

## How military vehicles became part of Remembrance Day in Aldergrove



[Dan Ferguson](#)

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2 / 2 Military vehicles, seen during a previous Aldergrove Remembrance Day parade, will once again be part of the memorial procession. (Langley Advance Times files)

In 1990, retired Major Ian Newby drove in his first Aldergrove Remembrance Day parade, in a Second World War jeep, right behind the veterans.

From one jeep, it became five military vehicles, and last year, there were 15.

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This year, vehicles were expected to include jeeps, armoured personnel carriers, and a heavy logistic vehicle towing a 155-millimetre howitzer from the Korean War.

Newby, in his original uniform, will be marching just ahead of the vehicles.

“Aldergrove has the biggest military vehicle presence of any municipality in British Columbia,” Newby estimated.

The number of vehicles in the parade are limited by the number of available qualified drivers, he explained.

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“Everybody here who volunteers [to drive] is a veteran, they know the drill and they know how to follow orders, how to drive safely,” Newby said.

“We’ve got one chap flying in from Wisconsin to be in the Aldergrove parade, we’ve got four coming over from Vancouver Island. We’ve got two coming down from Squamish.”

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Many of the vehicles would have been turned into scrap metal, if the museum hadn’t intervened, Newby noted.

“Preserving military history [in Canada] is like Sisyphus rolling rocks eternally up the mountain,” Newby noted, thanks to federal government policies that effectively forbid reselling most military vehicles.

“They can turn them into razor blades,” Newby fumed.

“I never back down. I never give up. And, for that reason, you’re going to see Canadian vehicles on parade that would have been consigned to the shredder.”

Newby has been taking part in Remembrance Day ceremonies since he was “at least four or five years old.”

“I come from a long line of soldiers,” he explained.

As he described it, his career path, even as a young boy, always aimed in a military direction, beginning with the Boy Scouts.

“I am Wolf Cub Number One of the first Brookwood Thunderbirds Wolf Cub pack. Still got my membership card, and when they had their 50th reunion in 2004, down at Camp McLean on 16th [Avenue], I was not only the only wolf cub from the 1950s and 60s who turned up, but I was number one,” he laughed.

A few years later, there was a tour with the Royal Canadian Air Force Ground Observer Corp, even though he was about three years too young.

Then, in 1958, Newby heard rumours the artillery regiment at a Vancouver armoury might have actual missiles, so he went to have a look, and saw some “big canvas-covered objects.”

When a sergeant major spotted him and asked if he was there to join the young soldier training program, Newby said he thought about a “nanosecond” before he said yes.

“He said ‘how old are you?’ And I said, ‘how old do you have to be?’ He said sixteen and a half. I said ‘what a coincidence.’ Then I had to come up in my head with the birthday real fast because I was actually just shy of 15. Anyway, they took me because I was breathing and I could spell my name.”

As it turned out, the “missiles” under the canvas were Second World War Two anti-aircraft guns.

In the Canadian Army, according to Newby, promotions are about “not doing anything particularly stupid [so] you take a senior NCO course and you are qualified to be a lance sergeant, then a sergeant, and a staff sergeant, and a warrant officer second class.”

“I went up through all the ranks, then some fool decided I might make an officer, so they sent me to officer training school. I don’t know how I did it, but they promoted me to major and that was my rank when I retired.”

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By then, he had begun acquiring historic military vehicles.

“I didn’t like to refer to myself as a collector, but as a historian and a preservationist,” Newby told the Langley Advance Times.

His interests led to creation of the Western Museum of the Armed Forces, an Aldergrove-based facility devoted to the preservation and exhibit of vehicles and equipment used by the Canadian military in wartime, and peacekeeping operations – as well as equipment used by British allies and American operations.

Then, the movie First Blood happened, a U.S. production company that was shooting in Canada needed military gear. Newby had the “vehicles, equipment, and the knowledge, and all the personnel” they needed.

“It really was a life changer for all the people who participated,” he said of the film.

The museum now doubles as a provider of props for movie and TV shoots, under the name International Movie Services, which helps Newby pay for the acquisition and maintenance of the vehicles and equipment in his collection.



***About the Author: Dan Ferguson***

Best recognized for my resemblance to St. Nick, I'm the guy you'll often see out at community events and happenings around town.

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