum re P.C.M.R.-reserve army relationship, 30 June 1944, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D592).

<sup>55</sup>Frank P. Weir to Col. Taylor, 23 March 1942, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D91).

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

unit existed.<sup>57</sup> The Ranger captain at Port Alice, J.W. Fraser, was not pleased with the decision to force unwilling men into his Ranger company. Captain Fraser explained to Colonel Taylor that his unit already contained many volunteers rejected for military service, and several "postponees" who worked at the local pulp mill. How, asked Fraser, would these men react to a new class of recruits described as "conscripted postponees?" Indeed, Fraser was not optimistic when he asked Colonel Taylor

How will this new set-up with its mixture of volunteers and forced men compare with our organization which came into being through voluntary effort alone? How will the men work together?<sup>58</sup>

It seems that for some postponees the P.C.M.R. was an easy way to "do their bit" for the war effort. Rangers did not have to endure harsh military discipline and, unlike in the reserve army, service in the P.C.M.R. did not entail the possibility of being sent to another locality to relieve active army units. Jim Kingsley, the Ranger captain at Parksville, did not take kindly to this type of Ranger:

Those that were excluded from service for working in the bush... didn't give a damn. They were against war. They were no good to me anyhow and I wouldn't report them because they got in trouble... I only had half a dozen of them. I didn't waste time telling them what I thought about them. I had some good men too.<sup>59</sup>

In the later stages of the war, for some British Columbians, Japan became only a distant threat. The Canadian government and military authorities, however, were aware of the possibility of a Japanese attack even if they did not see it as an immediate danger.

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<sup>57</sup>Captain R.F. Lyons to Col. Taylor, 12 February 1943; Col. Taylor to Capt. Lyons, 24 May 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D95).

<sup>58</sup>Capt. Fraser to Col. Taylor, 13 February 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D81).

<sup>59</sup>Interview with Jim Kingsley, Parksville, B.C., 16 January 1989.

On the other hand, the majority of the voting public was certainly worried about the threat of the Japanese war machine. During wartime the last thing the authorities wanted was a dissatisfied and fearful public. While the P.C.M.R. proved to be a valuable adjunct to British Columbia's defences, they were also a low cost venture which placated a nervous population and allowed the government to avoid the people's wrath over its inaction. Ultimately, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were created for psychological and political as much as military reasons, and their creation resulted more from local initiatives than from federal directives.

## Chapter 3

### Membership

What type of men volunteered as Rangers?<sup>1</sup> In general, the P.C.M.R. was composed of men from all levels of society. More specifically, however, Rangers were primarily British Columbians engaged in the dominant occupations of the province. North Bend, for example, being a railway terminal, contained a large proportion of railway workers who enlisted as Rangers. In Penticton, the Ranger company was composed "mainly of businessmen and ranchers" many of whom were "members of the local fish and game club."<sup>2</sup> Hope and Laidlaw, on the other hand, contained many loggers which was reflected in their Ranger membership (see Table 3.1). As previously mentioned, Ranger units were even organized in remote logging camps as well as among workers in mines, sawmills, and fish canneries throughout the province. In virtually all industries both management and unions fully supported the P.C.M.R.<sup>3</sup> The other occupations of Rangers ranged from prospectors, trappers, carpenters, farmers, cooks, and truck drivers to bankers, accountants, and store owners. Walt Cousins, who was a Ranger in Number 118 Company (West Point Grey), remembered that the men in his unit came "from all different walks of life and you were, more or less, put into a category where it would be of benefit . . . . We had papermakers, truck drivers, we had an engineer, surveyor. God, we had everybody

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<sup>1</sup>The following information regarding P.C.M.R. membership is based upon incomplete collections of application for enlistment forms. Every Ranger recruit was required to fill out one of these application forms but, unfortunately, they have not all survived the years.

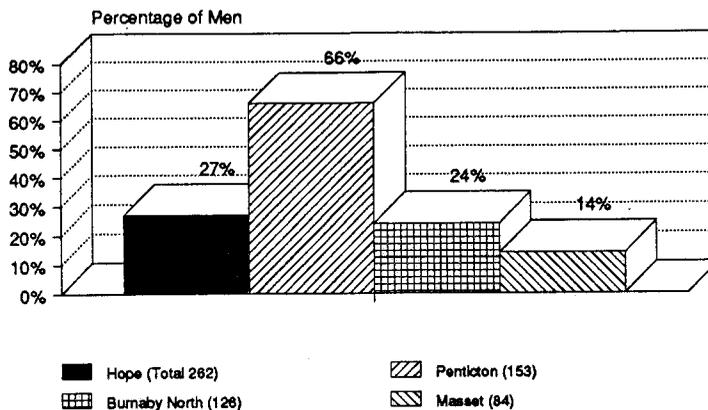
<sup>2</sup>Cpl. Dean Miller to HQ Pacific Command, 2 April 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D85).

<sup>3</sup>For an example of the cooperation of trade unions see the *B.C. Lumber Worker*, 25 July 1942.

	No. 73 Coy. (including all detachments)	Hope Det.	Laidlaw Det.	Yale Det.	Boston Bar Det.	North Bend Det.
Logger	35	15	19	1		
Cat Driver	2	2				
Prospector	8	6		1	1	
Miner	3	3				
Trapper	5	5				
Construction	4	2	1	1		
Mechanic	11	6	1	1	2	1
Truck Driver	16	6	8		1	1
Electrician	3	2		1		
Guide	3	2		1		
Farmer	4	2	2			
Railway	28	2	3	6	4	13
Accountant	2	1		1		
Total No. of Men in unit	262	98	51	38	18	57

Table 3.1: Occupations of Rangers in Number 73 Company. Source: Hope Museum Archives, PCMR file, applications for enlistment.

## Automobile Ownership Hope, Penticton, Burnaby North, Masset



Sources: HMA; PMA, 4-4377, 4-4378; Gerald Charlton Papers;  
B.C. Prov. Archives, Add. MSS. 2113.

Figure 3.1: Rangers owning automobiles in No. 71 Coy. (Penticton), No. 73 Coy. (Hope), No. 90 Coy (Burnaby North), and No. 105 Coy. (Masset).

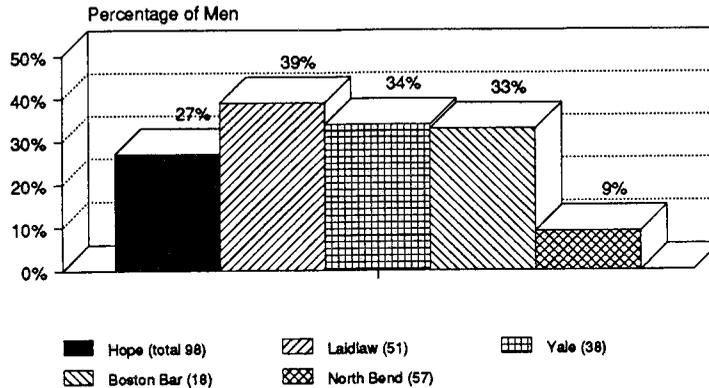
in there.”<sup>4</sup>

Automobile ownership among Rangers serves as one indicator of their economic status. Application for enlistment forms reveal that approximately 27 percent of all Rangers in Number 73 Company (Hope, Laidlaw, Yale, Boston Bar, North Bend) owned automobiles (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2). North Bend was well below this average with only 9 percent of Rangers in possession of a vehicle. This figure, well below the 1941 B.C. average of 35 percent,<sup>5</sup> can be explained by the fact that North Bend was an isolated village with a transient population of railway employees. Similarly, automobiles were scarce in the isolated Queen Charlotte Island community of Masset. While automobile ownership in Number 73 Company was close to the provincial average, a high percentage

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Walt Cousins, Penticton, B.C., 29 December 1988.

<sup>5</sup>Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Eighth Census of Canada 1941* vol. 1, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), Table XVII, "Percentage of Households With Specified Conveniences, For Canada and the Regions, Rural and Urban, 1941," 421.

## Automobile Ownership Detachments of No. 73 Coy.



Source: Hope Museum Archives, PCMR file, applications for enlistment.

Figure 3.2: Rangers owning automobiles in Number 73 Coy., By Detachment.

of Rangers in Penticton owned automobiles, and a relatively low percentage in the urban area of Burnaby. This can be explained, in part, by the high number of older Rangers in Penticton, and the equally high level of Burnaby Rangers too young to drive or afford a vehicle (see Figures 3.1, 3.6, 3.7).

Many Ranger recruits were either too young to enter the regular army or too old for active service. Some became Rangers because they were denied entry into the armed forces due to their poor health. From the outset it was made clear that P.C.M.R. recruiting standards were flexible:

Enrolment will not necessitate a medical examination nor need membership be limited as to age or physique, but membership should be limited strictly to those fully capable of carrying out any duty that may be required.<sup>6</sup>

Yet others were exempt from military service because they were employed in essential

<sup>6</sup>Memorandum from Major T.A.H. Taylor, 18 March 1942, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D298).

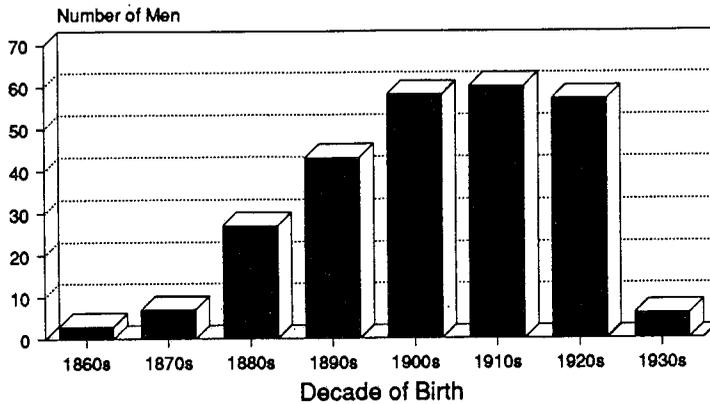
industries. The youngest Rangers in Number 73 Company were fifteen years old and, when he joined in 1942, the oldest Ranger's age matched his company's number. Figures 3.3-3.7 illustrate the age distribution of Rangers in four companies (No. 73 Coy. Hope, No. 105 Coy. Masset, No. 71 Coy. Penticton, and No. 90 Coy. Burnaby North). In Hope and Masset, many Rangers were in their thirties and would have been eligible to enlist in the regular forces. Most of these men, however, would have been denied entry into the armed forces for medical reasons. Others, particularly in Masset, would have been employed in the logging industry which exempted them from military service. Figure 3.4 reveals that, in Number 73 Company, the number of Rangers born in 1916, 18, 19, 22, and 23 was considerably lower than in other years. This suggests that men in their twenties joined the regular forces in relatively larger numbers, which also reflects the preferences of military recruiters. Finally, a large number of Rangers in both Hope and Burnaby were born in the 1920s because many in these samples joined before they were old enough to enter the regular forces. This is evident in the Burnaby company in which over one-quarter of its members were active in school army cadets prior to joining the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers.<sup>7</sup>

Membership data also reveals that previous military experience among Rangers varied from a low of 19 percent in Number 73 Company to a high of 41 percent in Penticton (see Figure 3.8). As the high number of older Rangers with previous military experience suggests, many First World War veterans wanted to demonstrate their loyalty and the P.C.M.R. allowed them to do so. The pressure to be a voluntary contributor to the war effort was great; "zombies" (conscripts), and "conchies" (conscientious objectors) were disdained in Canada during the Second World War. Membership in the P.C.M.R. allowed these veterans to recover the comradeship that they had shared during the First

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<sup>7</sup>Gerald Charlton Papers, No. 90 Coy. (Burnaby North), applications for enlistment. Thirty-five out of a total of 126 Rangers in No. 90 Coy. had previous cadet training.

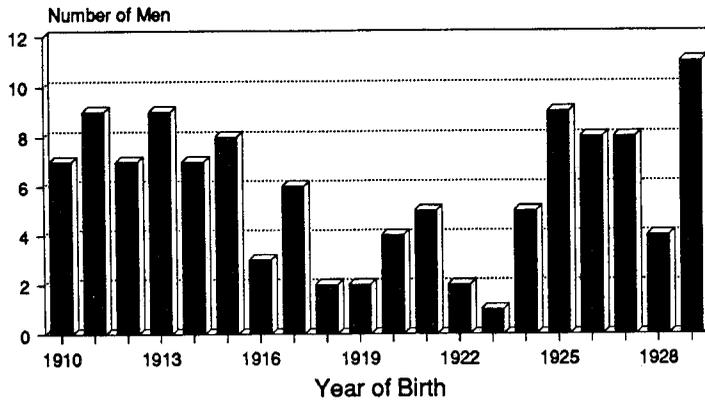
### Age Distribution No. 73 Company (Hope)



Source: Hope Museum Archives, PCMR file, applications for enlistment, 1942 to 1945.

Figure 3.3: Age Distribution in Number 73 Coy. (Hope), By Decade of Birth.

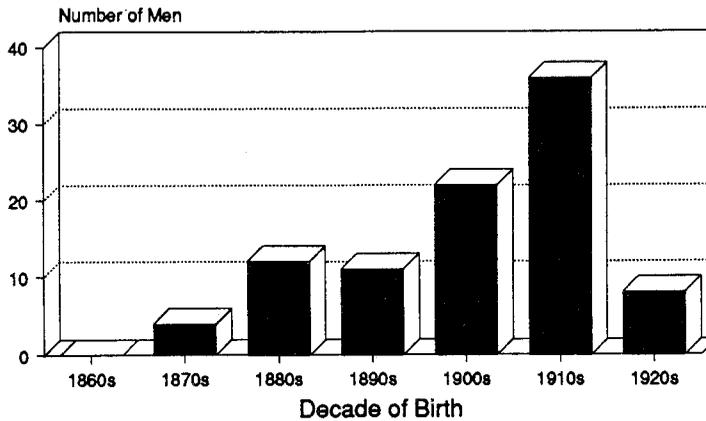
### Age Distribution No. 73 Company (Hope)



Source: Hope Museum Archives, PCMR file, applications for enlistment, 1942 to 1945.

Figure 3.4: Age Distribution in Number 73 Coy. (Hope), By Year of Birth.

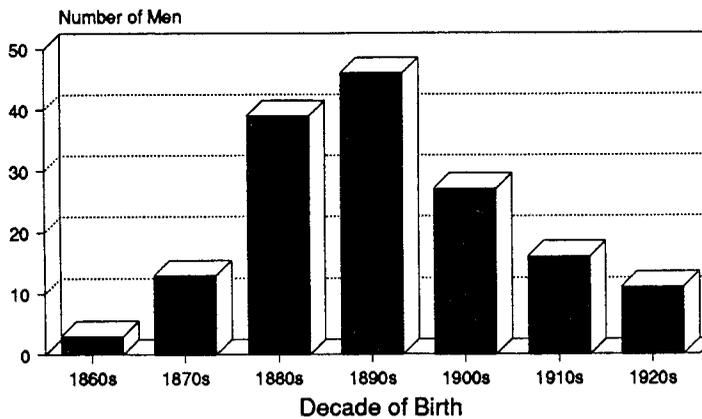
### Age Distribution No. 105 Company (Masset)



Source: B.C. Provincial Archives, Add. MSS. 2113.

Figure 3.5: Age Distribution in Number 105 Coy. (Masset), By Decade of Birth.

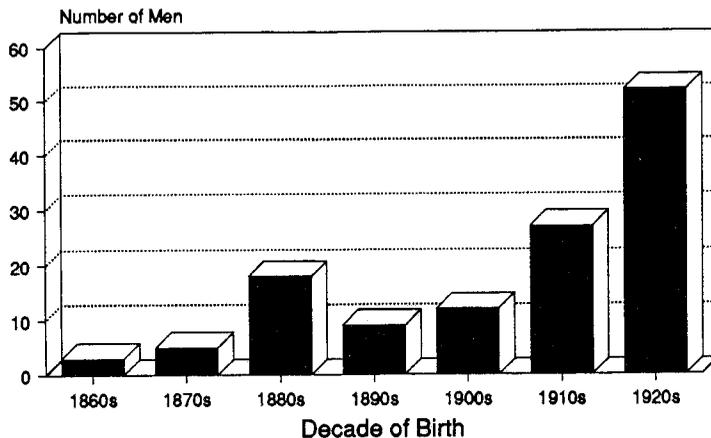
### Age Distribution No. 71 Company (Penticton)



Source: Penticton (R.N. Atkinson) Museum and Archives, 4-4377 and 4-4378.

Figure 3.6: Age Distribution in Number 71 Coy. (Penticton), By Decade of Birth.

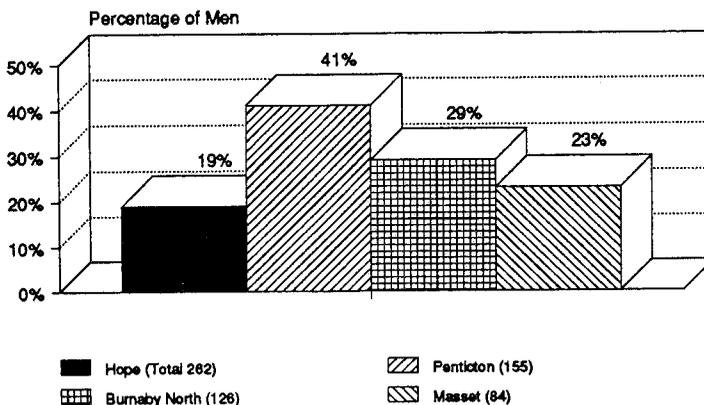
### Age Distribution No. 90 Company (Burnaby North)



Source: Gerald Charlton Papers.

Figure 3.7: Age Distribution in Number 90 Coy. (Burnaby North), By Decade of Birth.

### Previous Military Service Hope, Penticton, Burnaby North, Masset



Sources: HMA; PMA, 4-4377, 4-4378; Gerald Charlton Papers;  
B.C. Prov. Archives, Add. MSS. 2113.

Figure 3.8: Rangers with military service prior to enlistment in No. 71 Coy. (Penticton), No. 73 Coy. (Hope), No. 90 Coy. (Burnaby North), and No. 105 Coy. (Masset).

World War. The Rangers provided an opportunity for these older men, unable to serve overseas, to feel wanted again. Those who had previous military experience often became officers in the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. For example, Lieutenant Stanley Munro, commander of the Laidlaw P.C.M.R. detachment, served during the First World War in France as a machine gunner in the 29th Battalion. Similarly, Captain Henry Johnson, the commander of Number 73 Company (Hope), also had an extensive war record in the 196th Battalion and, later, with the Royal Air Force during the First World War. In some companies, First World War veterans were valued members of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. This was the case for former teenaged Ranger Lloyd Cornett, who believed that they were "lucky" to have had veterans in Number 89 Company (Burnaby South). Cornett contended that the First World War veterans were

very fine guys who knew that hard end of soldiering, and they passed those skills and attitudes along to us and we benefitted greatly . . . . We were taught how to respect weapons, and handle them properly, and take care of them, and take the proper safety precautions. Those things were taught very vigorously by these guys because they knew how important they were.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, other younger Rangers saw the veterans as a hindrance to the effectiveness of the P.C.M.R. Likewise, many veterans resented younger men, with little or no military experience, in positions of authority. First World War veterans often clamoured for the captaincy of their Ranger company. For example, when Ranger Harry Livingstone discovered that there would soon be a vacant officer position in Number 128 Company (Deep Cove), he advised Colonel Taylor that "it would be wise" to install "someone who has had the Army Knock."<sup>9</sup> Livingstone, not surprisingly, was a veteran with four years "Imperial Army training," and was dismayed by his comrades' disrespect for military

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<sup>8</sup>Interview with Lloyd Cornett, Burnaby, B.C., 29 November 1988.

<sup>9</sup>Harry C. Livingstone to Col. Taylor, 16 May 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D93).

decorum. Livingstone reported to Colonel Taylor that, while on Ranger sentry duty, men in his unit "march off and do not even give eyes right or left, and a man feels a darn fool standing up there at the present [arms] myself."<sup>10</sup> In conclusion, Livingstone promised Colonel Taylor that if he were promoted he would do his "duty as a good soldier." No action was taken by Colonel Taylor on this matter, and Ranger Livingstone was never given the promotion he desired.

The above incident was by no means an isolated one. A similar occurrence took place at Port Alice in July 1942. C. Cedric Ryan, in charge of the Port Alice A.R.P., wrote a five page letter to Colonel Taylor outlining why he should replace Ranger Captain Fraser. At the very least, Ryan wanted a separate Ranger organization formed which would be composed entirely of veterans. It is worth quoting Ryan's explanation at some length:

All Ranger officers have been appointed from the [pulp mill] office and do not include old soldiers.

All Ranger officers are young men and all are members of the local chemical staff. None have had better than C.O.T.C. (Canadian Officers' Training Corps) training. It is the local opinion of older men that the whole body would soon be lost in the woods.

I gather from private conversations with local residents that the Ranger officers are quite unpopular.

There are a great many retired men who saw service in France 1914-1918 but only *one* has joined the Rangers.

No Ranger organization has been made at Spey Camp (the Company's logging camp), nor at Winter Harbor. Mr. Fraser tells us that Winter Harbor

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

comes under his jurisdiction. He cannot be expected to form a unit in a locality where he is completely unknown.

The local Ranger organization has been carried on with great secrecy. As a matter of fact I have heard it suggested that it operated like a secret society. I have pointed out to Fraser that if he wanted public support he must take the public into his confidence.<sup>11</sup>

Ryan's proposed solution was to form a Ranger company separate from the existing one. The new unit would vote in its officers by secret ballot, and Ryan further claimed that it was sure to include

experienced woodsmen, hunters and trappers and practically every old soldier in town. I would like to mention that these old soldiers feel quite strongly against the 'young inexperienced boys' at the head of the Rangers. I feel sure of a membership of *at least 80 men*.<sup>12</sup>

Ryan also planned to install a "private electric buzzer" in the homes of his officers, so they would have "a continuous watch who will 'press the button' when dangerous boats or planes approach." Clearly, Ryan was trying to impress upon Colonel Taylor that he had better ideas, and could do a better job than Captain Fraser. In conclusion, Ryan pleaded with Colonel Taylor to change the existing framework:

Appoint me to a rank above Captain Fraser and I will organize Spey Camp, Winter Harbor and assist the local boys as well. I have a private boat and can reach all points on the Sound.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>C. Cedric Ryan to Col. Taylor, 14 July 1942, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D81).

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

In response to Ryan's impassioned plea, Colonel Taylor replied that his suggestions were "quite impossible," and that he "misunderstood the organization of the P.C.M.R."<sup>14</sup> Colonel Taylor explained his reasons for disregarding Ryan's suggestions as follows:

While I fully appreciate the value of a veteran and being one myself I will give veterans full credit, nevertheless, it is not always a veteran who should command in any area. Some of the best organized and functioning Ranger Companies are not commanded by veterans but veterans are serving in them giving their full co-operation and loyalty. This is as it should be.<sup>15</sup>

J.W. Fraser, in retrospect, partly attributed the controversy to a split between the First World War veterans who had worked at the pulp mill for many years, and the younger educated men who brought new technology to the mill. Animosity was also apparent between members of the A.R.P. and the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, as J.W. Fraser recalled when asked about the divisions in his company:

We had a lot of trouble with C. Cedric Ryan at one time but he eventually turned out to be one of my best friends. . . He was an engineer in the [pulp mill and] . . . he was the head of the A.R.P . . . . They were organized before us and they were a little jealous of us . . . . He was a troublemaker to the manager. He also thought he should be manager of the plant . . . . This is showing you a split in the town of the old fellas who used to run the mill before it became a bleach pulp mill, and the younger men who came in and made it a bleaching pulp mill, and of course there is always resentment. They didn't know the first thing about how to bleach pulp and we had to do it . . . . A lot of the veterans from the First World War came up there [to Port Alice] and settled

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<sup>14</sup>Col. Taylor to Ryan, 18 July 1942, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D81).

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

in as employees, and they formed what you might call an old guard. They resented this organization being done without them . . . . He wanted the job, he wanted to do it. I didn't even know that.<sup>16</sup>

Colonel Taylor made it clear that the most suitable man to be a Ranger captain was not necessarily someone with previous military experience. Above all else, as the commander of a civilian organization, a Ranger captain had to be a good leader and know how to deal with people. Strict discipline and military spit and polish were not the required order of the day. What was important, on the other hand, was the ability to form civilians into a formidable group of guerilla fighters. Captain Fraser fit this description, according to former Port Alice Ranger Ron Wilson:

As to the suitability of who was running the company, I think that Fraser—a younger man with some military training at U.B.C.—was probably the best one to be in charge of the company because he was a bit of a disciplinarian himself. He wasn't an easy guy. He knew things about discipline and how to get things done. He was in charge of the technical department [at the pulp mill and was] probably better educated than any of these other veterans. He did have a good idea about discipline although it wasn't too strict to arouse opposition. Finally, I don't think Ryan would have been a good leader for that company. He was too old and his personal characteristics were not equal to Fraser's.<sup>17</sup>

Veterans in Number 70 Company (Terrace) also felt threatened by the possibility of a younger captain. In July 1943, Ranger Field Supervisor D'Arcy asked Captain Dubeau to resign as commander of the Terrace company. Captain Dubeau was apparently finding

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<sup>16</sup>Interview with J.W. Fraser, North Vancouver, B.C., 12 December 1988.

<sup>17</sup>Interview with Ron Wilson, Penticton, B.C., 29 December 1988.

it difficult to devote the necessary time to the unit because of his civilian job. Lieutenant D'Arcy recommended that twenty-seven year old David Butler succeed Dubeau. This angered Dubeau because Butler was a newcomer to Terrace who was unfamiliar with the terrain, and the people in the community. Captain Dubeau appealed to Colonel Taylor to reconsider Butler's appointment:

In No. 70 Co. P.C.M.R. we have a goodly number of reliable conscientious ex-service men (1914-18) who know more about fire-arms, routine drill and army discipline than this young man under question will ever know. The majority of our personnel is made up of woodsmen, loggers, trappers and rivermen who because of their long residence in these parts know every trail and stream from Aiyanch to the Kitimat Arm; from Prince Rupert to Hazelton. Does it therefore seem reasonable to suppose that they will serve under the command of inexperienced youth? If the aforementioned qualified Rangers elect to resign their services from the present field of voluntary activity, none others in the wide area will be found to take their places, because I have combed the district thoroughly with a view to picking out the best men available for the job in hand.<sup>18</sup>

Captain Dubeau recommended that Lieutenant Sam Kirkaldy, a First World War veteran, take command of the company. Kirkaldy had lived in Terrace for thirty years and, according to Dubeau, was well acquainted with the region.

In response to Dubeau's letter, Colonel Taylor advised that Butler was still the preferred candidate, because his civilian employment did not "confine him to any particular schedule of movement or to any one point."<sup>19</sup> Taylor reasoned that Butler could devote more time to Ranger duties than either Dubeau or Kirkaldy, and he urged Dubeau to

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<sup>18</sup>Captain M. Dubeau to Col. Taylor, 5 July 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D84).

<sup>19</sup>Col. Taylor to Capt. Dubeau, 28 July 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D84).

support Butler's appointment. The men of Number 70 Company, however, did not want Dubeau replaced by Butler. A letter, signed by nine non-commissioned officers [N.C.O.'s] of the Terrace unit, was sent to Colonel Taylor in support of Dubeau's leadership. The letter stated that the men liked Butler but "as a commander of our Ranger Co. we do not believe that he has the stuff which makes an officer tick."<sup>20</sup> They believed that the woodsmen enrolled in the Terrace Rangers needed a commander who knew the district, and in whom they could "put their whole trust and confidence." Dubeau was respected by the "old timers," whereas the newcomer Butler was not. The N.C.O.'s also took the opportunity to complain to Colonel Taylor about a lack of equipment and cooperation from P.C.M.R. headquarters. In summation, the signatories of the letter plainly stated their intentions if Dubeau were forced to resign:

We the undersigned N.C.O.'s hereby state that if any change whatsoever is made in our C.O. we will resign our present posts, for we are civilians and a voluntary organization not to be dictated to by superior authority which has been misinformed.<sup>21</sup>

The Terrace Rangers were unhappy both with the proposed appointment of a young captain, and with the lack of equipment supplied to them. The veterans in Number 70 Company, and elsewhere, resented younger men in positions of authority. Many First World War veterans naturally felt that their combat experience made them the most qualified men to become Ranger officers. The Terrace N.C.O.'s made it clear, in a manner that would be mutinous in the regular army, that they would not submit to the orders from Ranger headquarters. They were successful in their stand; Captain Dubeau remained as commander of Number 70 Company for the duration of the war.

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<sup>20</sup>Letter from nine N.C.O.'s of No. 70 Company (Terrace) to Col. Taylor, 2 August 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D84).

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

While an internal struggle was waged between older veterans and younger Rangers in their late twenties and thirties, another distinct group of recruits was also prominent within the organization. This third group was composed of fifteen and sixteen year old boys, and sometimes these recruits were even younger than fifteen. Many of these young Rangers were previously active in school army cadets, and they often lied about their age to enrol in the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. Parker Williams recalled how he came to be a Ranger:

I was only fifteen years old when I joined the Rangers. One day on the way home from school in Ladysmith, a friend and I began wondering if there was any reason that we couldn't join the Rangers since we were too young for regular service and most Rangers were too old for the regular service. We stopped by the local commander's home who was a small farmer and an ex-W.W. I army officer. When we asked him, he was completely taken aback and wasn't sure. However, he gave it some thought and could find no reason why we couldn't join. So we entered the ranks with the older fellows and participated in the back-woods exercises.<sup>22</sup>

In like manner, Harry Hurley was very young when he joined the P.C.M.R.:

I was fourteen but looked older as did several others and were more or less taken under the wings of the World War I veterans who were in their early forties.<sup>23</sup>

Several Ranger companies utilized teenagers as runners or messengers. Major-General J.P. Mackenzie, Inspector-General (Army), was impressed by a "Boys platoon" active in Number 135 Company (Dawson, Yukon Territory):

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<sup>22</sup>Parker Williams, personal letter, 12 November 1988. Officially, the youngest Ranger recruits had to be sixteen years old.

<sup>23</sup>Harry Hurley, personal letter, 3 November 1988.

The boys were all mounted on bicycles, carrying rifles slung. The O.C. informs me that he uses them to convey messages to the various outposts. The boys are most enthusiastic. They will become imbued with the military spirit and will in time, no doubt, join the Active Forces of the country.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, Captain Buller, commander of the Bella Coola Rangers, enlisted several fourteen and fifteen year old boys who owned bicycles, to act as a "signalling and messenger section." Captain Buller explained to Colonel Taylor that the boys would "not carry rifles. In action they would be used well behind the front line".<sup>25</sup>

David Whittaker was a runner in Number 8 Company (Youbou), but was not issued a rifle because he was only a lad of about thirteen. Despite his young age, he was accepted as a Ranger and participated in the war effort. He recalled sitting in the front row of a lecture by a P.C.M.R. instructor and interjecting that he thought the local Rangers were there to protect the sawmill:

Somehow I thought the Japanese wanted our logs and lumber. Right away this guy, not putting me down as a kid, said "no its not the mill we're here to protect because we can always rebuild the mill. We're here to save women and children"...I realized suddenly I was not a child. I still went to school and stuff [but] we were kind of now in the world of men. It was that socializing of us young people—I don't know if it happened in other units but that certainly happened in our group—[that] identified us as men even though we were only 12, 13, 14.<sup>26</sup>

An article in *The Ranger*, the P.C.M.R. training magazine, noted that the "PCMR was

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<sup>24</sup>Major-General J.P. Mackenzie, Inspector-General (Army), "Report of the Inspection of No. 135 Company, Dawson, Yukon Territory," 30 April 1944, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D592).

<sup>25</sup>Captain Buller to Col. Taylor, 31 December 1942, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D87).

<sup>26</sup>Interview with David Whittaker, Vancouver, B.C., 14 February 1989.

of necessity a great 'leveller' " in which the "labourer and the banker worked together."<sup>27</sup> This would seem to have been the case in Number 73 Company as it was composed of men from all levels of society, and the officers were not necessarily from the upper echelons of the community. The religious affiliation of Rangers also indicates a mixture (see Figures 3.9-3.12). Not surprisingly, in a largely Protestant province, Protestants made up the bulk of Ranger membership. Nevertheless, Roman Catholics were by no means excluded from the P.C.M.R., and in Number 73 Company, at 27 percent, represent a higher proportion than the 1941 B.C. average of 13.4 percent.<sup>28</sup> This, however, has much to do with the fact that approximately 21 percent of Hope's population was Roman Catholic.<sup>29</sup> In Masset, Penticton, and Burnaby, on the other hand, the number of Roman Catholics in the P.C.M.R. was well below the provincial average but still in line with local averages.<sup>30</sup> In short, the number of Roman Catholic Rangers corresponded to the regional religious distribution in British Columbia at that time.

Married men who may have hesitated to enlist for active service overseas willingly joined the P.C.M.R. (see Figures 3.13-3.16). The percentage of married Rangers was high and varied from 50 percent in Burnaby to 70 percent in Penticton. In 1941, 46 percent of British Columbia's males were married which, when compared to the high number of married Rangers, might indicate that some men joined the P.C.M.R. rather than go overseas and leave their families behind.

Moreover, there were a substantial number of Native Indian Rangers throughout the province. Native Indian Rangers, in fact, were considered to be among the most skilled and respected in the corps.<sup>31</sup> The Ranger group at Katz, located on the north side of the

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<sup>27</sup> *The Ranger*, Stand Down Number (October 1945): 7.

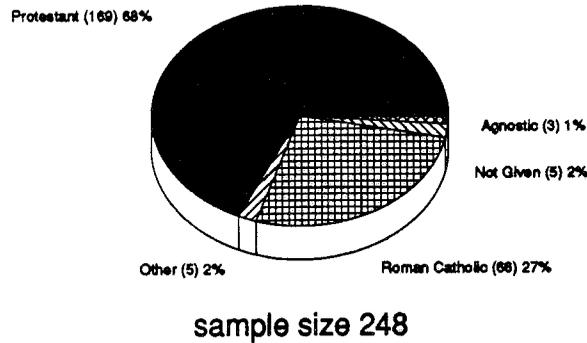
<sup>28</sup> Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Eighth Census of Canada 1941* vol. 3 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1946), 294.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 638.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *The Ranger*, Stand Down Number (October 1945):11. See also Barry Broadfoot, *Six War Years 1939-1945* (Don Mills, Ont.: Paper Jacks, 1974), 55.

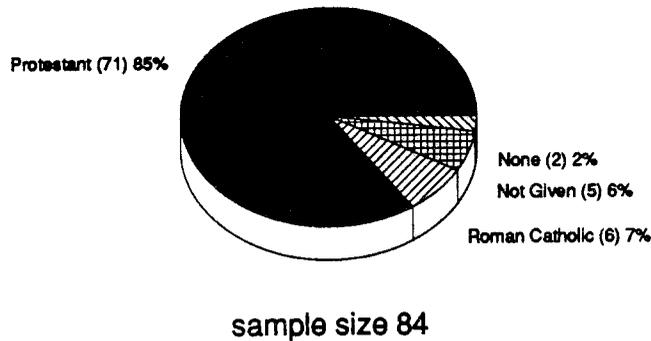
### Religious Affiliation No. 73 Company (Hope)



Source: Hope Museum Archives,  
PCMR file, Nominal Role (1942-1945).

Figure 3.9: Religious Denomination in Number 73 Coy. (Hope).

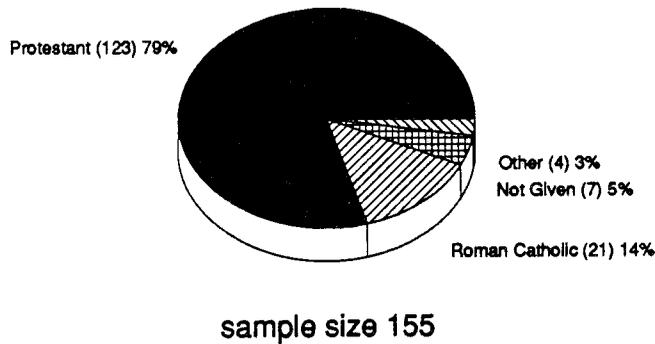
### Religious Affiliation No. 105 Company (Masset)



Source: B.C. Provincial Archives,  
Add. MSS. 2113.

Figure 3.10: Religious Denomination in Number 105 Coy. (Masset).

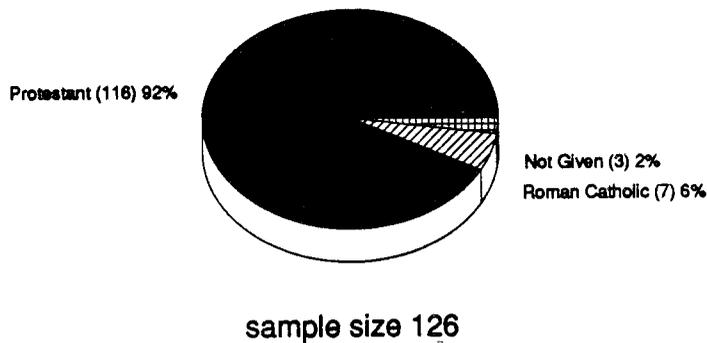
### Religious Affiliation No. 71 Company (Penticton)



Source: Penticton (R.N. Atkinson) Museum and Archives, 4-4377 and 4-4378.

Figure 3.11: Religious Denomination in Number 71 Company (Penticton).

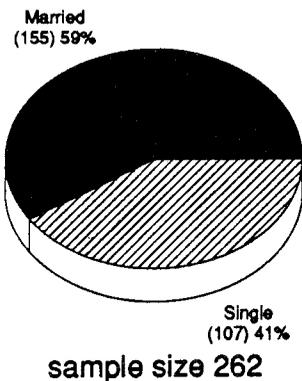
### Religious Affiliation No. 90 Company (Burnaby North)



Source: Gerald Charlton Papers.

Figure 3.12: Religious Denomination in Number 90 Company (Burnaby North).

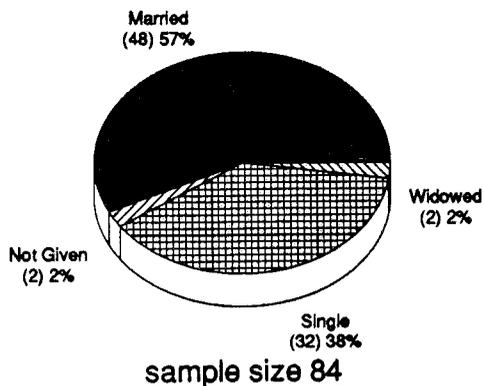
### Marital Status No. 73 Company (Hope)



Source: Hope Museum Archives,  
PCMR file, applications for enlistment.

Figure 3.13: Marital Status in Number 73 Company (Hope).

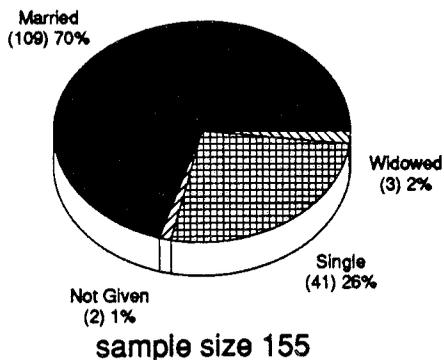
### Marital Status No. 105 Company (Masset)



Source: B.C. Provincial Archives,  
Add. MSS. 2113.

Figure 3.14: Marital Status in Number 105 Company (Masset).

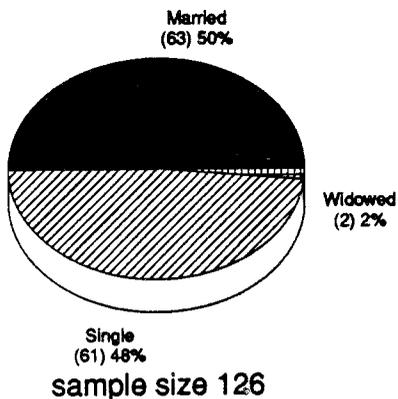
### Marital Status No. 71 Company (Penticton)



Source: Penticton (P.N. Atkinson) Museum and Archives, 4-4377 and 4-4378.

Figure 3.15: Marital Status in Number 71 Company (Penticton).

### Marital Status No. 90 Company (Burnaby North)



Source: Gerald Charlton Papers.

Figure 3.16: Marital Status in Number 90 Company (Burnaby North).

Fraser River downstream from Hope, was composed entirely of Indians. In an equipment inspection report this group was commended for having its equipment in "very good shape and well looked after."<sup>32</sup> Number 95 Company (Port Simpson) was also composed entirely of Indians and as the Inspector-General noted:

I was quite impressed with the company and with the feeling which appears to exist in the community with regard to the personnel of this company. The community all appear to be whole-heartedly behind them.<sup>33</sup>

Yet Native Indian Rangers were still treated in a paternalistic manner by white officers. Indians were not admitted into the Penticton company until the spring of 1943, because there was a "wet canteen in the Armouries."<sup>34</sup> The Indian Rangers of Number 123 Company (Ahousat) were required to keep their rifles and ammunition in stores, because of a shooting incident. In justifying the weapon lock-up Field Supervisor, Captain B. Harvey, found it necessary to deceive the Natives of Ahousat:

The reason given to the Indians was that the situation on the coast had eased off sufficiently to allow for enough warning to be expected, so that Rangers could be contacted in sufficient time for them to report to Coy. HQ and draw the necessary equipment, in an emergency, and that weapons would be better kept in proper storage. This seemed to be acceptable without protest. No mention was made of the incident in the report of attempted shooting, though from expressions on the faces of the older Indians, it is felt that they understood [the truth].<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Staff Sergeant Allan H. Gates, "Equipment Inspection Report," 14 November 1943, Hope Museum Archives, P.C.M.R. File (hereafter HMA).

<sup>33</sup>Major-General J.P. Mackenzie to Col.-Hon. J.R. Ralston, 15 February 1944, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D592).

<sup>34</sup>Corporal Dean Miller to Headquarters, Pacific Command, 2 April 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D85).

<sup>35</sup>Captain B. Harvey to Col. Taylor, 26 October 1943, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D592).

Evidently, Ranger authorities did not trust the Indians of Number 123 Company to keep their weapons. At Penticton, since Indians could not legally be served liquor, they were excluded from the Rangers until 1943. Native Indians may have been respected in other units, but the Indian Rangers at Ahousat and Penticton were treated with suspicion.

Many Native Indian Rangers were employed in essential industries, such as fish canneries, and were exempt from military service but they were anxious to join P.C.M.R. units. Colonel D.B. Martyn, commander of the Prince Rupert defences, supported the Indians of Kitkatla in their drive to form a Ranger unit. As Martyn explained to Colonel Taylor:

The Kitkatla Indians are...very patriotic, in fact ever since the call made at that point by your representative last year when the organization of a PCMR Company there was mooted they have been organizing and drilling and do not understand why they have not received any rifles or other equipment whereas other PCMR Companies have.<sup>36</sup>

The enthusiasm of Native Indians was widespread and as Ranger instructor B. Kennelly explained in a report from Kincolith:

All the Indians of these parts are strongly and enthusiastically (almost too much) for the Ranger organization. They see in it their opportunity to do their bit and to be prepared to help in home defence.<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, Native Indians were worried that enlistment in the P.C.M.R. required them to eventually join the regular army. Captain B. Kennelly reported that in Port Simpson, Kitkatla, and Metlakatla the fear of being called to join the active forces

<sup>36</sup>Col. D.B. Martyn to Taylor, 18 February 1944, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D77).

<sup>37</sup>Capt. B. Kennelly to Taylor, 28 February 1947, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D94).

“was the big grievance that had prevented them from feeling like being organized as a P.C.M.R. unit until now.”<sup>38</sup> As Captain Kennelly further advised Taylor on the situation:

The question of military call-ups is a serious matter with these men. They claim they have shown their loyalty and that Queen Victoria told them they would never have to fight unless they wanted to. They are very proud of their Ranger association.<sup>39</sup>

Native Indians were more than willing to join the P.C.M.R., even if they were less enthusiastic about service in the regular army.

Although Ranger officers' perceptions of Native Indians were coloured by racist attitudes, those same attitudes made Indians a preferred group for Ranger enlistment, because of the belief that Amerindians were adept at irregular guerilla warfare. For example, Lieutenant-Colonel W.B. Hendrie, the commander of the Canadian Army's Mountain and Jungle Warfare School at Terrace, requested the assistance of six Indian Rangers from the Nass River Miska tribe. Hendrie had heard that the six Indians had passed through the Sardis Ranger Training School with “very good results,” and he wanted them to act as instructors in the “jungle wing” of his school.<sup>40</sup> It seems that an ethnic stereotype made this minority group acceptable and even desired as recruits.

Be that as it may, not everyone was welcome to enlist in the P.C.M.R. W.W. Smith, captain of Number 134 Company (Woodfibre), advised P.C.M.R. headquarters that a naturalized German, Guido Krause, had applied to join the Woodfibre Rangers. As Captain Smith stated:

Personally I would just as soon not have the man in the organization but he

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Lieutenant-Colonel W.B. Hendrie to Headquarters 6 Canadian Division, Prince George, B.C., 30 October 1944, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D94).

has volunteered his services, and for such, deserves a hearing at least.<sup>41</sup>

In response, P.C.M.R. headquarters suggested that if Mr. Krause were naturalized, he should have a certificate of exemption to be enrolled. Furthermore, Captain Smith was instructed that if there was "any doubt about this man being a loyal Ranger, even though he has the certificate...of course he should not be enrolled."<sup>42</sup>

There was also concern at Woodfibre over the enlistment of Italians:

Some Italians who were naturalized in 1924, good fellows to all appearances, have wanted to join but [I] have put them off as easily as possible. They were formerly all for Fascism, but it is hard to tell their inside feelings now.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, the Ranger units at Alert Bay and Ladysmith requested instructions regarding the enlistment of men of Finnish descent. P.C.M.R. headquarters advised these units to use their own judgement but "White Finns" were considered desirable while "Red Finns" were "undesirable" and should be rejected.<sup>44</sup> It is apparent that, even though the Soviet Union was an ally, some residual fear of Bolshevism remained.

Chinese Canadians were also accepted by many P.C.M.R. detachments. James On Lee, a storekeeper at Yale, was one such example of a Chinese-Canadian Ranger. Yet it is also likely that many Chinese and other racial minorities were informally excluded from the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. In Number 8 Company (Youbou), as David Whittaker recalled:

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<sup>41</sup>Capt. W. W. Smith to Col. Taylor, 27 March 1944, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D95).

<sup>42</sup>Major Barton for Col. Taylor to Capt. W.W. Smith, 29 March 1944, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D95).

<sup>43</sup>Capt. R.F. Lyons to Col. Taylor, 3 March 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D95).

<sup>44</sup>Lieut. Osborn for Capt. J.B. Armstrong to Col. Taylor, 15 April 1943; Capt. W. Barton for Col. Taylor to Capt. Armstrong, 19 April 1943; Major Barton for Col. Taylor to Capt. S.J. Brinham, 29 June 1942, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D91). See also Lieut. H.V.N. Bankes, R.C.A. I.O. for Yorke Island, B.C., to G.S.O. 2 Intelligence, Pacific Command, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D82).

We had a Chinese bunkhouse and Chinese working in the mill and we had Sikhs...but I don't remember those men being in the militia. I think it was just Caucasians that were in that particular unit.<sup>45</sup>

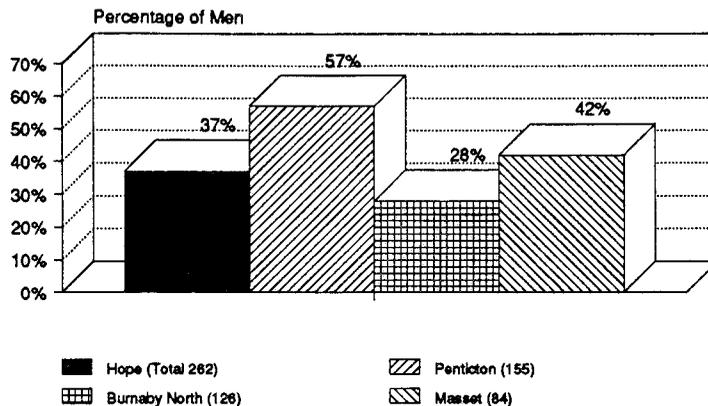
Overall, the P.C.M.R. was composed of men from all walks of life. Ultimately, however, Ranger Captains were free to use their own discretion as to who could join their companies. Some minority groups were shunned because of their enemy alien background, while others were overlooked, likely because they were outsiders in a predominantly white British Columbia. At any rate, P.C.M.R. membership reflected the general character of their communities. For example, Ranger units in the Cariboo consisted mainly of ranchers, while farmers dominated many Fraser Valley detachments.

Vancouver companies, by contrast, necessarily consisted of urban dwellers mostly unfamiliar with the woods. The contrast is most striking between the urban Burnaby unit and the interior Penticton company. A high proportion of the Burnaby Rangers were younger, while the Penticton unit was mainly composed of older men. The difference between urban and rural is more apparent when one examines the possession of firearms prior to Ranger enlistment (see Figure 3.17). Fifty-seven percent of the Penticton Rangers owned their own firearms, compared to only 28 percent in Burnaby. The low figure in Burnaby can be partly attributed to the high number of younger Rangers, but it is as likely the result of the urban environment. In rural areas, however, hunting and firearm ownership was more common as the higher figures of 37 percent in Hope, and 42 percent in Masset demonstrate. In outlying areas, therefore, the men of the P.C.M.R. already knew how to handle firearms. Nonetheless, in Vancouver, as well as in other urban areas, Ranger recruits soon became familiar with their rifles. In both urban and rural units, Rangers learned how to shoot in a military manner because, as *The Ranger* magazine

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<sup>45</sup>Interview with David Whittaker, Vancouver, B.C., 14 February 1989.

## Firearm Ownership Hope, Penticton, Burnaby North, Masset



Sources: HMA; PMA, 4-4377, 4-4378; Gerald Charlton Papers;  
B.C. Prov. Archives, Add. MSS. 2113.

Figure 3.17: Ranger recruits owning firearms prior to enlistment in No. 71 Coy. (Penticton), No. 73 Coy. (Hope), No. 90 Coy. (Burnaby North), and No. 105 Coy. (Masset).

frequently reminded them, they would be shooting at Japanese soldiers not at deer. Furthermore, the fact that many Rangers grew up or worked in a particular area for a number of years provided them with an intimate knowledge of the backwoods and coastal inlets. Jim Kingsley, former captain of Number 32 Company (Parksville), recalled that the men under his command

knew this area right from here through to the West Coast like a book. We hunted on it when we were young. <sup>46</sup>

Ranger recruits unfamiliar with the bush soon learned to know their regions. For example, as A. Frank Smith, formerly of Number 84 Company (Ladner), explained:

we were farmers and I wouldn't say I was a great bushman, but the year or

<sup>46</sup>Interview with Jim Kingsley, Parksville, B.C., 16 January 1989.

two of training in that, you got so you had a pretty good sense of direction in the bush. <sup>47</sup>

The men of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers came from all economic levels of society within the dominant Anglo-Saxon majority. Minorities, with the exception of Native Indians, were generally not involved in the P.C.M.R. Rangers were of all ages from teenagers to men well into their seventies and, sometimes, even their eighties. Most adult Rangers were married, which reflects both their age and the appeal of sharing in the war effort while remaining at home. Older men and those medically unfit to serve overseas were eager to serve on the home front. While many teenagers joined the Rangers for adventure and prestige, they were well aware of the seriousness of the war and their role in it. Previous military experience was also widespread among Rangers as was firearm ownership. This indicates that these recruits already had experience with weapons that would make them valuable members of the P.C.M.R. Yet others with little or no military experience were valuable because of their outdoor occupations. For instance, trappers and prospectors were familiar with the back country, and loggers were aware of roads absent from maps. Most Rangers were well acquainted with the area in which they would be required to fight and, in this respect, they were an asset to the defence of British Columbia.

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<sup>47</sup>Interview with A. Frank Smith, Vancouver, B.C., 8 November 1988.

## Chapter 4

### Training and Tactics

The P.C.M.R. was a unique organization because its structure and operations were deliberately unconventional. To be sure, the basic goal was to be a military unit, but the Rangers were dissuaded from the notion that they should rigidly follow military traditions and decorum. For example, *The Ranger* training magazine stressed the fact that Rangers were not regular soldiers and were never intended to be so. Rather, the Ranger's "whole function" consisted of "not being a regular soldier."<sup>1</sup> The Rangers were still civilians, and they continued with their daily work routine while pursuing their training in the evenings and on weekends. The problems of organizing and training such a group of civilians were recognized by the military authorities. Consequently, the Rangers were given certain privileges and leeway which would have been intolerable in the regular army. *The Ranger* magazine was even written in a casual fashion so it would be understandable to civilians. Emphasis was on practical training and Rangers were frequently reminded that "drill movements should not be overdone."<sup>2</sup> This was the case from the outset, as a memorandum of 18 March 1942 indicates: "Drill and training will not be on standard military lines, but voluntary and informal and designed by local authorities to suit local conditions."<sup>3</sup>

A spirit of cooperation existed in most Ranger companies and military discipline was relaxed. J.W. Fraser, former captain of Number 43 Company (Port Alice), explained

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<sup>1</sup> *The Ranger*, 5, no. 8 (August 1945): 2.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ranger*, 2, no. 7 (1 April 1943): 50.

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum from Major T.A.H. Taylor, 18 March 1942, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D298).

that he was

Only as strict as was necessary and what the men would take, because Ranger philosophy wasn't strict military discipline. You were there to learn as much as you could, learn to work together and that was about it. There was no such thing as punishment.<sup>4</sup>

Walt Cousins, a member of Number 118 Company (West Point Grey), recalled that the P.C.M.R. was

a loose outfit. If you were told to do a thing you were simply told 'I want you to do so and so' and you used your own judgement. It wasn't a case of, you know, you step out with your left foot. They didn't give a damn if you crawled. But I think everybody respected each other and knew their failings and their good points and just relied on one another.<sup>5</sup>

The civilian nature of the P.C.M.R. is apparent in the egalitarian way in which it operated. Military organizations have traditionally been marked by a rigid hierarchy of ranks and deference. Ranger units were ultimately responsible to Colonel Taylor, but were frequently left on their own to deal with different situations. The P.C.M.R. was a decentralized organization, and the democracy which existed within its ranks was unheard of in the regular army. Jim Kingsley, former captain of Number 32 Company (Parksville), ran his company in a typically democratic fashion:

I'd ask for suggestions. If we were going to do something I'd say 'now if any of you fellas have any ideas let me know. If you don't tell me how am I going to know'?<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Interview with J.W. Fraser, North Vancouver, B.C., 12 December 1988.

<sup>5</sup>Interview with Walt Cousins, Penticton, B.C., 29 December 1988.

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Jim Kingsley, Parksville, B.C., 16 January 1989.

Still further evidence of the relaxation of military standards can be seen in their uniforms, which were decidedly different from customary military dress. Their floppy hats, tan coloured "Dry-Bak" hunting jackets and pants and, later, khaki denim jackets suited British Columbia's damp outdoor conditions rather than following traditional military dress codes. In fact, the "Dry-Bak" line of clothing was popular among West Coast loggers because it was waterproof. Lieutenant-General Stuart was aware of the need for special uniforms when he remarked that

regulation battle dress serge uniform is not suited for the work Rangers are, or will be, called on to perform, nor the conditions met with in most areas, particularly the heavily timbered areas on Vancouver Island and the immediate Coast Mainland where the rainfall, coupled with the dense undergrowth, makes special clothing necessary, i.e. clothing such as worn by hunters, trappers, loggers and others who work in these areas.<sup>7</sup>

Much like their eighteenth century counterparts, then, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers discarded traditional military dress for clothing adapted to the environment.

It was believed that if the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were required to fend off an invasion, they could be most effective by employing hit-and-run guerilla tactics. The success of such operations would be contingent upon the ability of Rangers to profit from intimate knowledge of their own particular regions. On training schemes with the regular army, the Rangers often came out on top because of their skill at using the surrounding countryside to their advantage.<sup>8</sup> The Rangers, however, were not simply guerillas; they were also "militia men" trained in traditional military skills.<sup>9</sup> By combining both types

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<sup>7</sup>Lieut.-Gen. Stuart to Secretary, Dept. of National Defence, 22 June 1942, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D298).

<sup>8</sup>*The Ranger*, 5, no. 8 (August 1945): 2.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 3, no. 5 (1 September 1945): 130.

of training, and utilizing their local area knowledge and woodsmanship, the Rangers were expected to hinder any enemy invasion.

The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were unique to the Canadian Army but, at the same time, the Royal Canadian Navy had its equivalent called the Fishermen's Reserve. Otherwise known as the "Gumboot Navy," this force was similar to the P.C.M.R. because it was composed primarily of civilians—usually fishermen—who patrolled the B.C. coast in commercial fishing vessels.<sup>10</sup> Like the P.C.M.R., the Fishermen's Reserve was manned by irregulars who knew the coastal waters as well as Rangers knew the mountains and woods of British Columbia. As irregulars, they were also intolerant of discipline and authority which inevitably led to conflicts with officers of both the reserve and regular navy.

Outside Canada, the Second World War produced many other irregular guerilla formations. South of the border in Oregon, a guerilla force was organized by a First World War veteran. At its inception, this organization was surrounded with the same romantic aura that accompanied the birth of the P.C.M.R. A *Vancouver Sun* article of 17 March 1942 reflects this enthusiasm:

They provide their own rifles and ammunition. They have no uniforms and they do no drilling. They intend to fight, as the Indians did before them, from the sandpits and cliffs along the ocean and in the timbered mountain passes leading inland.<sup>11</sup>

Soon after their formation, these guerilla bands were officially attached to the Oregon State Guard.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Donald Peck, "The Gumboot Navy," *Raincoast Chronicles*, no. 7: 12-19; Carol Popp, *The Gumboot Navy* (Lantzville, B.C.: Oolichan Books, 1988).

<sup>11</sup>"Guerillas Organized to Guard Oregon," *Vancouver Sun*, 12 March 1942.

<sup>12</sup>"Guerilla Bands to join Oregon State Guard," *Vancouver Sun*, 17 March 1942.

The situation in Australia was similar to that in Canada. Ex-servicemen trained independently before the government formed them into the Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC). Later, as the threat of a Japanese invasion increased, other guerilla bands, separate from the VDC, began to train. Known as the People's Army, this group, according to Michael McKernan, appealed "to the remnant of the bush legend that encouraged Australians to think of themselves as practical and resourceful battlers."<sup>13</sup> Australian government officials became worried about independent guerillas beyond their control, which prompted them to expand the VDC in order to weaken the People's Army. The VDC, much like the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, had four primary roles: the static defence of localities, the protection of vulnerable and key points, guerilla warfare and the detection of enemy movements.<sup>14</sup>

The New Zealand Home Guard's role was much the same: they were to harass the enemy, defend important sites, and provide intelligence reports for the regular army. Similar to Rangers, a New Zealand Home Guardsman, according to Nancy M. Taylor, was

defined as a part-time infantry soldier, armed with rifle, machine-gun and bombs, who having no government transport or supply must fight and feed near his own home, his chief asset being close knowledge of the neighbourhood.<sup>15</sup>

Again, like the P.C.M.R., the New Zealand Home Guard concentrated on rifle training and knowledge of their areas, while disregarding military drill. Despite the similarities with the P.C.M.R., after April 1942 all men in New Zealand between the ages of thirty-five and fifty were required to join the Home Guard.<sup>16</sup> The P.C.M.R. remained a voluntary

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<sup>13</sup>Michael McKernan, *All In! Australia During the Second World War* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1983), 122.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>15</sup>Nancy M. Taylor, *The New Zealand People At War: The Home Front* (Wellington, New Zealand: V.R. Ward, Government Printer, 1986), 467.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 473.

organization and conscription was never considered, although social pressure was exerted on men to join the Rangers.

Perhaps the most famous of the British Commonwealth home guard units was the British Home Guard.<sup>17</sup> Officially designated as Local Defence Volunteers, they were initially poorly equipped and their tasks were simply to observe and report enemy movements in the event of an invasion. As time passed the supply of weapons increased, and Home Guard training focused on a more mobile defence strategy. Members of the British Home Guard were not paid but, after November 1941, men between the ages of eighteen and fifty-one could be conscripted into the force.

The Second World War also produced partisan guerilla groups in China, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe. The difference between these groups and those described thus far, is that these partisan resistance groups in Axis occupied countries actually engaged in combat. Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia harassed enemy forces with some success, as did Soviet guerillas. Soviet partisans used tactics in which the P.C.M.R., in theory, were trained in. For example, much like the P.C.M.R.'s proposed role, the Soviet guerillas, according to David Mountfield, went underground after the Germans invaded, and were expected to harass the Nazis

by means of sabotage, by... 'blowing up bridges and railway tracks, destroying enemy telephone and telegraph communications, blowing up enemy ammunition dumps.'<sup>18</sup>

Soviet partisans carried out these guerilla tactics, but they were never a serious threat to the German Army. They did, however, draw manpower away from the German's main objectives, which to some extent eased the burden of the Red Army. If the Pacific Coast

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<sup>17</sup>For an in depth study of the British Home Guard see Norman Longmate, *The Real Dad's Army* (London: Hutchinson Library Services, 1974).

<sup>18</sup>David Mountfield, *The Partisans* (London: Hamlyn, 1979), 177.

Militia Rangers were called into action, they were expected to engage in the same type of guerilla war that the partisans waged in the Soviet Union.

Accordingly, the chief purpose of Ranger training was to "perfect small but strong self-contained units" that could carry out assignments alone or "in conjunction with active service force units."<sup>19</sup> The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were not expected to meet an invasion head on and successfully repel it. Rather, they were assigned the task of preventing a major breakthrough by harassing and containing the enemy for as long as possible. The Rangers were to force the enemy "into the woods and rugged country denying him the routes of easier travel."<sup>20</sup> Clearly, then, the Rangers were to function primarily as an initial defensive screen until further help could arrive.

Because Rangers were expected to function as guerilla units, there was necessarily an emphasis on training in guerilla tactics. Therefore, techniques such as the ambush, tree sniping, personal camouflage, and explosives training for blowing up bridges were taught to all companies. Hugh Sutherland, a former Ranger from Number 129 Company (Grand Forks), vividly recalled his unit's training methods:

our role was as a guerilla unit, hence we learned the art of killing with a knife, blinding or deafening, and generally close range combat as well as concealment. Ambush tactics were explained to us: [about] giving us the best advantage without exposing ourselves, i.e. fire then roll, fire then roll, never shooting from the same position twice so one cannot be located by the muzzle flash etc.<sup>21</sup>

Yank Levi's booklet, *Guerilla Warfare*, was recommended reading for all Rangers, and the author was even asked to give lectures to P.C.M.R. companies throughout British

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 2, no. 7 (1 April 1943): 50.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 2, no. 9 (1 May 1943).

<sup>21</sup>Hugh Sutherland, personal letter, 5 February 1989.

Columbia.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Ranger training often recommended a form of bush warfare much like the Indians waged hundreds of years ago. As Ranger instructor B. Kennelly explained to Colonel Taylor in a report on the Kincolith Rangers:

the night before I had pleased them by saying we advocated the Rangers train to fight like 'Indians' and not like soldiers, and they began to recall their forefathers' days of fighting with the Alaskan and outer island tribes etc.<sup>23</sup>

A two week long officer training camp was established, at the Sardis Engineer Training Centre, to periodically instruct Rangers from throughout British Columbia and the Yukon Territory. The school was taught by Canadian Army senior N.C.O.'s, but it was designed specifically for Rangers. Many attending the camp were older men and Pacific Command did not expect them to go "beyond their limitations." As a result, it was stressed that the training at Sardis would "not be on standard military lines."<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the school covered a broad range of topics including "application of fire, method of instruction, light automatic (Bren gun), field and bushcraft, field sanitation, explosives, and map reading."<sup>25</sup> Lloyd Cornett learned some valuable lessons from the Ranger training camp:

They brought people in from all over the province . . . there were trappers from northern British Columbia and Indians and woodsmen of various kinds. Loggers—people who were very comfortable in the woods and very experienced. It was worth a lot just to be with these guys . . . We didn't do much in the way of drill but we were taught mapping very clearly. We were taught fieldcraft: how to move around in the woods. Camouflage: how to hide and keep out

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<sup>22</sup>'Yank' Levy, *Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1942); "Kill-Or Be Killed: Herb 'Yank' Levi Enunciates the Doctrine of the Guerilla Fighter," *Penticton Herald*, 14 October 1943.

<sup>23</sup>Capt. Kennelly to Col. Taylor, 28 February 1947, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D94).

<sup>24</sup>P.C.M.R. Circular Letter No. 55, 21 April 1943, HMA.

<sup>25</sup>*The Ranger*, 5, no. 2 (February 1945): 7.

of sight. We were taught the use of some extra weapons that we didn't get because they weren't available: Anti-tank weapons, grenades of various kinds. Demolitions: how to blow a railway line, how to lay charges on a bridge, how to blow craters in roads. It was a kind of a guerilla warfare thing in a sense. The idea being that if the Japanese ever invaded we would not line up and take them on. We would go into the woods and harass them.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, the Ranger training camp was important because it promoted cooperation between the P.C.M.R. and the Canadian Army. If the Rangers were to be the eyes and ears of the regular army, there had to be a close alliance between the two. Indeed, as W.K. Dobson, one of the instructors at Sardis, explained: "Essentially our efforts were to show them how they could help us by knowing how to write messages and what information they should include."<sup>27</sup> When they returned from the Sardis training camp, Rangers then passed on their newly-acquired knowledge to their detachments. These Rangers became qualified instructors for their own companies.

Because P.C.M.R. companies were spread throughout British Columbia, centralized training was not feasible. Training and tactics varied from region to region according to the terrain in which combat would occur. As Ranger instructor Kennelly observed: "a great deal must be left to the initiative and enterprize [*sic*] of Ranger company commanders."<sup>28</sup> *The Ranger* training magazine was sent out to all companies to aid in training, but was especially useful for the more remote detachments. In addition, travelling instructors frequently visited Ranger units to provide instruction in the use of various weapons. J.D. Little describes training given to Number 129 Company (Grand Forks) by travelling instructors:

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<sup>26</sup>Interview with Lloyd Cornett, Burnaby, B.C., 29 November 1988.

<sup>27</sup>W.K. Dobson, personal letter, 28 November 1988.

<sup>28</sup>Lieut. B. Kennelly for Col. Taylor to Capt. C.S. Williams, Officer Commanding No. 118 Company, P.C.M.R. (West Point Grey), 22 August 1942, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D92).

Periodically we would have military personnel come to town to provide us with guerilla warfare instruction. I recall learning a number of potentially lethal holds; how to make a bomb from homemade chemicals, and a detonator from a flashlight bulb filled with gunpowder; how to use steel wire to choke someone, etc.<sup>29</sup>

These special Ranger instructors were chosen for their military experience, ability, and knowledge of local terrain. Of the eight men sent into the field as travelling instructors, seven were First World War veterans, while Captain B. Kennelly had served in the Irish Republican Army. All of them were familiar with British Columbia's terrain. Their ranks included a forest ranger, a game warden, a Peace River trapper, a timber cruiser and surveyor, and a mining engineer.<sup>30</sup> Among other things, these instructors taught Rangers how to handle machine guns and explosives as well as proper signalling methods. Training in Number 73 Company seems to have been extensive and was taken seriously. The Laidlaw detachment of this company trained in techniques of personal concealment, shadow blending, scouting, relaying messages, field signals, mapping, and the construction of slit trenches and Molotov Cocktails.<sup>31</sup>

The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were also expected to serve in another capacity—by using their local area knowledge—as scouts and guides for the regular army. Consequently, Ranger units were encouraged to study their areas “from a military standpoint” to determine “what places would be of tactical significance if invading forces came to their district.”<sup>32</sup> A progress report from the Yale detachment reveals that they “concentrated on knowledge and ability to operate” in the woods surrounding their village. Furthermore, as Lieutenant C.E. Barry reported:

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<sup>29</sup>J.D. Little, personal letter, 5 March 1989.

<sup>30</sup>“History Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, Note Re Staff,” n.d., D. Hist., file 322.009 (D298), 5.

<sup>31</sup>Laidlaw P.C.M.R. detachment Progress Report, 5 July 1944, HMA.

<sup>32</sup>*The Ranger*, 3, no. 2 (15 July 1943): 109.

We have also studied and planned carefully the defence of the three transcontinental [rail and road] lines in this district. At the present time we are picking out spots along these lines where the defence of same would be easy for a small number of men.<sup>33</sup>

In a similar report from 1 December 1942, Lieutenant C.C. Young, the North Bend detachment commander, noted that he had forty-eight men under his command. They were broken up into "four groups of eight men each" to cover the North Bend area, and a fifth group of ten older men "for home guard duty." Young also gave an update on their training schedule:

Tuesdays, light exercises and study of Morse and flagging—Thursdays, light exercises, drill, Morse and flagging. Sundays, field manoeuvres (have had six to date and have covered the surrounding district for three miles around, with an average turnout of fifteen men on Sundays and about thirty-two on Thursdays).<sup>34</sup>

A subsequent progress report explained that because North Bend was a railway junction it was "pretty hard to get all the men together at one time." Those who were able to attend training sessions, however, appeared "very interested in field manoeuvres" and some were showing an improvement of "50 percent...in their shooting."<sup>35</sup>

Training was much the same in other Ranger companies, with a mix of outdoor exercises and classroom lectures. Number 54 (Alert Bay) Company's training report reflected this mix:

Tuesday last was devoted to field manoeuvres—Sten gun instruction and practice—grenade throwing and other outdoor exercises. Wednesday, indoor Sten gun

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<sup>33</sup>Yale P.C.M.R. detachment Progress Report, 15 July 1944, HMA.

<sup>34</sup>Lieut. C.C. Young to Capt. H.W. Johnson, 1 December 1942, HMA.

<sup>35</sup>North Bend P.C.M.R. detachment Progress Report, n.d., HMA.

instruction and practice aiming, signals, semaphore and map reading. Attendance and enthusiasm good.<sup>36</sup>

Rangers were instructed extensively in map reading and many remote areas were mapped for their own use, but primarily for the benefit of active force units. The West Point Grey Rangers, for example, mapped the entire University of British Columbia Endowment Lands so that it was possible, as Walt Cousins recalled, to "know exactly, if anything landed, where we were going."<sup>37</sup>

Despite all their preparatory classroom work, realistic training was the number one priority for Rangers. Dave Bunbury, who was the lieutenant in charge of the Hope unit during the latter stages of the war, remembered taking his men into the mountains around the Village of Hope and conducting training exercises:

We knew the whole area. I knew the upper end of the Twenty-Five Mile and the Yale people knew their area . . . . We all had sufficient training to look after ourselves . . . . We'd get up in the hills and practice shooting at certain areas . . . Sten gun mostly.<sup>38</sup>

The routine was similar in Number 90 Company (Burnaby North) according to Harry Hurley:

The training evening once a week entailed a roll call and an intelligence update, followed by instruction in guerilla warfare in the wooded hills nearby where we practiced setting up ambush points, and moving stealthily on our stomachs from point to point. We also learned how to improvise field first aid and use available materials to evacuate casualties, i.e. cut tree limbs and

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<sup>36</sup>Capt. George Baldwin to Col. Taylor, 13 November 1942, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D82).

<sup>37</sup>Interview with Walt Cousins, Penticton, B.C., 29 December 1988.

<sup>38</sup>Interview with David Bunbury, Chilliwack, B.C., 9 January 1988.

put them through the arms of our jackets to improvise a stretcher.<sup>39</sup>

Another important aspect of Ranger training consisted of mock battles with other P.C.M.R., reserve, and active force units. For example, "Evasion Exercise Spud" was carried out between three Fraser Valley Ranger units, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the U.S. National Guard to "exercise P.C.M.R. companies in the capture or elimination of enemy saboteurs."<sup>40</sup> In this exercise, the Rangers were to prevent acts of sabotage at strategic points within an eight mile radius of the Abbotsford Airport, and capture R.C.A.F. airmen posing as enemy paratroops.

A similar exercise was conducted among the members of the Alert Bay Rangers. As Ranger instructor B. Harvey observed:

This scheme was a simple one of one group acting as enemy, while the other groups went into recce. [reconnaissance] formations and had to move up a wood road through timber, locate the enemy group and then conduct an encircling movement. It showed that even the best of woodsmen cannot make an approach in wooded country without making some sounds which can be easily heard by those lying in wait.<sup>41</sup>

Rangers were often very effective in mock battles against the regular army. The regulars, from places across Canada, were unfamiliar with the territory whereas the Rangers knew their areas well. Donald Sword, whose father was co-captain of Number 1 Company (Victoria), recalled the effectiveness of Rangers against the regular army:

Weekends were often spent on para-military exercises, including mock battles with the army, which the Rangers frequently 'won' using militarily unorthodox means. On one of these occasions at the Jordan River Power Station, the

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<sup>39</sup>Harry Hurley, personal letter, 3 November 1988.

<sup>40</sup>"Spud Training Evasion Exercise," 27 May 1945, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D475).

<sup>41</sup>Capt. B Harvey to Col. Taylor, 23 August 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D82).

army was defending and the Rangers were attacking. The Rangers came out from Victoria by fishing boat at night (supposedly acting as Japanese Commandos from a submarine lying off the coast). The skirmish ended quickly when a Ranger swam all the way up the spillway completely out of sight of the defenders and placed a marker 'bomb' on each of the turbines in the power station.<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, in a sham battle with the B.C. Dragoons, a militia regiment, the Oliver Rangers,

remarkably well camouflaged on a forward slope, found good targets and the referees declared that an entire section, on the Dragoons' flank, had been put out of action . . . .<sup>43</sup>

In another training scheme with the B.C. Dragoons, the Penticton Rangers made good use of their guerilla tactics. In this mock battle the Rangers were attacking, and as one umpire noted,

The defense had a very strong position, but the infiltration was also excellent. At the close, the Rangers seemed to spring up from behind every tuft of grass, and many of them proved that they are a lot younger than their years would seem to indicate in the way they snaked around all over the place.<sup>44</sup>

The main focus of Ranger training, however, was rifle practice. One hundred and sixty-three rifle ranges were constructed by P.C.M.R. companies, and good marksmanship was required of every Ranger.<sup>45</sup> Since the rifle was their main weapon and every

<sup>42</sup>Donald Sword, personal letter, 30 November 1988.

<sup>43</sup>"Oliver Rangers Hold the Battleline," article from unknown newspaper probably the *Penticton Herald*, 25 November 1943, Penticton (R.N. Atkinson) Museum and Archives (hereafter PMA), file 4-464.

<sup>44</sup>"No Decision In Sham Battle Here," article from unknown newspaper probably the *Penticton Herald*, 9 September 1943, PMA, file 4-464.

<sup>45</sup>"Brief of P.C.M.R.," n.d., D. Hist., file 159 (D1), 9.

Ranger was equipped with one, most Rangers became proficient marksmen. Shooting competitions were frequently held against regular army units such as that described in the *Kamloops Sentinel*:

The biggest get-together this year of military units for a day's shooting on the Kamloops rifle range took place last Sunday . . . . Units participating included Pacific Coast Militia Rangers Nos. 85 and 124 Companies; 2nd Battalion Rocky Mountain Rangers; Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps and Royal Canadian Air Force.

The P.C.M.R. teams took first, second and third with the R.M.R.'s coming fourth.<sup>46</sup>

Initially, Rangers used their own weapons, such as .22 calibre rifles or shotguns, and in many cases they drilled with dummy rifles for want of real weapons. Soon, however, thousands of .30-30 sporting rifles were supplied to Ranger units and as Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor reported to Captain Johnson: "the Department has acted to release for our use suitable rifles impounded from enemy aliens."<sup>47</sup> In addition to the Winchester Model 94 .30-30, Rangers were supplied with the Ross .303, Enfield Model 1917 .30-06, Lee-Enfield .303, Springfield .30-06, and the Marlin .30-30.<sup>48</sup> Most, however, were armed with the Winchester .30-30 carbine, which is surprising because it was considered a short range hunting rifle rather than a military firearm. Rangers preferred to receive this rifle precisely because it was a much sought-after hunting weapon. As Lieutenant Barry complained to Captain Johnson: "It's getting near hunting season and I would like to get some 30/30[s] . . . to give the boys."<sup>49</sup> Within the P.C.M.R., at the local level, military

<sup>46</sup> *Kamloops Sentinel*, 13 September 1944.

<sup>47</sup> Col. Taylor to Capt. Johnson, 26 July 1942, HMA.

<sup>48</sup> Donald J. Klancher, "The Arms of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," *Canadian Journal of Arms Collecting* 8, no. 4 (November 1970): 122.

<sup>49</sup> Lieut. C.E. Barry to Capt. Johnson, 2 September 1944, HMA.

matters often seem to have been overshadowed by civilian interests, such as game hunting. Even though the .30-30 carbine was a preferred hunting weapon, P.C.M.R. headquarters issued this model for military reasons alone. In ordinary warfare the .30-30 would have been a poor weapon because of its relatively short range of 300 yards. On the other hand, for use in the bush of British Columbia, where close range shooting would occur, it was considered an ideal weapon. This rifle was also a practical choice because it was a simple weapon that was easy to look after, it was light (6.5 pounds) and easy to carry through dense bush, and many Rangers were already familiar with it because they had used it for hunting.<sup>50</sup> Finally, the .30-30 was chosen because it was a standard civilian calibre which alleviated the problem of ammunition supply.<sup>51</sup>

Rangers were also equipped with bayonets and knives, and were trained to use explosives, Molotov Cocktails, mortars, .303 Bren guns, and Sten submachine guns. Fired from the waist, the Sten gun could be used to engage different targets almost as rapidly as they appeared. Again, a very useful weapon for close range bush warfare. These weapons, however, were not in abundance and were regarded as less important than the rifle.

Ranger activity was not all work, training, and planning. On the contrary, the P.C.M.R. also served as a type of social club in which men could get together either at meetings or on the rifle range. By the same token, it gave the older generation a chance to work with and teach young Rangers skills such as rifle shooting, and survival techniques. Aside from the comradeship established during training routines, Rangers also held "smokers," and dances which were open to the entire community.<sup>52</sup> As for younger Rangers, they learned a great deal about military tactics, but they also learned things about life, as David Whittaker recalled:

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<sup>50</sup>James Amos Goguen, "Ranger Gun," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 1 October 1967, 16.

<sup>51</sup>*The Ranger*, Stand Down Number, 4.

<sup>52</sup>Interview with J.W. Fraser, North Vancouver, B.C., 12 December 1988.

We played war as kids... but this was kind of like real. And so we were being then socialized into the role of men, and into the role of the militia, and into the role of soldiering, and the adventure and the excitement.... We felt part of the world of men, and it gave us a lot of self-confidence in terms of adolescents wanting to belong. It gave us a chance... to have a rather healthy childhood.<sup>53</sup>

For old and young Rangers alike, then, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were more than just a defence organization. For many, the P.C.M.R. also served an important social role in British Columbia's wartime society.

On the whole, P.C.M.R. training was many-faceted but the emphasis was on guerilla tactics. For the most part, practical backwoods training took precedence over military drill and methods. In the tradition of previous Ranger units, the men of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were trained to become expert marksmen, woodsmen, scouts, and guerilla fighters. From the French and Indian War to the Second World War, the basic skills of Rangers had remained the same.

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<sup>53</sup>Interview with David Whittaker, Vancouver, B.C., 14 February 1989.

## Chapter 5

### The Japanese Menace

The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers had diverse roles in the defence of British Columbia: the Rangers were expected to act as combat units to deal with minor raids, and “operate either by themselves or in conjunction with units of the Canadian Army Active Forces to repel a major attack.”<sup>1</sup> More specifically, the duties of the P.C.M.R. included “guerilla warfare in enemy rear, demolitions according to plan,” and “covering rear and flanks of Army forces against enemy infiltration.”<sup>2</sup> Their primary function, however, was to act as the eyes and ears of the regular army. As such, the Rangers’ duties included the compilation of intelligence reports, coast observation, scouting, and guiding. The orders for Vancouver Island P.C.M.R. companies required them to “watch for sabotage and para-troops landing,” and to watch and “report enemy movements.”<sup>3</sup> Ranger companies were also assigned the task of protecting fuel supplies, lines of communication, and other “vital points.”<sup>4</sup> This was particularly challenging for Number 73 Company’s Rangers because three major railroads passed through Hope—the C.N.R., C.P.R., and the Kettle Valley line—as well as the Hope-Princeton Trail and Highway Number One.

It appears that the Rangers of Number 73 Company took their duties seriously. At one point Lieutenant C.C. Young, of the North Bend detachment, expressed his concern

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<sup>1</sup>“P.C.M.R. Operation Instruction No. 1,” n.d., HMA.

<sup>2</sup>Major General A.E. Potts, “Operational Role PCMR, Vancouver Island,” 15 August 1942, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D813).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid; “Brief of PCMR,” D. Hist., file 159 (D1).

to Lieutenant-Colonel T.A.H. Taylor about the "vulnerability of the communication facilities through the Fraser Canyon."<sup>5</sup> On another occasion the C.N.R. tracks near Laidlaw were damaged. The Provincial Police apparently blamed school children, but Ranger Lieutenant Munro, upon investigation, believed that it could not possibly have been done by children. In this case, both Munro and Captain Johnson were not ruling out the possibility of sabotage.<sup>6</sup> Concern was also expressed by Lieutenant R.O. Edgar, of the Boston Bar detachment, about the protection of strategic areas. In October 1942, Edgar was in the process of making plans for the defence of the airport at Boothroyd near Boston Bar. According to Edgar, the airport "would have to be defended in case of attack" because it would be a "good manoeuvring place," and "a good landing place for enemy paratroops."<sup>7</sup>

The Rangers of Number 73 Company were well-prepared for any emergency. Each detachment, in fact, had formulated a specific plan of action suitable for its own particular area. At Yale, the Rangers had made plans to retreat into the woods if it became necessary. For this purpose they located "a natural fortress commanding Yale east and west." This hiding place was near a water supply and was far enough from Yale that campfire smoke could not be detected from the village.<sup>8</sup>

For the Hope Rangers, the "T-Plan" was devised to deal with "enemy parachute landings," small scale raids or larger invasion attempts, and "sabotage or violence by enemy aliens."<sup>9</sup> The plan of defence for Hope required that, in an emergency, Rangers place themselves at several points of strategic importance. Rangers residing in designated areas were assigned guard duty at bridges, railway stations, the airport, and the village

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<sup>5</sup>Col. Taylor, Memorandum re security and defences of roads and railways in the Fraser Canyon, 18 May 1943, HMA.

<sup>6</sup>Capt. Johnson to Col. Taylor, handwritten draft of letter, no date, HMA.

<sup>7</sup>Lieutenant R.O. Edgar to Capt. Johnson, 19 October 1942, HMA.

<sup>8</sup>Lieutenant Barry to Capt. Johnson, 19 April 1943, HMA.

<sup>9</sup>Secret draft of T-Plan, no date, HMA.

water pumping station, as well as other locations. The "T-Plan" even provided for protection against protests of "discontented elements," such as striking workers.<sup>10</sup> The possible employment of the P.C.M.R as a strikebreaking force was a concern for many Rangers. Those Rangers who belonged to trade unions, such as loggers, miners, and railroad workers, were worried that they could be called out to suppress a strike by their union brothers.<sup>11</sup> This fear of being called upon to aid the civil power was apparent on Vancouver Island. Colonel Taylor tried to reassure the commanders of the Ladysmith and Courtenay Rangers that their fears were unfounded:

While on Vancouver Island recently I was confronted at several points by P.C.M.R. Company Commanders with information to the effect that there had been some feeling amongst the P.C.M.R. that consideration was being given to maintaining the P.C.M.R. organization after cessation of hostilities, so that it might be available for use as a strike-breaking organization, and I wish now to correct any impression to this effect that may exist with you or in your unit.<sup>12</sup>

Taylor added that the P.C.M.R. was not trained along orthodox military lines, and its training did "not fill requirements of army units that might be called upon to assist civilian authorities in cases of civil unrest."<sup>13</sup>

It has been common in Canadian history for militia units to be called out to protect employers' interests against striking workers, and Vancouver Island had more than its share of this activity. The Vancouver Island Rangers who protested to Colonel Taylor about the possibility of being called out to aid the civil power, likely had lingering

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Rumours that the New Zealand Home Guard would be used as strikebreakers was also a concern to its members. See Nancy M. Taylor, *op. cit.*, 456-457.

<sup>12</sup>Col. Taylor to Captain G.V. Osborn, 14 March 1944, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D91); Col. Taylor to Captain A. McDonald, 15 March 1944, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D80).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

memories of militia units breaking local strikes. For example, in 1913 the militia was called out to restore order during the United Mine Workers of America strike against the Mackenzie and Mann-controlled coal mines at Nanaimo, Cumberland, Ladysmith, and other areas. The militia units, some 1000 strong, provided protection for "scab" miners, and assisted the police in the arrest of striking workers.<sup>14</sup> The enduring memories of the 1913 strike, and others like it, made some Rangers wary of their possible role. Rangers were willing to fight the Japanese, but they did not want to be used in cases of civil disturbance. Once again, the civilian—largely working class—members of the P.C.M.R. resisted the values of the military establishment. The Rangers were to act as independent guerilla fighters in the event of a Japanese invasion but, in the meantime, they had always been independent thinkers.

Throughout British Columbia Ranger units had the same defensive end in view. By using guerilla tactics they were to be a constant thorn in the enemy's side. As George Swanson, former Ranger from Number 129 Company (Grand Forks), recalled:

We were to know the location of road and railway bridges, rock cuts and tunnels, and in the case of invasion, we were to demolish by dynamite these areas, then disappear into the hills and harass the enemy.<sup>15</sup>

Every Ranger detachment's character was unique, and geography often played an important role in its defence measures. For example, Number 54 Company (Alert Bay) had

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<sup>14</sup>For a review of the militia's role in the 1913 Nanaimo strike see Peter Guy Silverman, "A History of the Militia and Defences of British Columbia 1871-1914" (M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1956), 180-192. See also Desmond Morton, "Aid to the Civil Power: The Canadian Militia in Support of Social Order, 1867-1914," *Canadian Historical Review* 51, no. 4 (December 1970): 407-425; John Norris, "The Vancouver Island Coal Miners, 1912-1914: A Study of an Organizational Strike," *B.C. Studies* 45 (Spring 1980): 56-72; and Carlos A. Schwantes, *Radical Heritage* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), 202-204.

<sup>15</sup>George Swanson, personal letter, 5 February 1989.

a marine detachment which consisted of men who owned their own boats or were "Captains of the B.C. Packers seine boats."<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the situation in the Cariboo was much different. Captain C. Reay, of Number 64 Company (Clinton), explained to Ranger headquarters that his men

carry arms 90 percent of the time during their everyday work, which entails riding for stock and winter feeding at the present time, and at no time would they be far from their arms.

In this manner I feel sure you will see that this area is covered by Rangers all the time as an active unit, which, though it may not be as spectacular as large bodies of men in drill formation would be to an inspection officer; as a Ranger organization to cover this large area of 490 square miles with 170 all ranks, it is the best we have been able to evolve to this date.<sup>17</sup>

Captain George Baldwin, of P.C.M.R. headquarters, was well aware of the vast area covered by the Clinton Rangers. In reply to Captain Reay, Baldwin remarked that these mounted cowboys were a perfect Ranger unit:

I think it is an ideal one and is about as close as it could possibly be to the setup which it was originally intended to have in the Ranger organization. . . your area is covered by Rangers practically the whole time, and to a person who is thoroughly Ranger minded, it is filling the bill in a much more efficient manner than a much larger body of men in drill formation could.<sup>18</sup>

To be sure, Ranger units throughout British Columbia had different plans of defence for their regions. Nevertheless, a strategy common to all P.C.M.R. companies involved

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<sup>16</sup>Captain A.W. Derrom to Col. Taylor, 3 February 1944, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D82).

<sup>17</sup>Captain C. Reay to Col. Taylor, 20 March 1945, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D83).

<sup>18</sup>Capt. Baldwin for Col. Taylor to Capt. C. Reay, 29 March 1945, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D83).

harassing the enemy in the backwoods, and not engaging them in open combat. Lloyd Cornett reflected upon the probable role of the P.C.M.R. had there been a Japanese invasion:

British Columbia has changed a lot. In those days there were a large percentage of people in the population who had experience in hunting and had hunting rifles . . . . We expected that our members would be strengthened by people. They may not have had the training but we would have to provide the core [or base to which] they would go. We expected to pick up additional people who, if there was a Japanese invasion, [would] grab the old hunting rifle off the wall and we'd absorb them into our organization . . . . but if we were forced out of this area, into a more remote area, then we would have to reorganize and absorb any recruits we got into a larger and stronger force. Presumably, we'd get additional supplies and ammunition, and we would become the basis of an underground guerilla group here if this area was ever taken over. We would want to survive that [invasion] and be available.<sup>19</sup>

Wes Walker, another former Burnaby South Ranger, remembered how it was stressed to them that they should not engage the enemy in open combat unless it was absolutely necessary. What the Canadian Army did want from the P.C.M.R., according to Wes Walker, was a group of skilled guides:

They wanted us mostly to know every tree and branch and whatever in our own area which we did . . . . it was brought to our attention rather seriously that we had to know all these things, because if we had to lead or guide a company or platoon of regular army, then we didn't want to be making the wrong steps.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Interview with Lloyd Cornett, Burnaby, B.C., 29 November 1988.

<sup>20</sup>Interview with Wes Walker, Surrey, B.C., 16 July 1990.

As in Britain, rumours of a "Fifth Column" of traitors began to circulate in British Columbia. Pacific Command realized that Ranger units could provide valuable information through intelligence reports. In the Rangers, Pacific Command had contacts throughout the province who knew their communities and the people residing in them. In a report on Number 2 Company (West Vancouver), the Inspector-General referred to the value of Rangers in compiling information:

The role of the PCMR is to have an accurate knowledge of all roads, tracks, waterways, etc., in the district for which the coy. is responsible. Also, a thorough knowledge of the countryside and complete information of all families and personnel living in the vicinity, to the extent of knowing their histories, activities and views regarding Canadian affairs, citizenship, etc.

In the event of subversive action, the PCMR's could put their finger on any person who might be implicated.<sup>21</sup>

The Inspector-General also noted that, in cooperation with the Provincial Police, Rangers apprehended "the murderer of two trappers in the Prince George district."<sup>22</sup> In like manner, Rangers helped to capture escaped prisoners of war, and soldiers absent without leave (A.W.O.L.) from the Aleutian Islands campaign.<sup>23</sup> The Rangers also participated in various search and rescue operations. Because of their knowledge of local terrain, Rangers were frequently called out to assist the air force in the search for lost aircraft.<sup>24</sup> Ranger detachments throughout British Columbia also worked in close cooperation with the Aircraft Detection Corps to provide a warning system for enemy planes.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Major-General J.P. Mackenzie, "Report on No. 2 Coy., P.C.M.R.," 25 March 1944, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D592).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>"Brief of PCMR," n.d., D. Hist., file 159 (D1).

<sup>24</sup>*The Ranger*, Stand Down Number (October 1945): 11; "Coast Rangers Will Be Maintained," *Vancouver Province*, 14 June 1944.

<sup>25</sup>Flight Lieutenant R.E. Slinger to all P.C.M.R. companies, 21 April 1943, HMA; *Vancouver Province*,

In addition to aiding in the search for lost aircraft, Rangers were useful in searches for missing persons. One such occurrence took place at Hope when a woman became "lost in the woods," and the local Rangers subsequently made a "big effort" to help find her.<sup>26</sup> On another occasion the Woodfibre Rangers, on a training exercise in the woods, came to the aid of an injured woman. As the husband of the victim explained the event:

A stretcher was quickly improvised by using G.I. blouses and cedar poles, and transportation down that very steep and rugged hillside was very greatly manoeuvred. The patient was placed in a rowboat (stretcher and all) and towed to the doctor at Woodfibre. Although the accident did not prove serious, I am deeply indebted to the boys for their solicitude and service beyond the call of duty.<sup>27</sup>

Like the British Home Guard, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were assigned the duty of thwarting any Fifth Column activity.<sup>28</sup> P.C.M.R. detachments were flooded with propaganda warning that "Hitler's invisible army of spies," and "grinning devils from the land of the Rising Sun" were active in Canada.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, one secret memorandum from the Department of National Defence advised Ranger companies that "Axis saboteurs" may have landed on the Pacific Coast. Considering the lurid nature of most wartime propaganda, it is not surprising that the leader of these saboteurs was described as having "red hair and one finger missing."<sup>30</sup> Rangers were instructed to report the

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3 August 1943.

<sup>26</sup>Allan K. and Marjorie Stuart to Commanding Officer, Hope Rangers, 12 March 1943, HMA.

<sup>27</sup>G.R. Hurley to Col. Taylor, 14 July 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D95).

<sup>28</sup>E.S. Turner, *The Phoney War on the Home Front* (London: Michael Joseph, 1961), 220-221. For a detailed account of the British Home Guard see Norman Longmate, *The Real Dad's Army* (London: Hutchinson Library Services, 1974).

<sup>29</sup>"The Nazis Are Here," newsletter re Fifth Column activity, n.d., HMA.

<sup>30</sup>Major H.C. Bray, Secret Memorandum re Axis saboteurs, 24 October 1942, HMA.

strange behaviour of neighbours; anyone asking questions about the war effort; and anyone loitering around an industrial plant.<sup>31</sup> The Rangers of Number 73 Company carried out these tasks in a manner that reflected their loyalty and the state of wartime paranoia pervading the society at that time. For example, Captain H.W. Johnson, acting in cooperation with the Agassiz Rangers, alerted Pacific Command about a suspicious man of German origin, who had recently sold his auto camp at Harrison Hot Springs to move to Nanaimo.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the Rangers closely observed and diligently reported any activity that was regarded as a security threat. Another report noted an "eccentric" summer resident of Hope who had been voicing his opinion that Hitler was "the only man in Europe who had succeeded in organizing anything."<sup>33</sup>

Concern was greatest, however, about Japanese Canadians and the Tashme internment camp which was located only fourteen miles from Hope. In fact, even before it was established, local Ranger officers were worried about the consequences of having an internment camp so close to the Village of Hope. Captain Johnson, on 17 July 1942, suggested to Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor that contact be established with military authorities in the United States.<sup>34</sup> Johnson believed that meetings should take place at Whitworth Ranch in the Skagit Valley—located three miles from the Canada-U.S. border—to "exchange information... which may be of mutual benefit."<sup>35</sup> These meetings were deemed to be imperative because of the plans to construct the internment camp at "14 Mile Ranch" [Tashme], which was only some twenty-five miles from the United States border. As Captain Johnson saw the situation:

In the event of enemy action in this territory the presence of these

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<sup>31</sup>"The Nazis Are Here," HMA.

<sup>32</sup>Capt. Johnson to Major Bray, 21 October 1942, HMA.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 13 March 1943, HMA.

<sup>34</sup>Capt. Johnson to Col. Taylor, 17 July 1942, HMA.

<sup>35</sup>Capt. Johnson to Regional Forester #6, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Portland, Oregon, 8 October 1942, HMA.

Japanese could constitute a serious menace not only to ourselves by their proximity to our communications at Hope, but also to the two dams just below the Boundary on the Skagit River in the U.S.A.

Also it may be pointed out that in the mountains both west and east of the '14 Mile' Ranch, (as well as at the ranch itself), there *are*, without question places where paratroops might land and descend into the valley, and seize control of the camp itself; the males could be armed, and from there raids could be made on both Hope and Ruby Creek in Washington.<sup>36</sup>

After Japanese work camps, located eleven and fifteen miles along the Hope-Princeton Trail, and the main camp of Tashme had been established, Captain Johnson attempted to organize the white employees in these camps into a Ranger detachment. This detachment was to serve the dual purpose of furnishing Johnson with intelligence reports, and standing by in readiness "to take over in case of an emergency."<sup>37</sup> This proposal was opposed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (R.C.M.P.), who were responsible for the camps, because "any military organization of any kind at the camps... might excite the Japs."<sup>38</sup> As a result, Captain Johnson suggested to Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor that they should proceed to organize these men, and discreetly furnish them with arms without the R.C.M.P.'s knowledge.<sup>39</sup>

Accordingly, one of the main components of Number 73 Company's "T-Plan" was to defend against a possible uprising in the Tashme camp. The Hope Ranger detachment was to be "ready at a moment's notice to deal with" an attempted breakout of Japanese from the camp. If such a breakout occurred, the Rangers were to "forestall and prevent, by small or large numbers, acts of sabotage by any of these Japanese" until regular forces

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<sup>36</sup>Capt. Johnson to Col. Taylor, 17 July 1942, HMA.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 20 March 1943, HMA.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

could arrive.<sup>40</sup>

Japanese passing through Hope, on their way to or from Tashme, were watched closely by the local Rangers. Movements of Japanese Canadians in Hope were carefully recorded and the information was sent to Ranger headquarters. These reports were often quite detailed:

On March 25, [1943], between 11:00 and 12:00 hrs., three Japanese were seen by Rangers from the Fraser River bank at Hope, taking pictures of the Historic Sites Monument and the river and mountains. These men came into Hope early in the morning and were seen around Hope until 17:00 hrs.<sup>41</sup>

Captain Johnson became increasingly concerned about the lack of security at Tashme, and charged the R.C.M.P. with "becoming very lax and careless in their handling of the Japanese coming into or out of the camps." Johnson further complained that "Japanese are allowed to roam around the Village of Hope without any attempt at control and it is causing considerable comment and concern among the citizens here."<sup>42</sup>

In response to Johnson's concerns, Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor explained that, with the facilities available, the R.C.M.P. could not avoid stopovers in Hope when transporting Japanese to Tashme. Work was underway, however, to provide accommodation for the Japanese when they were in Hope to prevent any loitering.<sup>43</sup>

Fear of the Japanese, nevertheless, continued to exist among the Hope Rangers. Captain Johnson expressed these feelings in an intelligence report of December 1943, in which he cited two young Japanese men who, in his opinion, were being given too much freedom of movement. The two Japanese brothers in question were employed by the local Magistrate and both resided in Hope. Apparently they were the sons of a Japanese dentist at

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<sup>40</sup>Secret draft of T Plan, n.d., HMA.

<sup>41</sup>Capt. Johnson to Intelligence (Security) Headquarters, Pacific Command, 13 April 1943, HMA.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 22 April 1943, HMA.

<sup>43</sup>Col. Taylor to Capt. Johnson, 24 April 1943, HMA.

Tashme and their mother was white. The older brother periodically carried the mail to and from Hope, while the younger brother drove a truck between Hope and Vancouver for a local company. According to Johnson, he was not alone in objecting to this situation: "the fact that a Japanese is put in charge of His Majesty's Mail is the cause of much adverse local comment."<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, Johnson continued to complain about what he regarded as the poor security measures of the police. Apparently the R.C.M.P. had moved their guard post into town from its previous location on the Hope-Princeton Trail. Johnson believed that the post should have remained on the Hope-Princeton Trail, because its new position allowed alternate routes to be used by someone wishing to avoid detection.<sup>45</sup>

These reports from Number 73 Company were taken into consideration by Ranger headquarters, but how seriously they were considered is not known. Perhaps the Hope Rangers were trying to impress headquarters with their zeal, or simply trying to emphasize their strategic importance. In any event, Major H.C. Bray, from the Intelligence branch of Pacific Command, tried to allay the fears of the Hope detachment. In response, Bray explained that the two Japanese brothers employed in Hope were "Eurasians born in Canada, and as such" were entitled to "the same freedom as other British subjects." Furthermore, Bray advised the unit that he had talked to R.C.M.P. officers and was assured that their new location at Hope was "only the headquarters of the Detachment," and that "in the meantime the road" was "covered by patrols."<sup>46</sup>

Needless to say, the Village of Hope was not the only area where the Japanese were treated with suspicion. Lieutenant Edgar, commander of the Boston Bar Rangers, provided information to headquarters about a Japanese woman who frequently visited

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<sup>44</sup>Acting Adjutant for Capt. Johnson to Intelligence (Security), Pacific Command, 3 December 1943, HMA.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Major Bray to Acting Adjutant, No. 73 Coy., 14 December 1943, HMA.

Boston Bar. Upon the request of Major Bray, the woman was closely investigated by the local Rangers. Lieutenant Edgar went so far as to ascertain that "during her visits, she receives and makes telephone calls to and from Vancouver. . . and usually calls a Hastings number." In the end it was discovered that she was not Japanese but, in fact, was from Shanghai and that her husband, still there, was possibly a prisoner of the Japanese.<sup>47</sup>

The Japanese in and around Yale were also kept under close observation. Even after V-J Day, the Yale Ranger detachment was "ordered to stand by in readiness" in case the Japanese residents, and the Japanese C.P.R. extra gang at Spuzzum decided to cause trouble.<sup>48</sup> Captain Barry reported that T. Sumi, a C.P.R. employee at Spuzzum, who was "at one time an officer in the Japanese Army," claimed that if the "Japanese quit he would blow up the railway bridge and commit hari-kari."<sup>49</sup> Sumi was arrested by the police, but the Rangers continued to patrol the C.P.R. yards "for three days after V-J day."

As in Number 73 Company, Rangers in other units also doubted the loyalty of Japanese Canadians. Captain C. Reay, commander of Number 64 Company (Clinton), expressed his concern over the 200 Japanese employed by the Sorg Pulp Company:

Not five minutes ago, a truck laden with about twelve Japanese, passed my front gate. There was no one in charge of it, but I spoke to the driver who speaks English (and to whom I am known), and told him to tell the Head man at Taylor Lake to advise his men not to wander outside their workings.<sup>50</sup>

Captain Reay was worried that Japanese paratroops would land in the vicinity and be indistinguishable from the Japanese pulp mill workers. How, asked Reay, were his

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<sup>47</sup>Lieutenant Edgar to Capt. Johnson, copy of letter from Major Bray re Japanese woman at Boston Bar, 29 July 1943, HMA; Lieut. Edgar to Major Bray, 1 August 1943, HMA.

<sup>48</sup>Col. Taylor to Intelligence (Security), Pacific Command, copy of report received from Captain C.E. Barry re Japanese at Spuzzum, 28 August 1945, HMA.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Captain Reay to Col. Taylor, 4 June 1945, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D83).

Rangers "to determine hostile from friendly Japanese, without" exposing themselves "to the obvious dangers of recognition through visual or vocal contact, with what might prove to be an enemy." Reay's proposed solution was simply "to remove these so-called friendly (?) Japanese to a district which is not likely to... become a battle zone."<sup>51</sup>

In response, Pacific Command advised the Clinton Rangers that the R.C.M.P. had the "enemy alien" situation under control. Everyone of Japanese origin in Canada was required to carry a registration card; the Japanese employed by the Sorg Pulp Company were "strictly supervised" by both the R.C.M.P. and the company itself; and the R.C.M.P.'s special constable checked all trains entering and leaving the district. In short, Pacific Command concurred with the R.C.M.P.'s claim that its precautions regarding the Japanese were "so effective as to preclude the possibility of any potential saboteur being landed in a locality where Japanese are employed, without the matter being brought to" their "immediate attention."<sup>52</sup> Once again, the concerns of local Rangers were not fully shared by Pacific Command. In this case and many others the Rangers tried to justify their existence by magnifying local dangers. Rangers, as civilians without accurate strategic information, were much more susceptible to fears generated by the uncertainty of the war and the perceived threat of the "yellow peril." By contrast, Pacific Command provided a rational voice in an atmosphere dominated by rumours of "suicide squads of Japanese" paratroops with designs on North America.<sup>53</sup>

Japanese Canadians were treated with suspicion everywhere, even as far north as Dawson, Yukon Territory. Major-General Mackenzie, the Inspector-General, reported the concerns of Number 135 Company (Dawson, Y.T.) where the Japanese were not interned:

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Brigadier, General Staff, Pacific Command to Capt. Reay, 19 June 1945, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D83).

<sup>53</sup>Lieutenant Hubert Gammie to Capt. Reay, 4 June 1945, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D83).

There is a general feeling that the Japanese in Dawson have too much freedom. This applies also to the Japs in Whitehorse. Furthermore, I am informed that the P.C.M. Rangers are somewhat disturbed about the Japanese in Dawson as they are all equipped with excellent long and short-wave radio sets. The O.C. informs me that they listen to the Japanese broadcasts, and as many of them are cooks employed in restaurants, they have many opportunities to pass derogatory remarks about the Allies, these remarks being based on information received over the radio sets. They are couched in such a way that no action is possible by the authorities, nevertheless, the sting is there.<sup>54</sup>

There was a widespread belief that Japanese-Canadian fishermen and workers provided the Japanese military with coastal marine maps and photographs of areas of strategic importance. Ron Wilson, former Ranger from Number 43 Company (Port Alice), explained this concern:

We had some thoughts about the likelihood of the Japanese making raids on the British Columbia coastline. We had Japanese working in our mill... for some time. We had a Japanese community [and] there was always some doubt whether they would all be loyal. The Japanese we knew had marine maps of the whole coast of B.C. The Japanese Navy probably had them. They knew our weak points.<sup>55</sup>

British Columbia's representatives in the House of Commons at Ottawa voiced similar fears. Thomas Reid complained that Japanese Canadians had photographed military defence sites, and passed the information on to the Japanese Army. Furthermore, according to Reid, the Japanese military also had

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<sup>54</sup>Major-General J.P. Mackenzie, "Report of the Inspection of No. 135 Company, Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 30 April 1944, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D592).

<sup>55</sup>Interview with Ron Wilson, Penticton, B.C., 29 December 1988.

complete information of Pacific coast waters, bays and harbours, it being well known that the Japanese had up-to-date charts, the data for which were obtained during fishing operations.<sup>56</sup>

There was no evidence of Japanese Canadians engaged in espionage, so that rumours of disloyal Japanese Canadians probably originated from the racism of many white British Columbians.

Grand Forks, like Hope, was near a Japanese internment camp. Although Grand Forks is located much farther inland than Hope, the local population was still apprehensive about nearby Japanese internees. Ranger Hugh Sutherland recalled that his concern was primarily rooted in a fear of Japanese military strength, but there was still a lingering distrust of the Japanese Canadians:

Hysteria was rampant. As High School students we developed friendships with the evacuees in our school and met their parents. Yet we were suspicious of those we didn't know. We were both afraid of the potential invader because of his reputation in the Sino-Japanese War... and in Bataan and Corrigidor. We expected at anytime for there to be enemy action on our Pacific Coast, hence the impoundment of the West Coast Japanese fishing boats and short wave radios. Though Pearl Harbor was a great distance away, Japanese activity was evident on the Aleutian Islands and Dutch Harbor, Alaska and we knew we'd little between 'them' and us in January 1942.<sup>57</sup>

For David Whittaker, on the other hand, fear of the Japanese was based upon a thorough propaganda campaign supervised by the local Ranger company. Whittaker recalled the suspicion and dislike he developed for the Japanese:

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<sup>56</sup>Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 2 February 1942, 227.

<sup>57</sup>Hugh Sutherland, personal letter, 5 February 1989.

A lot of propaganda was laid on the men, against especially the Japanese. To some extent [it was against] the Germans and the Italians but basically against the Japanese . . . . We also saw propaganda films which weren't in general circulation to the public. For example, captured films . . . smuggled out of China in the 1930s of the invasion of Manchuria by the Japanese. . . . We would see . . . situations of Japanese . . . killing women and taking their babies from them and throwing their babies up in the air and then catching them with their bayonets. Well, of course, that was a propaganda film but it was also maybe historically true too. The thing is that it got us all riled up; we've got to protect ourselves from the Jap hordes . . . . Those images are burnt into my mind to this day. I remember them very well, how we hated those Japs—we'll have to kill those Japs.<sup>58</sup>

It took years of "education and growing up" for Whittaker to rid himself of the hatred he felt toward the Japanese.<sup>59</sup> The P.C.M.R. had served as an effective inculcator of propaganda for British Columbia's citizen-soldiers.

Although the film viewed by David Whittaker and his fellow Rangers was not available to the public, other forms of propaganda were common. For example, a magazine titled *Jap Blood Cult* sold for twenty-five cents at the local newsstand.<sup>60</sup> This magazine claimed that a "cult of blood" called the Black Dragon Society had infiltrated the Japanese government and military, and planned to conquer the world. The magazine described brutal Japanese atrocities as well as Fifth Column activity in China and North America. Japanese soldiers were portrayed as inhuman, sex-mad monsters:

I saw Chinese women torn from the arms of their husbands and attacked

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<sup>58</sup>Interview with David Whittaker, Vancouver, B.C., 14 February 1989.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>*Jap Blood Cult: Rape! Torture! Kill! Exposing the Shocking Secrets of Japan's Black Dragon Society* (Country Press, Inc., 1942).

in the streets by gangs of ten to twenty men while their husbands were forced to watch.

I saw a baby torn from the breasts of its pretty Chinese mother and thrown into a flaming building while the mother was stripped naked and tied to a post at a street corner, where the sobbing, fainting girl was forced to submit to brutal indignities which only the minds of sex-mad Japanese could devise.

I saw a little girl of twelve or thirteen seized by two ronins as she fled. Her skirts were ripped off and when it was found that she was physically incapable of fulfilling the purposes her captives intended, she was treated in such a way that she would never again be found desirable by any other man.<sup>61</sup>

Magazines such as this fanned the flames of hysteria, and increased the public's fear of the "yellow peril." Reports of Japanese atrocities against Canadian prisoners of war in Hong Kong served the same purpose.

Other Rangers claim they were immune to the propaganda which was prevalent in wartime British Columbia.<sup>62</sup> For example, in Grand Forks, as former Ranger Ray Orser explained:

Any suggestion that any of the Japanese who came to this community, and were living and working here, might be involved in any acts of sabotage was greeted with much skepticism . . . . These Japanese were treated as friends, neighbors, co-workers, and colleagues. They entered into our community life and activities as naturally as the indigent [indigenous] population. It would

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>62</sup>While many of these benign recollections are genuine, others may not reflect contemporary reality. Such recollections occurred long after the events described and may show the effects of the modern revulsion for the forced removal of the Japanese Canadians from the coastal security zone.

have been hard going to drum up any feeling or atmosphere of enmity among the community residents toward the Japanese deportees.<sup>63</sup>

Ez Henniger, another Grand Forks Ranger, concurred with Orser about the Japanese Canadians:

I divorced these people entirely from the real threat from Japan, and their presence here in no way influenced my decision to join the P.C.M.R.

The community as a whole viewed them as a group of people disrupted from their homes and treated them in a compassionate and friendly manner.<sup>64</sup>

It seems that the perceived threat of the Japanese Canadians varied from region to region throughout the province. In some areas, at least among the officers of the P.C.M.R., all Japanese Canadians were seen as a security threat and were treated accordingly. This was reasonable, if one views the situation from the perspective of a citizen in the early stages of the Pacific War, when propaganda about a Japanese Fifth Column was widespread. This propaganda was strengthened by reports, both true and false, of subversive acts by Japanese residents in nations attacked or conquered by the Japanese. The Japanese had already achieved rapid military victories in the Pacific when they captured the Aleutian Islands of Kiska and Attu in June 1942, and the speed of these conquests was plausibly explained by internal subversion. Even closer to home, on 20 June 1942, the Estevan Point lighthouse, on Vancouver Island, was shelled by a Japanese submarine. These attacks led many to believe that British Columbia could be the next victim of Japanese militarism. The invasion never materialized, but recent studies have shown that the threat may have been more real than past accounts have claimed. J.L. Granatstein and G.A. Johnson have discovered that the staff of the Japanese consulate in

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<sup>63</sup>Ray Orser, personal letter, 5 February 1989.

<sup>64</sup>Ez Henniger, personal letter, 27 February 1989.

Vancouver was involved in espionage as early as 1939.<sup>65</sup> In 1941, the Japanese code was broken which revealed that the Japanese “were taking great interest in the B.C. coast.”<sup>66</sup> Moreover, in January 1941, copies of a message from Tokyo to Washington were sent to the Vancouver consulate advising them to “switch their emphasis from publicity and propaganda to intelligence gathering.” This telegram “made special reference to the ‘utilization of our Second Generations [Nisei] and our resident nationals.’ ”<sup>67</sup> Another telegram requested the Vancouver consulate to focus on “ ‘intelligence involving U.S. and Canada,’ especially the strengthening of Pacific Coast defences, ship and aircraft movements.”<sup>68</sup>

It remains unknown whether or not the Japanese planned an invasion of British Columbia but even in June 1942, when coastal defences had been strengthened considerably, the military authorities still maintained that it was “entirely inadequate against many types of attack that are possible and probable from the West.”<sup>69</sup> While the military was uneasy about the weakness of British Columbia’s defences, the public was in a state of panic. The perception of a brutal Japanese Army which had committed the Nanking Massacre—bolstered by knowledge of the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor—provided justification for the racism which had always been a part of white British Columbian society. Whether or not the men of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers disliked Japanese Canadians, in almost every case they feared and loathed their mother country, Japan, which many believed had designs on British Columbia. Ultimately, fear of Japanese military

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<sup>65</sup>J.L. Granatstein and Gregory A. Johnson, “The Evacuation of the Japanese Canadians, 1942: A Realist Critique of the Received Version,” in *On Guard for Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939-1945*, eds. Norman Hillmer et al. (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1988), 106-108.

<sup>66</sup>J.L. Granatstein, “The Enemy Within,” *Saturday Night* 101, no. 11 (November 1986): 39.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>68</sup>Granatstein and Johnson, 107.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 119. While an invasion was unlikely, harassing attacks by the Japanese were not.

strength became intertwined with feelings of racial animosity toward Japanese Canadians. Unfortunately, many innocent Japanese Canadians were caught in between the two and interned as enemy aliens but, at the same time, the Japanese Consul certainly expected his immigrant countrymen to aid him as spies. It was, however, a time of war and it is not surprising that the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers—charged with the defence of British Columbia—acted in such a manner towards Japanese Canadians who were, in their eyes, potential security threats. For the Rangers, the “Japanese menace” provided golden opportunities to demonstrate their alertness and zeal to P.C.M.R. headquarters.

## Chapter 6

### Decline of the Ranger Empire

By early August 1943, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers had reached what Pacific Command regarded as peak strength. Therefore, Pacific Command urged Ranger detachments to limit new enlistments and to concentrate on "quality rather than on quantity."<sup>1</sup> British Columbia's defences had improved greatly since the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the war in the Pacific had begun to turn in the Allies' favour. Nevertheless, in October 1943, when an article in the *Vancouver Sun* claimed that military authorities in Ottawa were contemplating the disbandment of some P.C.M.R. companies, and a drastic strength reduction in others, it created outrage among the Rangers.<sup>2</sup> Captain R.N. Atkinson, of Number 71 Company (Penticton), appealed to his Member of Parliament to prevent the proposed strength reduction of 4500 men.<sup>3</sup> Captain W.W. Smith of the Woodfibre Ranger Company complained that

Even if the article is true it has had a tremendous effect in lowering the morale of the Coy. as a whole. For some time, many in the Ranger organization have wondered just how important was their role; the aforementioned article was just that much more fuel added to the smouldering fire of complacency [*sic*]. . . . A Fifth columnist could not do more in so few words in such a short space of time.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Major Barton for Col. Taylor, memorandum re strength of Ranger units, 9 August 1943, HMA.

<sup>2</sup>"Ranger Units to Be Cut," *Vancouver Sun*, 18 October 1943.

<sup>3</sup>Captain R.N. Atkinson to Hon. Grote Stirling, 29 October 1943, PMA.

<sup>4</sup>Captain W.W. Smith to Col. Taylor, 24 October 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D95).

Captain Smith further informed Colonel Taylor that "attendance at the last parade following the article was about 50% of previous meetings."<sup>5</sup> Captain Harvey, a P.C.M.R. Field Supervisor, reported to Colonel Taylor that a similar drop in morale took place throughout Vancouver Island.<sup>6</sup> Captain R.H. Swan, commander of Number 86 Company (Britannia Beach), was similarly perturbed by the article:

Such statements appearing in the press at this time are extremely damaging to the Ranger organization and are precious morsels for the rumor-mongers in our midst. Our Rangers have recently listened to talks by Yank Levy and also by Corporal D.W. Taylor, of the A.R.P. organization in Vancouver, both of whom stressed the importance of preparedness, assuring us that we were not by any means 'out of the woods' yet. We recently had a visit from Lt. Lorne Clark, R.C.N.V.R. [Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve], in connection with the Fifth Victory Loan. In a short address, he warned us against complacency and a false sense of security. Are we to assume, therefore, that this was all 'eye-wash?'

Lets face the facts. Has the war reached the point where we can relax our efforts? Is the Pacific Coast so well guarded and patrolled that we can turn in our rifles? Is all threat of invasion past? What will I tell those Rangers who, after reading this article, will feel that their usefulness is at an end and decide it is unnecessary to turn out for further manoeuvres or target practice?

It is my considered opinion, for what it is worth, that such a move as contemplated would be false economy and I would strongly urge that representations be made to Ottawa to have such an order rescinded.<sup>7</sup>

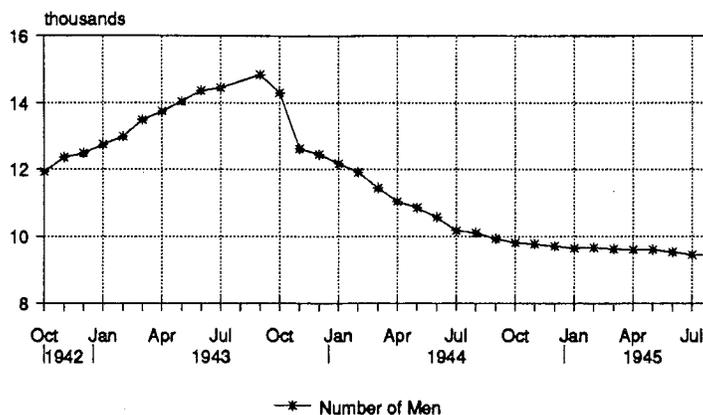
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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Captain B. Harvey to Col. Taylor, 3 February 1944, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D81).

<sup>7</sup>Captain R.H. Swan to Col. Taylor, 20 October 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D89).

## Monthly Strength Returns Pacific Coast Militia Rangers



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D69).

Figure 6.18: Combined Monthly Strength Returns of all P.C.M.R. units from October 1942 to August 1945.

In response, Colonel Taylor assured Captain Swan that a “higher authority” had advised him that the Rangers

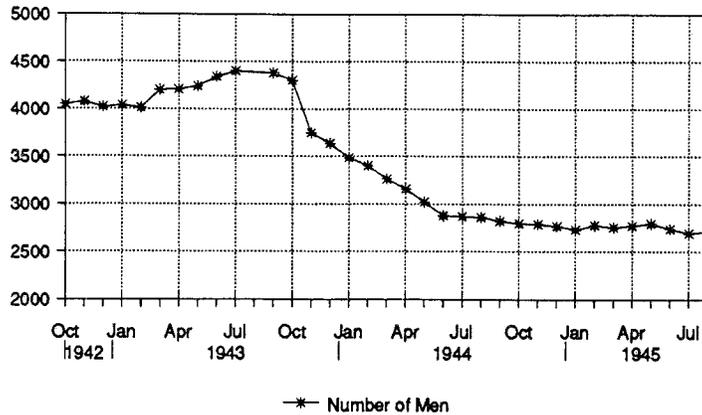
still have a useful function to perform and this applies particularly to units in the immediate coastal areas such as yours and that these units should be maintained in a high state of efficiency.<sup>8</sup>

At any rate, the news of strength reductions did cause an overall drop in Ranger enlistments (see Figure 6.18). Figures 6.19-24 indicate that Ranger enrolments in all regions of British Columbia peaked around September 1943. In each case, the most significant decline in Ranger numbers occurred between October and November 1943.

On 5 November, P.C.M.R. headquarters officially announced its intentions in a Special Circular Letter, which recommended that Ranger companies proceed to reduce their

<sup>8</sup>Col. Taylor to Capt. Swan, 30 October 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D89).

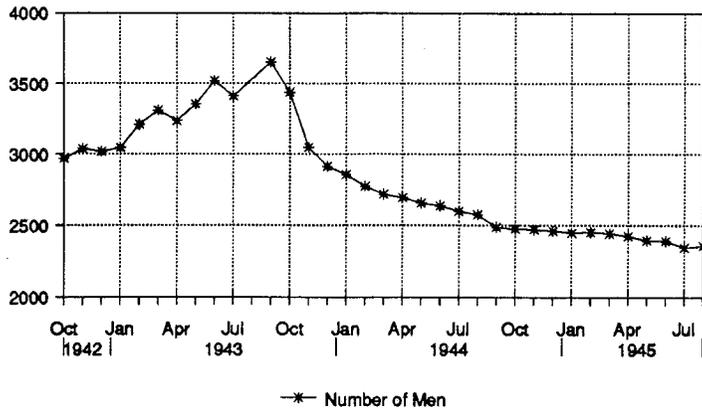
### Monthly Strength Returns Vancouver Island PCMR



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.19: Combined Monthly Strength Returns for Vancouver Island P.C.M.R. companies, October 1942 to August 1945.

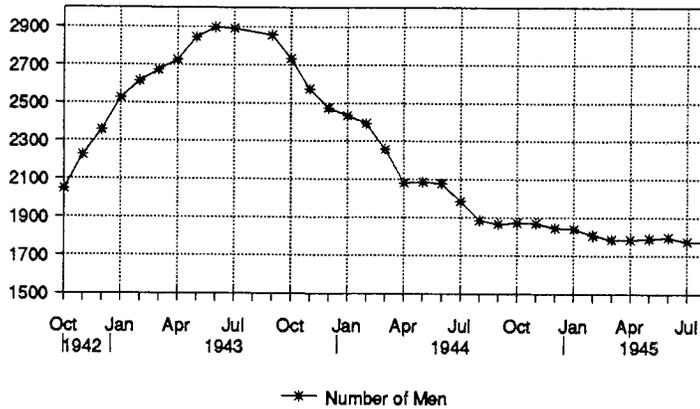
### Monthly Strength Returns Lower Mainland PCMR



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.20: Combined Monthly Strength Returns for Lower Mainland P.C.M.R. companies, October 1942 to August 1945.

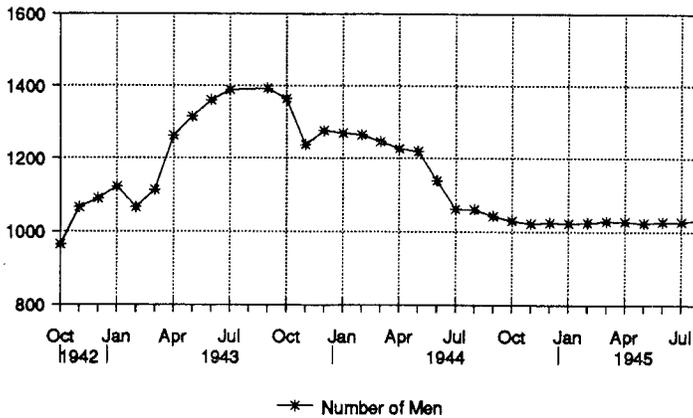
### Monthly Strength Returns Thompson-Okanagan PCMR



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.21: Combined Monthly Strength Returns for Thompson-Okanagan P.C.M.R. companies, October 1942 to August 1945.

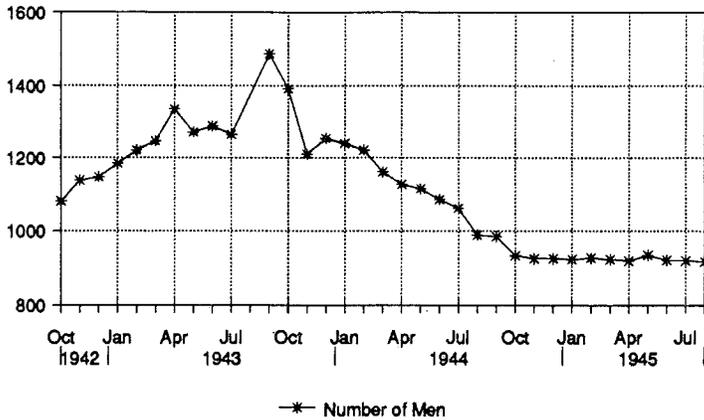
### Monthly Strength Returns Cariboo - Northern Interior - Yukon PCMR



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.22: Combined Monthly Strength Returns for Cariboo-Northern Interior-Yukon P.C.M.R. companies, October 1942 to August 1945.

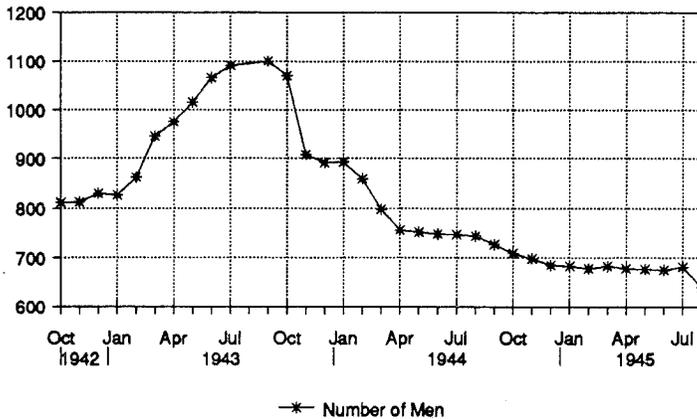
### Monthly Strength Returns North Coast - Queen Charlotte Is. PCMR



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.23: Combined Monthly Strength Returns for North Coast-Queen Charlotte Islands P.C.M.R. companies, October 1942 to August 1945.

### Monthly Strength Returns Kootenay PCMR



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.24: Combined Monthly Strength Returns for Kootenay P.C.M.R. companies, October 1942 to August 1945.

numbers. By the end of November, then, most Ranger companies had eliminated significant numbers from their rosters. Captain Swan vehemently disagreed with Taylor's directive and refused to cooperate. For Swan's company there could be no strength reductions; it was either no reductions or total disbandment of the unit. As Captain Swan explained to Colonel Taylor:

No. 86 Company must remain as it is, but with no new enlistments to be added to strength; or it must be disbanded in its entirety.

All but ten of our present strength have been with the Company since its formation in May, 1942 or have been in for a year at least. The ten referred to have been with us from six months to a year. The men in this Company have done considerable work on local trails, not to mention the weeks of hard spare time work clearing and making a very fine rifle range in the woods.

I do feel that a great majority of my men are keenly interested in Ranger work and, to strike ten or twenty men from strength at this time, would do much harm to the morale of the group as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

Captain Swan further advised Colonel Taylor that the final decision was his, but if he agreed, he asked him to "kindly send us the necessary discharge papers."<sup>10</sup>

Colonel Taylor did not believe that disbandment was the answer, but agreed with Swan that to reduce the strength of his unit would hamper its effectiveness. Moreover, Taylor attempted to mollify Swan by contending that

it was not the intention of N.D.H.Q. that the efficiency of the P.C.M.R. should be impaired, particularly in the case of units in Coastal Areas, consequently

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<sup>9</sup>Capt. Swan to Col. Taylor, 10 November 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D89).

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

the provisions of Special Circular letter of 5 November 1943, are not fully applicable in your case.<sup>11</sup>

Threatened with disbandment or reduction, Rangers once again stressed their strategic importance to P.C.M.R. headquarters. For example, Captain M. Dubeau, of Number 70 Company (Terrace), explained to Colonel Taylor that at Terrace there was

a valuable airport, a bridge crossing the Skeena River, a large military hospital and camp. The camp is being vacated, and the only local protection of these would be the local P.C.M.R., for which disbandment is proposed. Officers of the local unit had presumed that, in view of the current state of affairs, our unit would now be considered of much greater value, as we would be both prepared and proud to take on a more important defense role.<sup>12</sup>

Rangers did not want their numbers reduced and their protests to P.C.M.R. headquarters are evidence of this. Not only were the Rangers against any form of strength reduction, but the public also opposed such a scheme. For example, a *Vancouver Sun* editorial of 19 October 1943, lamented Ottawa's decision to partially disband the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. Once again the familiar theme of western alienation is evident:

Allied leaders, including Prime Minister Mackenzie King, have thrown cold water on those optimists who look for an early end to the war. The need for continuing watchfulness, and tight-locked defense has also been urged—and not least loudly by Mr. King. Now it appears that the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, those tough woodsmen who are in some measure the eyes and ears of Pacific Command, face partial disbandment:

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<sup>11</sup>Col. Taylor to Capt. Swan, 12 November 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D89).

<sup>12</sup>Captain M. Dubeau to Col. Taylor, 10 January 1944, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D84).

The Rangers are practical men. They showed this when they clamored for service in their own wilderness sectors, in their own way, at a time when the East inclined to the comfortable view that the defense of Canada should begin at the Rockies.

Being practical men, and having heeded the exhortation of vigilance, they will find it hard to understand why 4500 of their number may be asked to turn in their rifles.

They will certainly brush aside any suggestion that the move is proposed for reasons of economy. What would the saving amount to? A little ammunition—a few rain-test uniforms promised for all but delivered only in dribbles—a collection of old rifles more valuable in the hands of marksmen who can use them than gathering dust in stores.

The Rangers should and will disband when the need for their services is past. But to assume that this time has arrived is also to assume that Canada's western seaboard is forever entirely free from danger—and this assumption flies in the teeth of every warning given by our leaders.<sup>13</sup>

A similar editorial appeared in the *Kamloops Sentinel* on 27 October, which emphasized the Rangers' usefulness and pleaded for their continuation:

The real value of the Rangers has never been tested, we are humbly thankful, because no part of the Pacific land defenses has been called upon to do battle. How close we came to it we may never know, but we believe the margin was uncomfortably narrow.

The very nature of British Columbia's terrain—its vastness, its ruggedness, its remote and isolated stretches—plus the fact that the enemy had the country

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<sup>13</sup>"They're Still Needed," *Vancouver Sun*, 19 October 1943.

thoroughly impregnated with its agents, makes a force such as the Rangers a most valued part of any defence scheme . . . .

British Columbians seem to have failed entirely to impress upon far distant Ottawa the seriousness of the threat that exists in British Columbia. Japanese are to be found at every strategic point. And our government has even moved others conveniently into strategic positions. At a given signal communications could be cut so completely that we shudder to think of the implications.

We in this province are under no delusions. Fortunately, the tide of war ebbed from our coast, and the hour never struck. We are convinced in our own minds that our freedom from trouble is due, not to 100 per cent loyalty on the part of the Japanese here but to the fact that their plans failed to mature.

As an aside we would repeat that it is likely that the great majority of Japanese are good Canadians, but there are sufficient agents of the Mikado among them to make it necessary that precautionary measures be maintained . . . .

We know of no branch of Canada's defenses which operates with such small expense to the country. No man in the Rangers is paid.<sup>14</sup> The arms with which they are equipped would not, we believe, be used otherwise.

There is a marked similarity between the Rangers and the Swiss system where every man has his equipment in his home ready for instant mobilization.

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<sup>14</sup>P.C.M.R. headquarters staff and travelling instructors were paid but all others served without pay.

As long as the Pacific war continues we believe the Rangers serve a most useful purpose and their role should be developed rather than curtailed.<sup>15</sup>

These editorials show that the P.C.M.R. was a valued part of the province's defenders. In the minds of many British Columbians, the Rangers guarded the province, but they also provided psychological reassurance for the general population. The earlier popular outcry for the formation of a home defence organization such as the P.C.M.R., is evidence that the Rangers would be welcomed by the public. Furthermore, Macgregor MacIntosh, a provincial Coalition candidate for Vancouver Island, believed that the P.C.M.R. "as trained units meant much to the peace of mind of the local population."<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, some were skeptical about the Rangers' military value. Walt Cousins remembered those who mocked the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers:

I don't think half of them knew what it was all about. They'd see you going out with your rifle [and say] "you're a Saturday Night Soldier," but they'd have sung a different tune if some of the Japs had landed.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, Ed Aldridge, a former member of Number 83 Company (Squamish), recalled that some people made fun of the Rangers, although they were generally respected in the community:

I think people pretty well realized that these guys in that Ranger outfit had already done a day's work when they went and started doing their training. They had worked their eight hours at their job and then you would go back out at night and you might get in by eight or nine o'clock. It could be midnight

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<sup>15</sup> "The Rangers are needed," *Kamloops Sentinel*, 27 October 1943.

<sup>16</sup> Macgregor MacIntosh to Hon. Ian Mackenzie, Minister of Veterans' Affairs, 27 September 1945, Public Archives of Canada (hereafter P.A.C.), MG 27 (III B 5).

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Walt Cousins, Penticton, B.C., 29 December 1988.

before you'd come back home. You were doing it for the people's good [and] protection. I would have to say that they were more or less respected.<sup>18</sup>

Former Port Alice Ranger Captain, J.W. Fraser, corroborated Aldridge's observation:

[The Rangers] were also a morale booster for the people. If that [i.e., an invasion] had happened they'd have felt a lot better to have something there. I'm sure that was the general feeling because the attack on Pearl Harbor was quite upsetting.<sup>19</sup>

While some scoffed at the Rangers' fighting ability and labelled them "Saturday Night Soldiers," it seems that the majority appreciated their role in the defence of British Columbia. The psychological comfort the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers provided to a population at war was immeasurable. Although they were never tested in battle, the reassurance the Rangers gave to people more than justified their existence. The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, as a civilian organization, helped to bring members of the community together much like church, school, and sports groups. The P.C.M.R., however, was different because its members were able to contribute directly to the war effort, which provided a link between civilians and the military. Colonel Taylor wrote that

By its very nature, [the] P.C.M.R. organization provides a contact between 'Mr. Citizen' and the military that did not exist before and which no amount of...propaganda of the ordinary kind can produce.

In effect, the gap between civilian and military was bridged by the existence of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers and reserve army units. This was likely on the minds of government

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<sup>18</sup>Interview with Ed Aldridge, Squamish, B.C., 20 January 1990.

<sup>19</sup>Interview with J.W. Fraser, North Vancouver, B.C., 12 December 1988.

and military authorities when the plans were being laid for the formation of the Rangers. While the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers had a military purpose, they also satisfied public opinion which demanded some protection from the Japanese war machine.

Both editorials conveyed recurrent themes prevalent in wartime British Columbia. Once again, they express western alienation, and the belief that the federal government in Ottawa was not concerned about the defence of the Pacific Coast. The *Kamloops Sentinel* editorial also reveals the lingering fear of the Japanese in British Columbia even after their internment. Furthermore, it shows that many people believed that a Japanese Fifth Column was active in British Columbia. The public was still concerned about the possibility of an attack on the Pacific Coast and, as long as the threat of Japanese aggression existed, they wanted the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers to be at full strength and prepared for an attack.

The public outcry over partial disbandment of the P.C.M.R. probably led National Defence Headquarters to soften its position. On 10 November 1943, word came from Ottawa that the Rangers were to be further "streamlined" but not disbanded. By "clearing out the deadwood," as the military authorities argued, it would "strengthen rather than weaken the Rangers."<sup>20</sup> Almost three months later, when the reduction process had been completed, Major-General G.R. Pearkes was still concerned about the role and morale of the Rangers:

The effort that has been made by the personnel of the P.C.M.R. to reach the standard of efficiency which they have now achieved is appreciated. Their high morale, local knowledge of the country and their fighting qualities are such that in the event of hostile action being taken by the enemy against British Columbia they could provide a valuable contribution to the defence of

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<sup>20</sup>"Rangers To Be Streamlined," *Vancouver Province*, 10 November 1943.

the country. While the general situation in the Pacific is such that the risk of attack against the B.C. coast has been reduced, it cannot yet be considered impractical for the enemy to deliver an occasional raid on some point or another which he might select as an objective.

The improved strategical position has made it possible to release some of the P.C.M.R., particularly those in the interior of the province from the burden of their additional duties which they had so gladly accepted when a greater danger existed. The paper strength therefore of the P.C.M.R. was reduced from 15,000 to 10,000 but it was never the intention to give the impression that "they have been let down" because of this or any other action taken by these Headquarters. The S.O. [Senior Officer], P.C.M.R. must ensure that this situation, if it exists, is corrected at once.<sup>21</sup>

Even as late as February 1944, Pearkes believed that Japanese raids on the Pacific Coast were possible. Pearkes valued the services of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, and did not want the organization to collapse simply because of the improved military situation, or because they felt they were no longer needed.

In June 1944, it was reiterated by Colonel Taylor that as long as "danger still exists on the Pacific Coast" the Rangers would be maintained.<sup>22</sup> Seven months later, however, the Allied successes against Japan prompted Pacific Command to authorize the disbandment of Ranger companies "east of the general line" (100 miles from the coast).<sup>23</sup> Twenty-nine coastal companies were to be the only survivors of the disbandment order. As with the earlier order for disbandment, this proposal elicited protests from the Rangers. For example, as Captain C.R. West, of Number 18 Company (Cowichan Lake), explained to

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<sup>21</sup>Major-General G.R. Pearkes to Brigadier, General Staff, Pacific Command, 7 February 1944, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D592).

<sup>22</sup>"Coast Rangers Will Be Maintained," *Vancouver Province*, 14 June 1944.

<sup>23</sup>Special P.C.M.R. Circular Letter, 5 January 1945, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D24).

Colonel Taylor:

I wish to go on record that I consider the decision to disband the P.C.M.R. at this time a most unfortunate one.

At a time when strenuous efforts are being made to combat the attitude that the war is won the psychological effect will be most definitely negative.<sup>24</sup>

The order for disbandment was subsequently revoked on 22 January 1945, because of the threat from Japanese balloons carrying incendiary and antipersonnel bombs.<sup>25</sup> These hydrogen-filled balloons were constructed of panels of "laminated tissue paper made from the long fibers of the 'koko' bush . . . and from the 'matsumata' tree."<sup>26</sup> The layers of paper were cemented together and coated with a waterproof chemical. Usually, each balloon carried one fifteen kilogram antipersonnel bomb, and "four smaller thermite incendiaries weighing 5 kilograms."<sup>27</sup> The balloons were launched from Japan and reached heights of 25,000 to 35,000 feet where the prevailing winds carried them toward North America. When a balloon descended to a certain height from a loss of hydrogen, it registered on an aneroid barometer which automatically activated a blow-plug. The blow-plug would then cause a sandbag to be released and the balloon would rise again. Theoretically, by the time all the sandbags had been dropped, the balloon should have been over North America. The incendiary bombs would then be dropped by the same mechanism that detached the sandbags. The highly explosive antipersonnel bomb would be released last, which automatically triggered the balloon's "self-destruct

<sup>24</sup>Captain C.R. West to Col. Taylor, 16 January 1945, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D24).

<sup>25</sup>Special P.C.M.R. Circular Letter, 22 January 1945, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D24).

<sup>26</sup>Bert Webber, *Retaliation: Japanese Attacks and Allied Countermeasures on the Pacific Coast in World War II* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1975), 103. For further details on the balloons see Henry Morris, *Japanese Paper Balloon Bombs: The First ICBM* (North Hills: Bird and Bull Press, 1982); "Unexploded Bombs, Carried By Balloons, Still Source of Potential Danger in West," *Vancouver Province*, 31 May 1945; and "Balloons Shown Intricate Weapons," *Grand Forks Gazette*, 7 June 1945.

<sup>27</sup>Webber, 106-107.

mechanism.”<sup>28</sup> These balloon bombs were designed to start forest fires in North America, as well as inflict casualties from the antipersonnel bombs. In addition, as Bert Webber noted, the Japanese expected the balloons to “disrupt the Allied war effort and possibly force a withdrawal of troops and other resources from the southwest Pacific to protect the homeland.”<sup>29</sup>

While the balloons did create problems for the Canadian and American military authorities, there is no evidence that they caused any forest fires, and the only casualties were six civilians who came upon a downed balloon in Oregon and detonated it. Perhaps the most useful aspect of the balloons was for Japanese propaganda. The Japanese claimed hundreds of casualties and forest fires were caused by the balloons, which boosted the morale of their war-weary population.

Between six and nine thousand balloons were launched from Japan and, in British Columbia, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were assigned the task of watching the skies for these new weapons. On 16 March 1945, some 100 Ranger captains were summoned to a meeting in Vancouver to discuss the balloon bomb threat. The meeting was also attended by other active and reserve army officers and civilian officials. All Ranger units were instructed to use a special code and report any balloon sightings to headquarters. Many balloons were sighted by Rangers and remnants of the balloons were found throughout the province. After an initial outburst of panic in the press concerning the balloons, the media kept silent on the matter. As a result, the Japanese military eventually ended their balloon program because of lack of information regarding its success.

While the balloons proved to be ineffective military weapons, they did have a psychological impact on the population. For example, Captain R.N. Atkinson, of Number 71 Company (Penticton), was concerned about manned balloons in the future:

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 110.

To date no evidence of passengers has been found but should the experiment be considered satisfactory and this period has possibly passed in consideration of the increased numbers arriving, therefore the possibility of human passengers on one-way tickets cannot be overlooked as no doubt many more volunteers than could be accommodated would be ready to take flight. These people could be spies or guerillas and practically all of them would have a first-hand knowledge of the country through a previous residence.<sup>30</sup>

Secondarily, Captain Atkinson was also worried about the possibility of the balloons carrying bacteria. Others were also concerned about biological warfare and, according to Bert Webber, the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the United States "was on the lookout for evidence of pestilence brought by the balloons."<sup>31</sup> For many British Columbians, such as Lloyd Cornett, the balloon threat brought the war closer to home:

[The balloons] heightened our concern. We were actually being attacked. When the Japanese submarine surfaced on the west coast of Vancouver Island and fired a couple of rounds at the Estevan Point Lighthouse. . . that all shook us up too . . . . Little events like that and the balloons brought it home to us. We couldn't ignore it. It wasn't a theoretical thing that might happen, it was physical evidence to us.<sup>32</sup>

The Rangers' anger over reports of disbandment, and their work in sighting and reporting Japanese balloons, show their zeal and devotion to duty. Certainly, during the early stages of the Pacific war, most Rangers were very enthusiastic. In August 1942, Captain Baldwin, a P.C.M.R. Field Supervisor, noted in a report that the Port Alice Rangers were

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<sup>30</sup>Captain R.N. Atkinson, "Report of Military Conference Held at the Seaforth Armories, Vancouver, B.C.," 16 March 1945, PMA, file 4-478.

<sup>31</sup>Webber, 110.

<sup>32</sup>Interview with Lloyd Cornett, Burnaby, B.C., 29 November 1988.

a progressive unit, well officered, and the company functioning is taken very seriously, both by its membership and also the B.C. Pulp and Paper Co.; the latter giving every encouragement and facility.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout the P.C.M.R.'s existence, in fact, there were many examples of Rangers undertaking their duties enthusiastically. For example, the Inspector-General described the men of Number 29 Company (Chilliwack) as being "full of enthusiasm, putting a great deal of effort into their work."<sup>34</sup> Statements such as the above were common in the Inspector-General's reports. The Rangers' personal sacrifice becomes magnified when one remembers that they were unpaid volunteers, and most of them worked at civilian jobs during the day. Captain Alex MacDonald, of Number 23 Company (Courtenay), described the dedication of his men in a report to Colonel Taylor:

The exercise, for which 3 hours' notice was received, lasted from 19 hrs. on [the] 27th to 04 hrs. [on the] 28th and the Rangers engaged were drawn from No. 23 and No. 24 Coys. P.C.M.R. When one realizes that many of these men were on parade on [the] 27th within one hour of coming home from their work and, on the completion of the exercise, were again back to their daily jobs within one hour, their keenness can be appreciated.<sup>35</sup>

Personal sacrifices were made by many Rangers. Frank Smith, former Ranger in Number 84 Company (Ladner), recalled the commitment of his fellow Rangers:

Most of the boys were very serious. They would never miss a practice. Some of us belonged to churches and things like that. We more or less gave up all that during those years because that was the time of practice—Sunday

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<sup>33</sup>Captain Baldwin to Col. Taylor, 25 August 1942, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D81).

<sup>34</sup>Major-General J.P. Mackenzie, "Report on Sardis Detachment, No. 29 Coy., P.C.M.R.," 8 December 1943, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D592).

<sup>35</sup>Captain A. MacDonald to Col. Taylor, 30 August 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D80).

morning from nine o'clock to one. It was, I think, a sort of dedication to the job that most of the fellas made a point of giving up whatever they wanted to do on a Sunday and turned up for these practices.<sup>36</sup>

The concern in Number 73 Company about the danger from the Japanese at Tashme is evidence that the officers, at least, took their role seriously. Yet another initiative, proposed by the officers of the Hope Rangers, was the question of reserve food supplies in the event of an invasion. Ranger officers from Hope suggested that reserve supplies of wheat be hidden throughout British Columbia for use in the event of an invasion.<sup>37</sup> Pressure was continually put on headquarters to take action on this matter as it was deemed of high importance. At one point it was suggested by Captain George Baldwin, of headquarters, that the duty of Rangers would simply be to fight, surviving on existing supplies. When these supplies ran out, Rangers were expected to "commandeer" whatever else they needed to sustain themselves. As pointed out by officers of the Hope detachment, appropriations would work if they were fighting on foreign soil but to take food away from their families and friends was out of the question.<sup>38</sup> Assuredly, then, the officers of Number 73 Company were serious in their assertions about the need for food reserves, providing yet another indication that Rangers took the Japanese threat seriously. This also reveals that the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were very much a civilian organization; indeed, they were citizens first and soldiers second.

Most ex-Rangers feel that men enlisted out of patriotism: to serve their country in some fashion. Zeal and pride were expected of these unpaid recruits, as former Squamish Ranger Ed Aldridge recalled:

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<sup>36</sup>Interview with A. Frank Smith, Vancouver, B.C., 8 November 1988.

<sup>37</sup>"Reserve of Food in Time of Emergency," unsigned letter, 6 pages, no date, HMA.

<sup>38</sup>Capt. Johnson to Capt. Baldwin, 11 October 1942, HMA.

They took pride in being in there, a part of the outfit. The only ones that didn't feel that way and showed any laxity at all, Captain Frost would just go and gather up their equipment [and] write them off.<sup>39</sup>

For many there was also the chance of firing a new rifle, as former Ranger Captain J.W. Fraser explained:

You take a lot of men that age and offer to show them how to use a rifle and how to fire it, and give them free ammunition... they get interested and I think that was a big part of it. We had no trouble with a lack of interest.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, former West Vancouver Ranger C.F. Tyrell noted that a spirit and zeal usually animated most Rangers since they were staking their lives:

They were serious. They knew what they were expected to do... I don't know whether we would have reacted properly or not but we were willing at the time.<sup>41</sup>

This willingness to do their part for the defence of British Columbia was vital to the continued existence of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. Without this commitment, the organization would have collapsed when the possibility of a Japanese invasion ceased to be a serious threat.

The commitment of Rangers became evident in 1945 when the life of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers was near its end. At that time, feelers were sent out by headquarters to obtain Rangers' thoughts regarding a peacetime Ranger organization. Number 73 Company was in unanimous agreement that the Rangers should continue in some form or another. Members of the Yale detachment were of the opinion that the P.C.M.R. should

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<sup>39</sup>Interview with Ed Aldridge, Squamish, B.C., 20 January 1990.

<sup>40</sup>Interview with J.W. Fraser, North Vancouver, B.C., 12 December 1988.

<sup>41</sup>Interview with C.F. Tyrell, West Vancouver, B.C., 5 December 1988.

be continued "to further the interests of Canadianism" through teaching the "younger generation" techniques of self and national defence.<sup>42</sup> In like manner, the Boston Bar Detachment wanted to continue the movement but did "not wish to be used in cases of civil disturbance."<sup>43</sup> This is understandable considering that Boston Bar was primarily a railway town and hence contained many trade union members. Colonel Taylor estimated that about 100 Ranger companies were interested in perpetuating the organization.<sup>44</sup> Support was even evident from outside P.C.M.R. ranks. For example, A.W. Cooper, General Manager of the British Columbia Federation of Trade and Industry, fully supported the proposed P.C.M.R. Association:

Not only does it furnish a military basis for defence of the West Coast but to our mind is the best sort of instrument for promoting good citizenship and counteracting the efforts of the subversive elements which, as you doubtless know, are so prevalent in our province.<sup>45</sup>

The P.C.M.R. Association was eventually formed under the Societies Act, with the goal of perpetuating the "ideals and activities of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers."<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Number 1 Company (Victoria) continued to exist as a search and rescue group known as the South Vancouver Island Rangers. One of their main purposes, as their constitution states, was to "perpetuate Ranger spirit and the traditions of the P.C.M.R."<sup>47</sup> This voluntary continuation of the Rangers into peacetime also suggests a degree of loyalty and commitment to the goals of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers.

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<sup>42</sup>Lieutenant Barry to Acting Adjutant, No. 73 Coy., 18 October 1944, HMA.

<sup>43</sup>Typewritten notes of Captain H.W. Johnson, n.d., HMA.

<sup>44</sup>Col. Taylor, "Progress Report and Suggestions for P.C.M.R. Perpetuation," 11 December 1945, Gerald Charlton Papers.

<sup>45</sup>A.W. Cooper to Rt. Hon. Ian A. Mackenzie, 1 March 1947, P.A.C., MG 27 (III B 5).

<sup>46</sup>Pacific Coast Militia Rangers Association Declaration, n.d., Gerald Charlton Papers; See also *The Ranger*, 7, no. 1 (January 1947) which was a special edition of the P.C.M.R. Association.

<sup>47</sup>E. Scott, "South Vancouver Island Rangers," *RCMP Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (July 1951): 49.

But as Ed Aldridge's comment shows, all were not equally dedicated. Ranger activities were affected by recurrent seasonal work patterns, as well as by the war situation and government policy. A report from the Hope detachment reveals that, in 1943, Ranger activities were scheduled for twice a week during the winter, but as one Ranger explained: "I'm afraid most" of the activities "have fallen by the wayside, and all the enthusiasm we had worked up during the summer is either dormant or dead."<sup>48</sup> This lack of enthusiasm in the Ranger unit at Hope is also evident from correspondence of February 1943. Lieutenant C.E. Barry, commander of the Yale Rangers, complained to the Hope detachment because they had not contacted him "since before Christmas." Barry had heard rumours that they had not held a meeting in Hope for quite some time. Therefore, he suggested that Ranger officers from Hope attend meetings at Yale if they could not "get anything moving in Hope."<sup>49</sup> By April 1943, however, Captain Johnson reported that present enrolment was 235, with "a good possibility" that it would continue to grow.<sup>50</sup> Captain Johnson was correct in assuming that his company's size would increase. Figure 6.25 reveals that Number 73 Company grew steadily until October 1943 when, like other companies, news of possibly disbanding some units caused a drop in enrolment. The summer of 1943 brought yet another drop in Number 73 Company's attendance record, at least in North Bend. Lieutenant C.C. Young reported to Captain Johnson that he "found the movement slackening considerably due to holidays, hot weather and other things, but commencing Sept. 1" he intended to tighten "up on all delinquents."<sup>51</sup> Yet again in the summer of 1944, this time in Boston Bar, Ranger activities were reduced. As Lieutenant Martinson explained the situation to Captain Baldwin:

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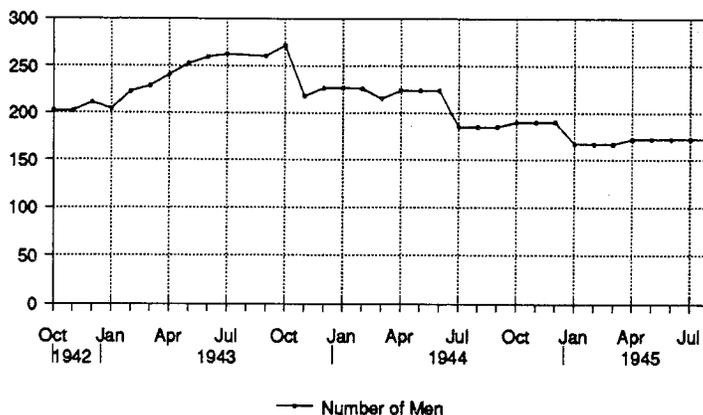
<sup>48</sup>Unsigned letter to Lieut.-Col. A. Leslie Coote, 5 January 1943, HMA.

<sup>49</sup>Lieutenant Barry to Acting Adjutant, No. 73 Coy., 10 February 1943, HMA.

<sup>50</sup>Capt. Johnson to Col. Taylor, 13 April 1943, HMA.

<sup>51</sup>Lieutenant Young to Capt. Johnson, 17 August 1943, HMA.

### Monthly Strength Returns Number 73 Company (Hope)



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.25: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 73 Company (Hope), October 1942 to August 1945.

You will probably agree with me that it is rather difficult to keep the Rangers together at this time of the year due to gardening, work at home, vacations etc. but it would seem that with a little rifle training along with the field work seems to keep up the morale and gives the boys a certain amount of competition.<sup>52</sup>

As the war progressed, other Ranger companies also had problems maintaining enthusiasm and high attendance levels. In Number 101 Company (Ladysmith) attendance at meetings dropped 30 percent between April and August 1943.<sup>53</sup> The same company had problems in September 1944, as Field Supervisor Harvey reported:

<sup>52</sup>Lieutenant Martinson to Capt. Baldwin, 5 June 1944, D: Hist., file 169.009 (D86).

<sup>53</sup>R.Q.M.S. Hayhurst, Report on No. 101 Company (Ladysmith), 28 to 31 August 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D91).

Captain Osborn has had to call off his meetings owing to the hot weather and closing of the logging operations, when a lot of his men went off fishing or to other jobs in the shut-period.<sup>54</sup>

Captain Harvey found a similar situation in Number 18 Company (Cowichan Lake) and, indeed, throughout Vancouver Island:

All company commanders have voiced the same opinion as to the general easing off of interest owing to the bettered conditions in Europe and the Pacific zones.<sup>55</sup>

At times officers, as well as ordinary Rangers, lost interest in P.C.M.R. activities. At a staff meeting of Number 73 Company in October 1943, it was moved that letters be sent to some eight absent officers requesting that they attend the next meeting "without fail." The letters were apparently mailed to the officers in question and they were all present at the next meeting.<sup>56</sup>

Evidently, then, interest in Ranger activities varied in intensity depending upon several factors. The Rangers were civilians first with jobs, families, and problems of their own to deal with. Domestic matters frequently took precedence over P.C.M.R. training. Interest in Ranger exercises often waned during the summer months when family vacations, gardening and other leisure pursuits occupied many Rangers' time. Rangers' enthusiasm also varied with popular perceptions of the Japanese military threat. As the war continued and Japan's military power grew weaker, so too did interest in the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers.

In general, monthly strength return statistics for P.C.M.R. companies indicate a sharp decline after October 1943, followed by a fairly constant number until disbandment (see

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<sup>54</sup>Captain Harvey to Col. Taylor, 15 September 1944, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D91).

<sup>55</sup>Captain Harvey, "Report on Nos. 15, 17, 18, 19 Coys.," 15 September 1944, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D79).

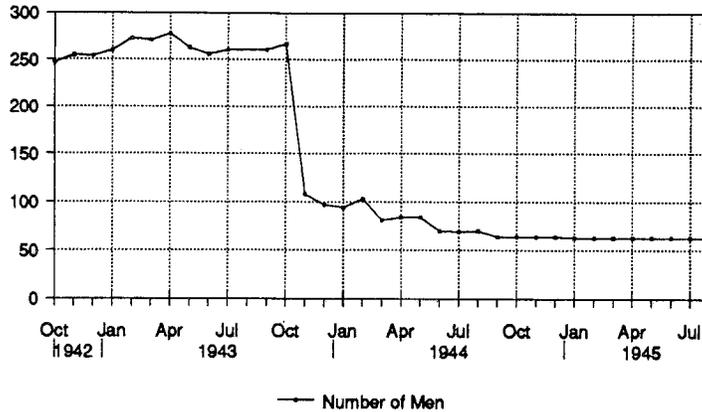
<sup>56</sup>Lieutenant Edkins to Capt. Johnson, 9 October 1943, HMA.

Figures 6.26-6.30). On the other hand, some Ranger companies differed from the norm and maintained a relatively constant number of men throughout their existence (see Figures 6.31-6.34). For example, the Ranger units at Ahousat and Nass River, which were composed mainly of Native Indians, experienced only minor manpower fluctuations. It is possible that Native Indians in these remote areas were not influenced by news reports, and rumours of disbanding the Rangers. Yet other Ranger units, such as Number 134 Company (Woodfibre) peaked early and levelled off when most companies were experiencing a sharp decline in numbers (see Figure 6.35). Number 24 Company (Tsolum) maintained a level number until April 1944 when it lost approximately half its men (see Figure 6.36). Finally, as Figure 6.37 indicates, the Burnaby South company grew steadily until September 1943 when it levelled off to a constant number.

The number of Ranger recruits varied from unit to unit, and there appear to be no consistent geographic patterns of enlistment. Each region, in fact, had a similar gradual decline in enrolment after September 1943, but on Vancouver Island, a likely location for Japanese raids, the number of initial recruits was very high (see Figure 6.19). In other regions, the number of recruits gradually increased to a peak in September 1943. Vancouver Island also had the highest number of Rangers, while the Kootenay region—farthest from the coast and the danger of invasion—contained the smallest number of Rangers.

Individual companies also varied in size. Several companies consistently contained between 100 and 200 men, while the Williams Lake and Kamloops units peaked at over 500 men. Other Ranger companies were relatively small in size. For example, the roster of Number 58 Company (Port McNeill) varied from between fifteen and twenty-four men. Naturally, the size of companies would depend on the population base of the area, but large numbers would often originate with keen officers who kept interest in Ranger activities at a high level. Conversely, if the officers lacked enthusiasm it would usually be

## Monthly Strength Returns Number 32 Company (Parksville)



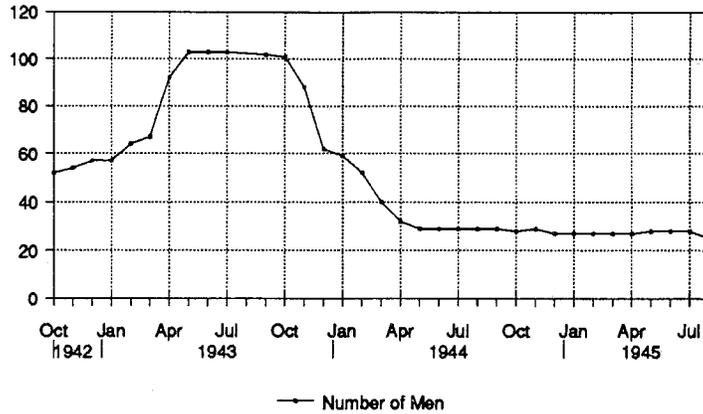
Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.26: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 32 Company (Parksville), October 1942 to August 1945.

reflected by low recruit levels. It should also be noted at this point that these strength return statistics would not reveal individual parade attendance; they only reveal the total number of men in any given company. For example, a Ranger company could have 100 men enlisted, but not all of them attended every parade or training session. Despite these strength return fluctuations from unit to unit, a nucleus of dedicated men remained loyal to the Ranger movement until the war with Japan ended. These Rangers took pride in what they were doing, even if they missed the occasional meeting, because it allowed them to serve Canada in a useful and respected manner.

Needless to say, problems arose from the fact that Rangers were unpaid volunteers with little logistical support. In Number 73 Company, one of the most pressing initial problems was that of expenses incurred in the line of Ranger duty. Correspondence between Number 73 Company and P.C.M.R. headquarters reveals that gasoline and tire

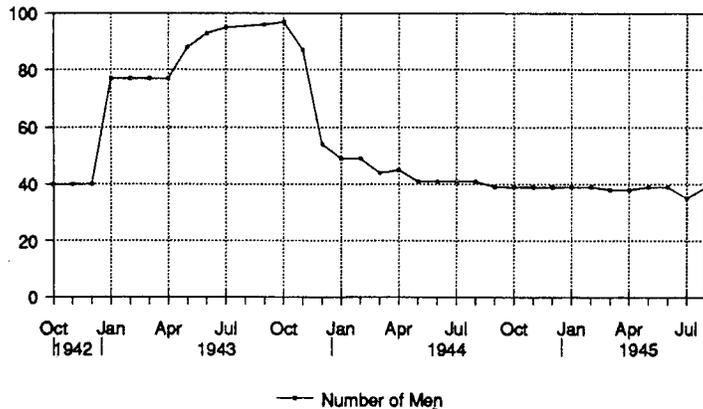
### Monthly Strength Returns Number 45 Company (Salmon Arm)



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.27: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 45 Company (Salmon Arm), October 1942 to August 1945.

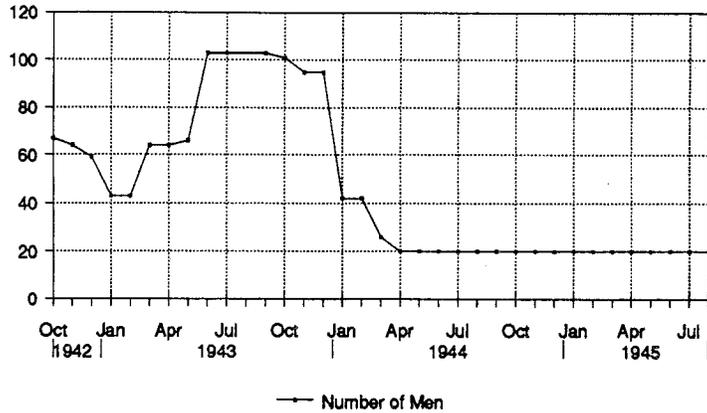
### Monthly Strength Returns Number 51 Company (Armstrong)



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.28: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 51 Company (Armstrong), October 1942 to August 1945.

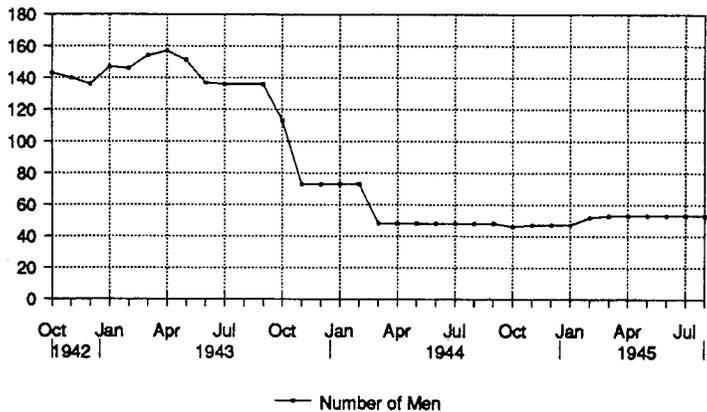
### Monthly Strength Returns Number 59 Company (Port Hardy)



Source: D.Hist, file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.29: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 59 Company (Port Hardy), October 1942 to August 1945.

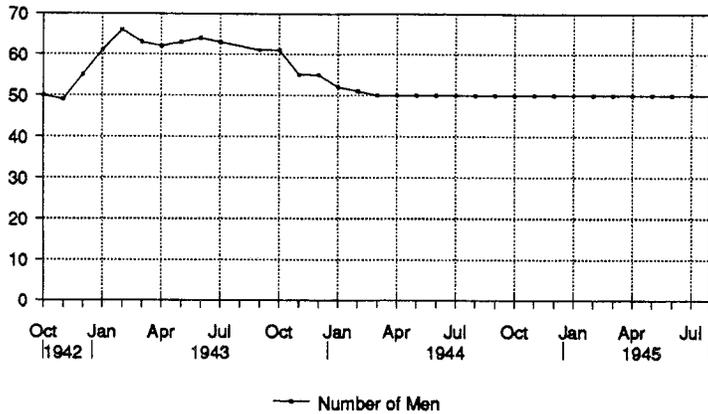
### Monthly Strength Returns Number 67 Company (Vernon)



Source: D.Hist, file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.30: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 67 Company (Vernon), October 1942 to August 1945.

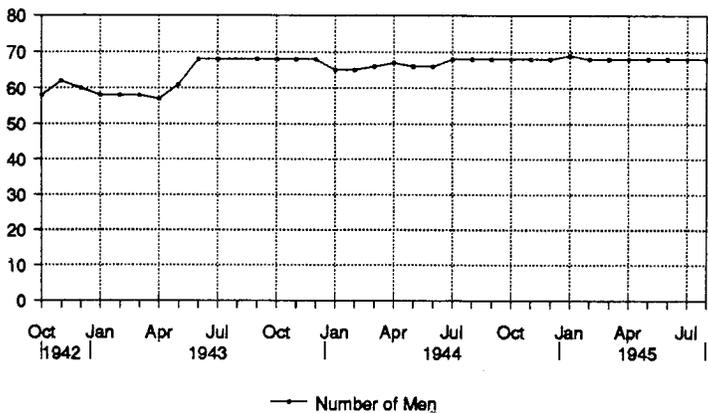
### Monthly Strength Returns Number 46 Company (Peachland)



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.31: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 46 Company (Peachland), October 1942 to August 1945.

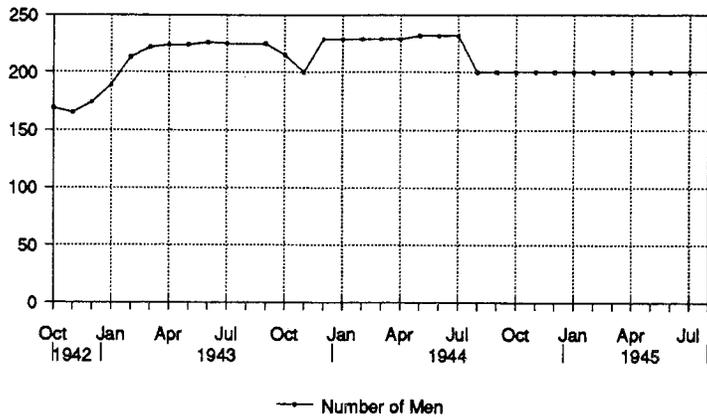
### Monthly Strength Returns Number 123 Company (Ahouzat)



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.32: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 123 Company (Ahouzat), October 1942 to August 1945.

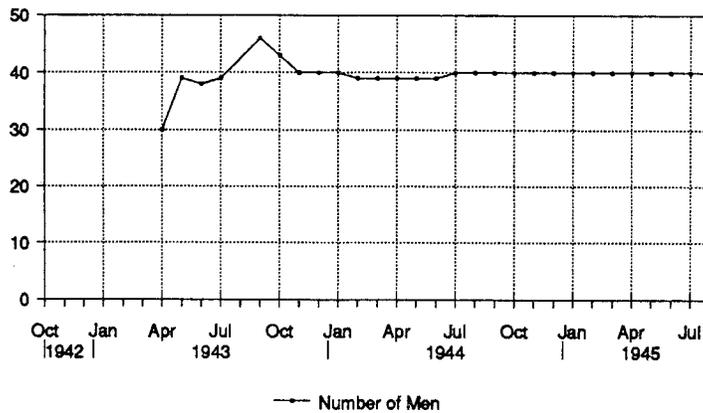
### Monthly Strength Returns Number 130 Company (Nass River)



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.33: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 130 Company (Nass River), October 1942 to August 1945.

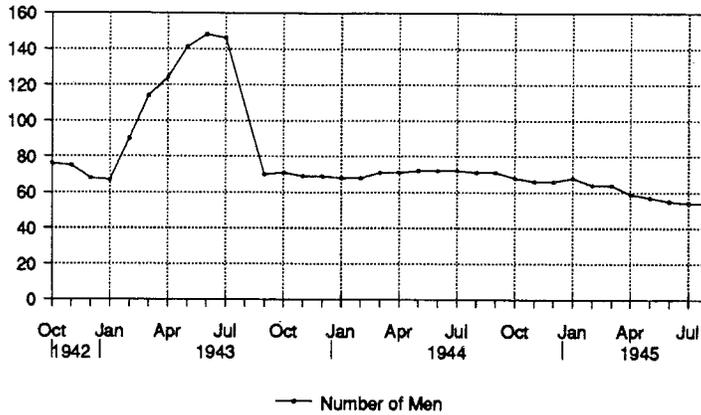
### Monthly Strength Returns Number 137 Company (Vanderhoof)



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.34: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 137 Company (Vanderhoof), October 1942 to August 1945.

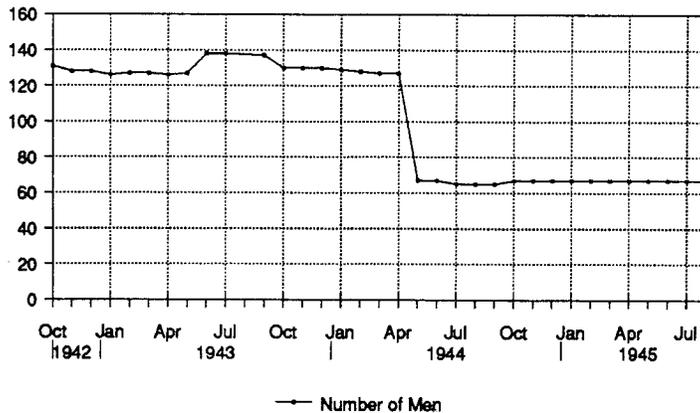
### Monthly Strength Returns Number 134 Company (Woodfibre)



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

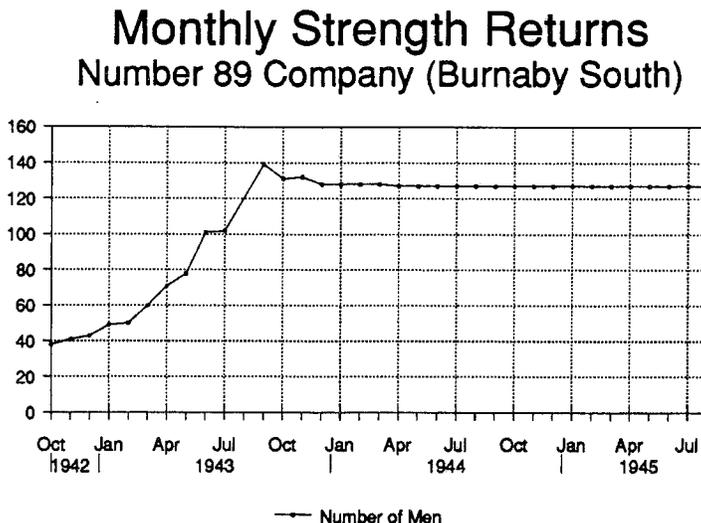
Figure 6.35: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 134 Company (Woodfibre), October 1942 to August 1945.

### Monthly Strength Returns Number 24 Company (Tsolum)



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.36: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 24 Company (Tsolum), October 1942 to August 1945.



Source: D.J.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.37: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 89 Company (Burnaby South), October 1942 to August 1945.

rationing caused the greatest problems. At different times both the captain and one other officer threatened to resign, either because of a lack of gas ration coupons or tire shortages. Vehicles were needed to transport men to and from training exercises, as well as on official business to outlying areas. Consequently, inflexible war rationing threatened the continued existence of the Hope Ranger detachment. Captain Johnson complained to Colonel Taylor about the unjust situation:

Having a detachment each in Yale and Laidlaw and groups at Katz and 11 mile on [the] Hope Princeton Trail, it has been my custom to visit them once a week with other members of the staff . . . I have a BX Ration book which barely allows me enough gas for my regular work as electrician in charge of the power system of the Hope Utilities Co. During the last few months I have used so much gas on purely Ranger work that even though I drop all Ranger

work and exercise even more rigid economy I could not get through to the end of the year on what tickets I have left . . . . It seems unfortunate that we who are giving so heavily of our time and means to forward what is a vital part of the war effort are to be deprived of gasoline necessary to do that work, while others who appear to be making no contribution whatever for the cause are allowed so much gas for purely pleasure driving.<sup>57</sup>

In order to alleviate personal hardship on these Rangers, beginning in August 1942, the Department of National Defence provided a monthly grant of 10,000 dollars to cover certain P.C.M.R. expenses. Included in this was a "provision to cover the current running expenses of individual units."<sup>58</sup> While this provision eased the burden, the funds still did not cover all contingencies. The evidence is a memorandum, sent to all P.C.M.R. companies, stating that "P.C.M.R. funds are limited and they cannot be stretched to cover all items of expense that may be submitted by P.C.M.R. Companies."<sup>59</sup> Rangers were still expected to serve without pay, and even share the burden of incidental expenses incurred in the operation of their units. Even with the provision for expenses, Ranger captains often had to satisfy complex bureaucratic requirements before they received any compensation for personal expenditures. In fact, the operation of the P.C.M.R. proved to be less expensive than the 10,000 dollars allotted by the Department of National Defence. For example, between August 1942 and March 1943, 78,000 dollars was allotted to the P.C.M.R., but 34,947 dollars was returned by Ranger headquarters.<sup>60</sup> It is possible that the unexpended surplus reflected the Rangers' unwillingness to go through the paperwork necessary to satisfy requirements for restitution. But it is more likely the

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<sup>57</sup>Capt. Johnson to Col. Taylor, 8 August 1942, HMA.

<sup>58</sup>P.C.M.R. Circular Letter No. 22, 17 August 1942, HMA.

<sup>59</sup>Capt. Barton for Col. Taylor to all P.C.M.R. Companies, 24 September 1943, HMA.

<sup>60</sup>"Utilization of P.C.M.R. Funds, Appendix A," 22 January 1944, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D592); Colonel C.P. Stacey to Major Newlands, 16 February 1956, D. Hist., file 159.049 (D1).

result of Ranger funds being administered very stringently, which often led to tension between headquarters and the Rangers trying to obtain restitution. Captain D.V. Palin, of Number 19 Company (Shawnigan Lake), was annoyed with P.C.M.R. headquarters over such a situation:

I, like your other O.C.'s run their cars over rough roads and wear out their tires and don't complain. Our expenses are heavy in more ways than one and used to put in many hours of hard work after a day's hard work, Sunday included. Last Sunday I worked 5 hours with pick and shovel and have only missed two Sundays since last March. "All Ranger work."

I sometimes wish I had not taken on the work, [since I would] much rather be in the front line, however I have done my best and if there is a lot of red tape to be contended with, I am afraid it won't improve the goodwill of the Rangers. I hope you do not think I am blaming you, but I am certainly wondering whether the Captain realizes that a Ranger Captain has to contend with "wear and tear of clothes and shoes." Two weeks ago my car was smashed attending an important meeting of the A.R.P. and as C.O. 19th Coy. I had to attend. When I left I found my car battered about. I expect my expense for same will be around sixteen dollars. These expenses make it hard.<sup>61</sup>

Particular economic strain was placed on the officers because Ranger administration was, in fact, very time-consuming. C.E. Barry was promoted to captain in charge of Number 73 Company in April 1945. The hardship the captaincy caused him is evident in a letter he wrote to headquarters:

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<sup>61</sup>Captain D.V. Palin to Col. Taylor, 4 November 1942, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D79).

I certainly would have never accepted the Captaincy had I known what was entailed. I have been absent from my business on Ranger business now for almost 5 days and have had to pay a man to take care of the store and office during my absence and it is far from finished.<sup>62</sup>

Some found the economic burden of being a Ranger captain too great and were forced to resign. Captain R.S. King, of Number 91 Company (Burnaby East), regretfully resigned his position because:

For some considerable time, I have been finding it most difficult to carry on my work as a Game Warden and also as Officer Commanding No. 91 Company, P.C.M.R. I have become so tied up in my work for the P.C.M.R. that it has been seriously interfering with my Game Conservation duties, that sooner or later my employers will be calling upon me for an explanation.

While I have been very pleased to have been connected with the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, and have enjoyed working with the officers and men of my company, I feel, in fairness to my employers, that I must now tender my resignation to take effect forthwith.<sup>63</sup>

Although Captain King was forced to resign, he gladly offered to assist the P.C.M.R. in other ways.

In addition to the economic burden of being a Ranger captain, there was also a great deal of mental strain associated with the position. Jim Kingsley, former captain of the Parksville Rangers, was forced to neglect his business for Ranger duties, but he also felt the psychological pressure of the captaincy:

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<sup>62</sup>Captain C.E. Barry to Captain A.F. Watts, 30 January 1946, HMA.

<sup>63</sup>Captain R.S. King to Col. Taylor, 5 June 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D90).

I felt an awful responsibility. I'd go to bed at nights thinking [and] figuring out what we were going to do, and how we were going to do it. It was a big responsibility.<sup>64</sup>

While Jim Kingsley was a dedicated captain, others were not as committed to the Rangers and they neglected their military responsibilities. This was the case in Number 74 Company (Bella Coola), as described in a Field Supervisor's report to Captain Baldwin:

I have been requested to write you in connection with Ranger Captain Buller. It seems that he is not the man to be in charge of this Coy. He is away most of the time and is in very bad health. He also cares for his liquor too much for the good of the morale of the Coy. This Coy. is gradually decreasing on that account.

Ranger Captain Buller is liked by the people, but as a leader I can't see how he can expect to lead his men under the circumstances which I have mentioned. Unless something is done real soon this Coy. will fold up. The men are very keen but will lose all interest unless they have a good leader.<sup>65</sup>

A meeting of the officers and N.C.O.'s of Number 74 Company decided to appoint an acting captain until a meeting of the entire company could be held. It was typical of the egalitarian nature of the P.C.M.R. that if a captain were negligent, or disliked by the men, he could be voted out of his position.

In Number 130 Company (Nass River) the men were dissatisfied with Captain Nelson, and Lieutenant Stewart, the detachment commander at Kincolith. Both men had been

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<sup>64</sup>Interview with Jim Kingsley, Parksville, B.C., 16 January 1989.

<sup>65</sup>Letter from unknown P.C.M.R. Field Supervisor to Capt. Baldwin, 4 September 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D87).

absent for quite some time and the Rangers under their command resented it. Captain D'Arcy, a P.C.M.R. Field Supervisor, decided that, given the situation, he would have to ask for the resignations of both Captain Nelson and Lieutenant Stewart.<sup>66</sup>

In contrast, personal conflicts or dissatisfaction with the operation of the corps sometimes prompted Ranger officers to resign, or at least threaten to resign, of their own free will. One such incident took place at a joint meeting, held on 26 November 1943, between the officers of Number 22 Company (Cumberland) and Number 23 Company (Courtenay). P.C.M.R. Field Supervisor, Captain J.B. Acland, was also invited to attend the meeting and, in his words, the topic of discussion

was one of general dissatisfaction with the administration of the P.C.M.R. as now existant [*sic*] and the apparent lack of interest and imagination shown by those responsible for the creation and development of the Ranger Corps. from N.D.Hq. down to and including P.C.M.R. Hqs . . . .

...there has been an increasing feeling of discontent with the conditions under which the P.C.M.R. coys. have to carry on after nearly two years of operation.<sup>67</sup>

The officers' complaints included a lack of equipment and uniforms. They also requested a "better appreciation of their role... and the development of training and administration under area control." Furthermore, the officers favoured "a battalion establishment similar to that of the reserve army...to the point where O.C. Coys are in favour of inclusion under the Reserve Army Administration." The chief concern of those attending the meeting, however, centered around the strict disciplinarian attitude

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<sup>66</sup>Staff Sergeant A.A. Young to Col. Taylor, 26 October 1943 and Captain N.J.H. D'Arcy to Col. Taylor, 27 October 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D94).

<sup>67</sup>The following details on the P.C.M.R. meeting at Cumberland all come from a report written by Captain J.B. Acland to Col. Taylor, 28 November 1943, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D80).

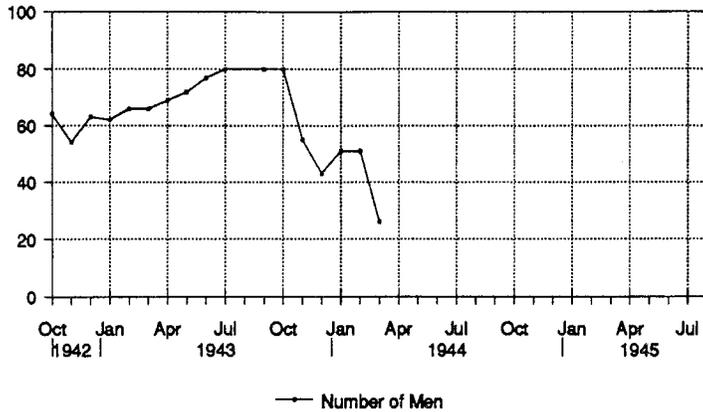
of the P.C.M.R. instructor, Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant Hayhurst. Apparently Hayhurst had given Number 23 Company an unfavourable weapons report, and "made disparaging remarks about the detachment at a lecture given to a class of No. 23 Company." The officers at the meeting believed that "the real reason for the adverse report was personal spite against the detachment leader who had reprimanded him for his attitude during the lectures." They further claimed that the company was supplied with ten .303 Ross rifles which were so badly rusted it was "impossible to get them clean." In addition, Number 22 Company had fifteen teenagers on its duty roster and Hayhurst had "incensed" the Rangers "by asking why they were running a kindergarden" [sic]. Hayhurst, moreover, "made a point of riding these boys hard during the lecture, and in the opinion of the detachment leader, unnecessarily so." If steps were not taken Acland feared that the two companies would disband. Acland further wrote that the threat of resignation by the officers

was not offered by way of protest but rather because they felt that the authorities were no longer interested in their efforts, at least not sufficiently interested to supply the units with adequate equipment to carry out the role expected of them.

Figures 6.38-6.39 reveal that Number 22 Company did disband in April 1944, and Number 23 Company maintained a steady number of Rangers until it declined drastically between May and June 1944.

Captain Acland's report on the meeting at Cumberland reveals the dissatisfaction of Ranger officers over the lack of equipment, and lack of appreciation for their role. Rangers, as civilians volunteering their time, needed reassurance that their activities were a vital part of the war effort. Perhaps even more revealing is the fact that the Rangers at Cumberland and Courtenay protested the disciplinary actions of R.Q.M.S.

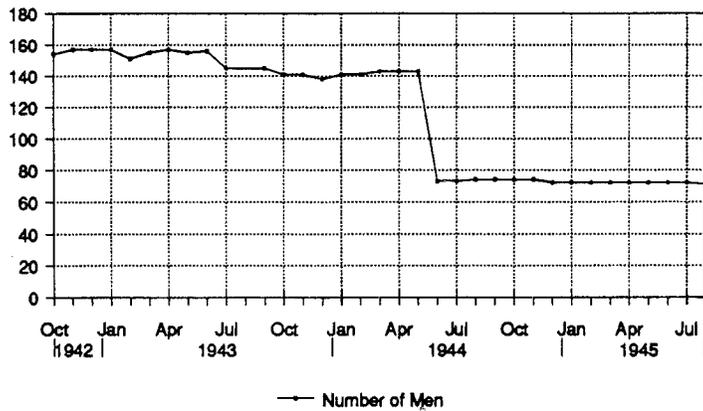
### Monthly Strength Returns Number 22 Company (Cumberland)



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.38: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 22 Company (Cumberland), October 1942 to August 1943.

### Monthly Strength Returns Number 23 Company (Courtenay)



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.39: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 23 Company (Courtenay), October 1942 to August 1945.

Hayhurst. Again, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were civilians and, like their historic predecessors, resented strict military discipline and scornful treatment.

A similar protest meeting of P.C.M.R. officers took place at Nanaimo in March 1944. At this meeting, several Vancouver Island company commanders drafted a joint resolution to disband their units, because of the lack of enthusiasm caused by the improved Allied position in the Pacific theatre of war. The signatories of the joint letter were also concerned about the lack of equipment for Ranger companies.<sup>68</sup> At a subsequent meeting which took place at Qualicum Beach on 22 March 1944, Captain Kingsley of the Parksville Rangers decided to resign. According to Kingsley's diary, "all that were present for the meeting decided to resign."<sup>69</sup> Kingsley, in the end, did not follow through on his threat to resign and by 23 April made it clear that he was withdrawing his resignation. It is likely that Kingsley was influenced by Colonel Taylor who had visited Parksville on 19 April, to talk to the company and help Kingsley "decide what to do to hold the Coy. together."<sup>70</sup> In his diary, Kingsley cited several instances of poor attendance at meetings, and a general lack of enthusiasm toward the end of the war. In retrospect, Kingsley recalled later that his temporary resignation was caused by Ranger demoralization:

it was just the lack of interest by the men. Made you feel you weren't capable if something was wrong. That was the general feeling too; they knew it was coming to an end [because] we had them [the Japanese] on the run.<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, as the war progressed and it became clearer that the Allies would defeat Japan, entire Ranger companies disbanded. For example, as Figures 6.40-6.41 indicate, the Ranger companies at Englewood and Pinchi Lake were both disbanded in June 1944.

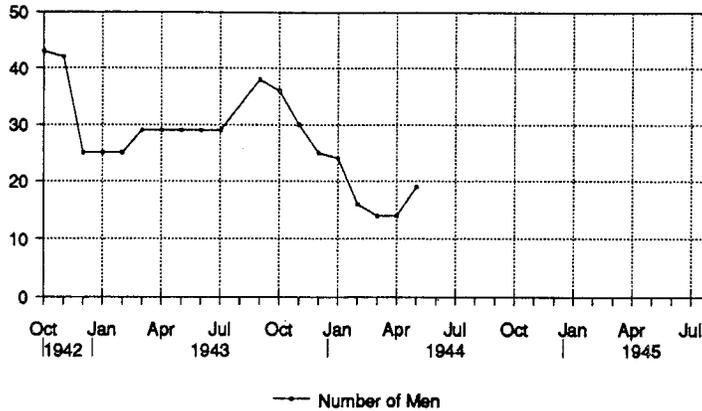
<sup>68</sup>Col. Taylor to Captain G.V. Osborn, 15 March 1944, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D91).

<sup>69</sup>Jim Kingsley, "Diary of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers...No. 32 Company. J.E. Kingsley Sr., O.C. Cptn. Nanoose, Red Gap, Parksville, Errington, Coombs, Hilliers, Little and Big Qualicum, and Qualicum Beach, all included. 1942-1946," British Columbia Provincial Archives, Add. MSS. 2516, 25.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Interview with Jim Kingsley, Parksville, B.C., 16 January 1989.

### Monthly Strength Returns Number 55 Company (Englewood)



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.40: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 55 Company (Englewood), October 1942 to August 1945.

Much later in the war, on 7 February 1945, Captain E. Gallant recommended to Colonel Taylor that Number 128 Company (Deep Cove) be disbanded (see Figure 6.42). Gallant spelled out his reasons for disbandment as follows:

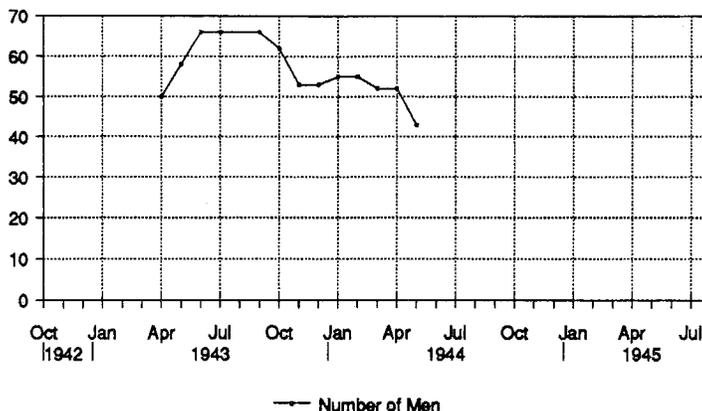
H.Q. and No. 1 detachment at Deep Cove now consists of three officers, 1 W.O. [Warrant Officer] 2, 5 N.C.O's and 6 Rangers.

Included in this number are three who, through age and defective eyesight, are unable to use weapons effectively. Three others are employed in shipyards and work on Sundays. They have been absent from most parades for months.<sup>72</sup>

Furthermore, Lieutenant G. Mantle, the commander of Number 128 Company's Lake Buntzen detachment, reported that his unit was reduced to "two Rangers and two

<sup>72</sup>Captain E. Gallant to Col. Taylor, 7 February 1945, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D93).

### Monthly Strength Returns Number 136 Company (Pinchi Lake)



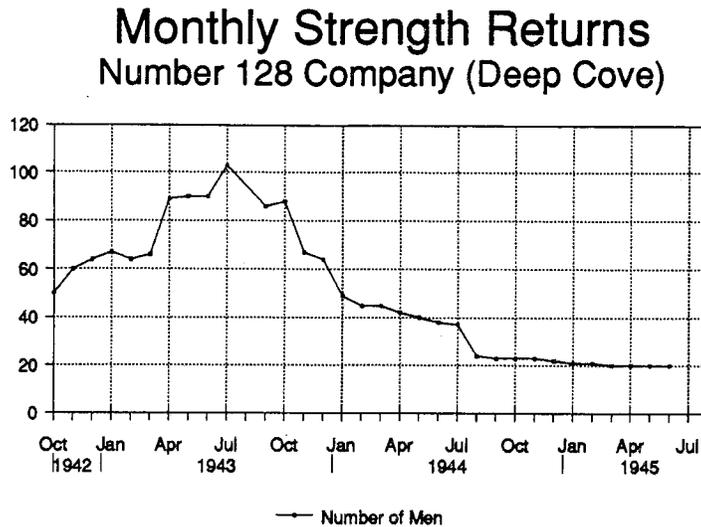
Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.41: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 136 Company (Pinchi Lake), October 1942 to August 1945.

N.C.O.'s."<sup>73</sup> For many Rangers, by early 1945 the war was over and their usefulness past.

Throughout its existence the P.C.M.R. was an organization in turmoil. Late in 1943, orders to cut back Ranger enlistments created a climate of uncertainty, and elicited protests from both Rangers and the general population. The threat of disbandment often prompted Ranger officers to declare their zeal, and exaggerate the strategic importance of their unit's role in the defence of the province. Morale and motivation varied with place and time. While some were very dedicated to their Ranger duties and took them seriously, others were less committed to the corps. Strength return statistics show the decline in enrolment after late 1943 when the possibility of a Japanese invasion became unlikely. At any rate, the Rangers were maintained, and there is evidence to suggest that

<sup>73</sup>Lieutenant G. Mantle to Capt. Gallant, 3 February 1945, D. Hist., file 169.009 (D93).



Source: D.Hist., file 322.009(D99).

Figure 6.42: Monthly Strength Returns for Number 128 Company (Deep Cove), October 1942 to August 1945.

the military authorities valued their contribution to the defence of British Columbia.

At the same time, however, the Rangers were probably seen by military and government officials as a cheap means to satisfy the public's demand for protection. The existence of the P.C.M.R. could also be justified as a means to release men of the "Active Militia" for overseas service. The heavy casualties inflicted upon the Canadian Army in the Italian campaign, put pressure on the military authorities in Canada to recruit National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) conscripts for overseas service.<sup>74</sup> The large home defence force was deemed unnecessary and, in August 1943, Pacific Command's 8th Division was disbanded while the 6th Division was reorganized into brigade groups. According to Major-General E.L.M. Burns, the NRMA men "who did not volunteer for general service would be transferred to other units in Canada to release GS [general

<sup>74</sup>See R.H. Roy, "Major-General G.R. Pearkes and the Conscription Crisis in British Columbia, 1944," *B.C. Studies* 28 (Winter 1975-76).

service] personnel as reinforcements.”<sup>75</sup> As the war progressed, and these reserve army units were reduced to siphon off NRMA conscripts for general service, the authorities could still maintain that the coast was adequately protected by the Rangers.

Moreover, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, by incorporating more civilian volunteers into Canada's home defence forces involved a higher proportion of B.C.'s population in the war effort. The war was brought much closer to home for 10,000-15,000 men who were equipped, armed, and trained in guerilla tactics. Rangers, as citizen-soldiers directly involved in the war effort, were much more responsive to the needs of the regular army, and less critical of the government's war policies. The existence of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers also served as an inducement for enlistment into the regular forces. Many young Rangers were indoctrinated with a military spirit and joined the regular forces as soon as they came of age. For example, as Colonel Taylor reported:

There have been numerous reports from ex-members of the P.C.M.R. who went on to serve in the Active Army, commenting on the value of their practical training in the P.C.M.R.<sup>76</sup>

Taylor further contended that many men who joined the Rangers, soon came to realize that in order to protect Canada they “should proceed overseas with an expeditionary force with a view to preventing an enemy from landing in the home country.”<sup>77</sup> Taylor was probably overly optimistic in his claim, but the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, although at times hampered by controversy, proved to be a military asset as well as a useful disseminator of propaganda. For example, *The Ranger* training magazine also circulated within the community. This magazine, to some extent, would have familiarized the general population with the government's war policies. But the Rangers themselves,

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<sup>75</sup>Major-General E.L.M. Burns, *Manpower In The Canadian Army 1939-1945* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited, 1956), 135.

<sup>76</sup>Col. Taylor to Colonel A. Duiguid, 4 April 1945, D. Hist., file 322.009 (D24).

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

as they went about their daily business within the community, were the most effective voices of propaganda the government could wish for. The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were visible proof that the government was doing something to counter the threat of a Japanese invasion, especially in geographically-isolated communities. It was important for the government of a nation at war to appease public opinion, and the P.C.M.R. served the purpose of reassuring an apprehensive population.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

In October 1945 the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were officially disbanded, thus ending the history of an unusual yet important part of British Columbia's Second World War defences. The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were formed in a climate of wartime hysteria, and were the culmination of both immediate and historic events. The historical fear of and dislike for the Japanese—based on race and economic rivalry—was given new life after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Anti-Japanese sentiment was further justified by the military situation in the early stages of the Pacific war. The swiftness and success of the Japanese war machine, as it conquered colony after colony in the Pacific, presented a threat to British Columbia. The public perceived Japan as a threat because nobody was certain who her next victim would be. Furthermore, the Japanese military encouraged fear on the West Coast through pin-prick attacks. For example, in June 1942, the Estevan Point lighthouse on Vancouver Island and Fort Stevens, Oregon, were shelled by Japanese submarines. These small scale attacks created an imminent sense of danger on the Pacific Coast of North America. Hysteria spread rapidly and people on the West Coast feared a Japanese invasion. The public's anxiety was inflamed by rumours of Axis saboteurs active in British Columbia, which only worsened the situation. It was in this context that a popular outcry demanded the formation of home guard units, and the evacuation of Japanese Canadians from the coastal areas of British Columbia. Contrary to the standard historical accounts which base hostility toward Japanese Canadians solely on racism, study of the P.C.M.R. reveals that it was also rooted in the fear of Japanese

militarism. British Columbians were in a state of panic concerning a Japanese invasion, and their suspicion of the Japanese was as much a result of this fear of being attacked, as it was a result of racism. In an effort to reassure the public and to bolster existing defences, a voluntary home defence organization, quite independent of the Veteran's Guard and the reserve army, was established in the form of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers.

While the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were organized as a corps of the Canadian Army, they were not a traditional military unit. Their casual uniforms, sporting rifles, guerilla tactics, and lack of parade square discipline set them apart from other Canadian military formations. Of paramount importance, however, was the fact that Rangers were civilians of all ages and of varying degrees of stamina. As a civilian army of irregulars—composed of medically unfit men, those too young or too old for overseas service, and married men who were reluctant to go overseas—the Rangers were an unorthodox assemblage of soldiers. Ranger membership was dominated by British Columbia's Protestant Anglo-Saxon majority. The P.C.M.R., however, contained a mixture of rich and poor, young and old, and those with and without previous military experience. Many First World War veterans joined the Rangers, and their confidence in their own military expertise often led to conflicts with younger Rangers in command. The operation of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers posed problems unheard of in the regular army. From the outset, Pacific Command recognized the limitations and diverse character of the P.C.M.R., and made efforts to accommodate to its peculiar makeup and needs.

The history of the P.C.M.R. also sheds light on British Columbia's wartime society. Study of the P.C.M.R. reveals several aspects of contemporary culture: the historical legacy of the Ranger tradition, fears and internal conflicts, wartime hysteria, racist attitudes, western alienation, and suspicion of the government's war policies. In the early

1940s, British Columbia was still very much an untamed wilderness area. More importantly, a popular romantic image of British Columbia was that it was a province populated by pioneers, woodsmen, and men who could readily function in the wilderness. This image was partly true, but it emerged largely from popular folklore and reached mythic proportions. Nevertheless, the preconception that British Columbia was a frontier region made it receptive to the North American Ranger tradition. The Ranger myth of the hardy frontier fighter, which began with Roger's Rangers in Colonial America, was perpetuated by the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. The P.C.M.R. evolved out of this Ranger tradition, and the belief that irregular guerilla warfare was more effective in the wooded terrain of frontier regions.

Conflicts within the P.C.M.R. reflected the nature of Canadian culture. The rivalry between the P.C.M.R. and the A.R.P., which centered around the competition for recruits, indicates that there was an intense desire among civilians to serve in the war effort. The friction between First World War veterans and younger Rangers reveals that veterans saw themselves as those most capable to lead this organization. The vociferous patriotism of First World War veterans was rarely matched by other groups in society. If their sons had to go overseas to defeat the enemy, just as the veterans themselves had done years before, then they were now anxious to "do their bit" for home defence. Finally, apprehension of trade unionists about the possibility of the P.C.M.R. being employed as strikebreakers, reveals the influence of working-class values in British Columbia during the 1940s. Rangers were ready to fight the Japanese, but they refused to be used against their fellow-workers.

British Columbians have always felt geographically isolated from the rest of Canada. The idea that Ottawa was "a million miles away," and that the federal government neglected the needs of the Pacific province, was given new life during the Second World War. The clamour for the formation of the P.C.M.R. can be partly attributed to the

belief, among British Columbians, that their province was neglected by the government in Ottawa. There was a widespread perception on the West Coast that the government's defence preparations for Canada ended on the east side of the Rocky Mountains. The public's discontent over inadequate coastal defences was often directed at the distant federal capital city of Ottawa. In an attempt to compensate for the government's perceived indifference, British Columbians took steps to provide their own local defence. Western alienation and anti-Ottawa sentiments were commonly expressed in appeals to establish and, later, to maintain the Rangers.

Anti-Oriental prejudice has been an important theme in British Columbian history, and it was also evident in the operation of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. In their role as defenders of British Columbia, Rangers were guided by both the immediate fear of Japanese militarism and long standing racial animosity toward Asians. The Chinese, however, were no longer the focus of racial prejudice during the war. China was an ally in the war with Japan, and for this reason Chinese Canadians were accepted in the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. Japanese Canadians had posed a greater economic threat to white British Columbians than the Chinese, and the Japanese military threat made Japanese Canadians the focus of anti-Oriental prejudice. To be sure, the Rangers' chief concern was the defence of British Columbia, but their concern was also linked with the traditional fear of the "yellow peril." Racist attitudes, however, were not entirely reserved for the Japanese. In the case of Native Indians, a type of positive racism made them a preferred group for Ranger enlistment. The stereotype of the North American Indian as a skilled irregular fighter was prevalent in British Columbia during the Second World War. Although Native Indians were often desired Ranger recruits, they were frequently treated in a paternalistic and condescending manner by white Ranger officers.

Despite the initial enthusiasm for enlistment, as the war progressed and the danger of a Japanese invasion became remote, the appeal of the P.C.M.R. waned. After mid-1943

most Rangers realized that a Japanese attack was unlikely, and they knew that they would not be called upon to fight. The war, however, continued and the Rangers carried on with vigour, and sometimes listlessly, in fulfilling their duty of defending Canada's westernmost province.

Study of the P.C.M.R. also reveals that it was created for obvious military reasons, but equally the corps was formed to satisfy public opinion. The initial moves to form the P.C.M.R. were taken locally, and the federal government acted primarily in response to public pressure. The Rangers served to reassure an apprehensive population concerned about the defence of British Columbia. Once organized, the P.C.M.R. also helped forward the government's war policies by acting as an instrument of propaganda, and by providing a visible defence force for all to see even in isolated areas. The P.C.M.R., then, placated a nervous population, acted as an indirect tool of propaganda for the government, gave its members a chance to participate directly in the war effort, and provided added military protection for the province. These were all important concerns for the government, and they were all achieved at a very low cost.

The most remarkable fact about the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers is that 10-15,000 civilians volunteered to defend British Columbia against the military might of Japan. How the Rangers would have fared in battle is not the issue here, although they certainly would have played a useful role in hindering a Japanese invasion by acting as scouts for the regular army, and by engaging in guerilla warfare. Most members of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers believed that they were playing an important role, and seriously planned and trained for a possible Japanese assault. Equally important is the fact that Rangers were willing to fight for Canada, and of this there is no doubt. The Rangers were, for the most part, patriots and would have fought, as partisans the world over have fought, for the defence of their homeland.

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## Appendix A

### List of Pacific Coast Militia Ranger Companies

- Number 1 Company, *Victoria* (Goldstream, Sooke, the Jordan River area).
- No. 2 Coy., *West Vancouver* (Ambleside, Caulfield, Horseshoe Bay).
- No. 3 Coy., *Sidney* (Sidney, North Saanich Peninsula, Patricia Bay).
- No. 4 Coy., *Brentwood* (Brentwood, Tod Inlet).
- No. 5 Coy., *Port Alberni* (Alberni, Great Central Lake, Franklin River).
- No. 6 Coy., *Clo-oose*.
- No. 7 Coy., *Camps 3 and 6, Youbou* (Youbou and North Cowichan Lake).
- No. 8 Coy., *Youbou* (Youbou and West Cowichan Lake).
- No. 9 Coy., *Rounds* (Rounds, South Cowichan Lake).
- No. 10 Coy., *Chemainus*.
- No. 11 Coy., *Inactive*.
- No. 12 Coy., *Mayo*.
- No. 13 Coy., *Hillcrest* (Hillcrest, Masachie Lake).
- No. 14 Coy., *Bamfield* (Bamfield, Cable Station).

- No. 15 Coy., *Duncan* (Duncan, Sahtlam and Paldi).
- No. 16 Coy., *Crofton* (Crofton and Westholme).
- No. 17 Coy., *Duncan* (Duncan, Somenos, Quamichan).
- No. 18 Coy., *Cowichan Lake* (Cowichan Lake, Hillbank and Cherry Point).
- No. 19 Coy., *Shawnigan Lake* (Shawnigan Lake and Cobble Hill).
- No. 20 Coy., *Cowichan Lake* (Cowichan Lake and Chanlog).
- No. 21 Coy., *Fanny Bay* (Fanny Bay and Bowser).
- No. 22 Coy., *Cumberland*.
- No. 23 Coy., *Courtenay* (Courtenay and Merville).
- No. 24 Coy., *Tsolum* (Tsolum, Courtenay and Sandwick).
- No. 25 Coy., *Oyster Bay* (Oyster Bay and Oyster River).
- No. 26 Coy., *Campbell River* (Campbell River and Cape Mudge).
- No. 27 Coy., *Quinsam* (Quinsam, Campbell Lake and Forbes Landing).
- No. 28 Coy., *Bloedel* (Bloedel, Camp 1 and Camp 5, Timber Area).
- No. 29 Coy., *Sardis* (Rosedale, Sardis, Vedder and Cheam).
- No. 30 Coy., Inactive.
- No. 31 Coy., *Nanaimo* (Nanaimo, Yellow Point and Wellington).
- No. 32 Coy., *Parksville* (Parksville, Qualicum, Hilliers and Coombs).

- No. 33 Coy., *Ocean Falls* (Ocean Falls, Link Lake and Cousins Inlet).
- No. 34 Coy., *Bralorne* (Bralorne, Shalalth, D'Arcy).
- No. 35 Coy., *Pioneer Mines* (Goldbridge, Pioneer Mines).
- No. 36 Coy., Inactive.
- No. 37 Coy., *Lillooet* (Lillooet, Pachelqua and Moha).
- No. 38 Coy., *Ganges* (Ganges and Fulford).
- No. 39 Coy., *Williams Lake* (Williams Lake, Likely, Alexis Creek and Forest Grove).
- No. 40 Coy., *Sechelt* (Sechelt, Halfmoon Bay and Pender Harbour).
- No. 41 Coy., *Bowen Island* (Bowen Island and Cowan's Point).
- No. 42 Coy., *Gibson's Landing* (Gibson's Landing and Roberts Creek).
- No. 43 Coy., *Port Alice* (Port Alice, Holberg, Quatsino, and Marble Creek).
- No. 44 Coy., Inactive.
- No. 45 Coy., *Salmon Arm* (Salmon Arm and Shuswap Lake).
- No. 46 Coy., *Peachland* (Peachland and Westbank).
- No. 47 Coy., *Lasqueti* (Lasqueti Island, False Bay and Squitty Bay).
- No. 48 Coy., *Oliver* (Oliver, Testalinda and Osoyoos).
- No. 49 Coy., *Kingsgate* (Kingsgate and Yahk).
- No. 50 Coy., *Creston* (Creston, Boswell, Crawford Bay and Gray Creek).

- No. 51 Coy., *Armstrong* (Armstrong and Hullcar).
- No. 52 Coy., *Smithers* (Smithers, Hazelton, Telkwa and Quick).
- No. 53 Coy., *Castlegar* (Castlegar and Robson).
- No. 54 Coy., *Alert Bay* (Alert Bay and Malcolm Island).
- No. 55 Coy., *Englewood*.
- No. 56 Coy., *Port McNeill* (Port McNeill and Cluxeive River).
- No. 57 Coy., *Englewood* (Englewood, Beaver Cove and Nimpkish River).
- No. 58 Coy., *Port McNeill* (Port McNeill, Suquash and O'Connor Lake).
- No. 59 Coy., *Port Hardy* (Port Hardy, Duval and Dillon Point).
- No. 60 Coy., *Whonnock* (Whonnock, Ruskin and Silverdale).
- No. 61 Coy., *Haney* (Haney, Pitt Meadows and Albion).
- No. 62 Coy., *Deroche* (Deroche, Nicomen and Errock Lake).
- No. 63 Coy., *Langley* (Langley Prairie).
- No. 64 Coy., *Clinton* (Clinton, Bridge Lake, Gang Ranch and Jesmond).
- No. 65 Coy., *Zeballos* (Zeballos, Ceepeecee).
- No. 66 Coy., *Dewdney* (Dewdney and Nicomen).
- No. 67 Coy., *Vernon* (Vernon, Coldstream, Lumby and Oyama).
- No. 68 Coy., *Lytton* (Lytton, Styne and Botania).

- No. 69 Coy., *Butedale* ( Butedale, Gragan, Kilcane Inlet).
- No. 70 Coy., *Terrace* (Copper Creek, Lower Skeena and Usk).
- No. 71 Coy., *Penticton* (Penticton and Kaleden).
- No. 72 Coy., *Trail* (Fruitvale, Rossland, Tadanac and Casino).
- No. 73 Coy., *Hope* (Hope, Laidlaw, Yale, North Bend and Boston Bar).
- No. 74 Coy., *Bella Coola* (Bella Coola, Anahim Lake and Hagensborg).
- No. 75 Coy., *Bella Bella* (Bella Bella, Namu, North Bentinck Arm).
- No. 76 Coy., *Inactive*.
- No. 77 Coy., *Coquitlam* (Coquitlam, Port Moody, Sunnyside and Maillardville).
- No. 78 Coy., *Kimberley* (Kimberley, Chapman Camp).
- No. 79 Coy., *Merritt* (Merritt, Douglas Lake, Nicola and Quilchena).
- No. 80 Coy., *Princeton* (Princeton, Hedley and Copper Mountain).
- No. 81 Coy., *Invermere* (Invermere, Spillimacheen and Canal Flat).
- No. 82 Coy., *Sicamous* (Sicamous and Malakwa).
- No. 83 Coy., *Squamish* (Squamish, Garibaldi and Pemberton).
- No. 84 Coy., *Ladner* (Ladner, East Delta, Boundary Bay and Canoe Pass).
- No. 85 Coy., *Kamloops* (Barriere, Savona, Blackpool and Blue River).
- No. 86 Coy., *Britannia Beach* (Britannia Beach and North East Howe Sound).

- No. 87 Coy., *West Summerland* (West Summerland and Trout Creek).
- No. 88 Coy., *Abbotsford* (Straiton, Matsqui, Brander and Sumas).
- No. 89 Coy., *Burnaby South* (Burnaby Lake, Central Park and Royal Oak).
- No. 90 Coy., *Burnaby North* (Capitol Hill and Barnet).
- No. 91 Coy., *Burnaby East* (Lozells and Edmonds).
- No. 92 Coy., Inactive.
- No. 93 Coy., *White Rock* (White Rock, Cloverdale, Colebrook).
- No. 94 Coy., *Agassiz* (Agassiz, Harrison Mills).
- No. 95 Coy., *Port Simpson* (Port Simpson, Finlayson Island).
- No. 96 Coy., *Queen Charlotte City* (Queen Charlotte City, Tlell and Skidegate).
- No. 97 Coy., *Quesnel* (Quesnel, Kersley, Marguerite).
- No. 98 Coy., *Wells* (Wells, Barkerville).
- No. 99 Coy., *Stave Falls* (Stave Falls, Hatzic Prairie and Ferndale).
- No. 100 Coy., *Kelowna* (Okanagan, Rutland, Glenmore).
- No. 101 Coy., *Ladysmith* (Ladysmith, Blainy, Brenton).
- No. 102 Coy., *Ucluelet* (Ucluelet, Port Albion, Stapleby and Wreck Bay).
- No. 103 Coy., *Tofino* (Tofino, Long Beach, Clayuquot).
- No. 104 Coy., *McBride* (McBride, Dore Creek and Teare Mountain).

- No. 105 Coy., *Masset* (Masset, Northern Graham Island).
- No. 106 Coy., *Hudson Hope* (Hudson Hope, Moberly Lake and Gold Bar).
- No. 107 Coy., *Port Renfrew* (Port Renfrew, Malahat and Hennigson).
- No. 108 Coy., *Cumshewa*.
- No. 109 Coy., *Cumshewa* (Cumshewa Inlet, Louise Island, Skedans Bay).
- No. 110 Coy., *Kaslo* (Kaslo, Lardeau, New Denver).
- No. 111 Coy., *Nakusp*.
- No. 112 Coy., *Chamis Bay* (Chamis Bay and Kyuquot).
- No. 113 Coy., *Huxley Island, Q.C.I.* (Huxley Island, Wernier Island).
- No. 114 Coy., *Cumshewa Inlet* (Cumshewa Inlet, Skidegate Lake).
- No. 115 Coy., *Golden* (Golden, Parson and Field).
- No. 116 Coy., *Enderby* (Enderby and Hullcar).
- No. 117 Coy., *New Westminster* (Queensboro, Brunette and Poplar Island).
- No. 118 Coy., *West Point Grey* (West Point Grey, Vancouver South and Marpole).
- No. 119 Coy., *Gambier Island* (Gambier Island, Port Mellon and East Bay).
- No. 120 Coy., *Ashcroft* (Ashcroft, Hat Creek and Spences Bridge).
- No. 121 Coy., *South Slokan* (South Slokan, Brilliant and Bonnington).
- No. 122 Coy., *Nootka* (Nootka, Maquinna Point, Friendly Cove).

- No. 123 Coy., *Ahousat* (Ahousat and Refuge Cove).
- No. 124 Coy., *Chase* (Chase, Tappen, Sorrento and Pritchard).
- No. 125 Coy., *Richmond* (Richmond, Steveston, Brighthouse).
- No. 126 Coy., *Galiano Island* (North and South Galiano Island and Mayne Island).
- No. 127 Coy., *Port Washington* (Pender Island, Saturna Island and Hope Bay).
- No. 128 Coy., *Deep Cove* (Deep Cove and North Arm).
- No. 129 Coy., *Grand Forks* (Grand Forks and Rock Creek).
- No. 130 Coy., *Nass River* (Nass River, Aiyanch, Kincolith and Canyon City).
- No. 131 Coy., *Prince George* (South Fort George, Sinclair Mills and Dome Creek).
- No. 132 Coy., *Rivers Inlet* (Rivers Inlet, Goose Bay and Draney Inlet).
- No. 133 Coy., *James Island*.
- No. 134 Coy., *Woodfibre* (North West Howe Sound).
- No. 135 Coy., *Dawson, Yukon Territory* (Dawson, Bear Creek, Moosehide).
- No. 136 Coy., *Pinchi Lake*.
- No. 137 Coy., *Vanderhoof* (Vanderhoof, Fort St. James and Fort Fraser).
- No. 138 Coy., *Juskatla, Q.C.I.* (Juskatla, Tlell and Skidegate).