



A Monthly Update
About Your Chamber

Bargain at the Chamber for Business in Michigan

If you are already conducting business with customers in Michigan, or you would like to try, you will most probably have to pay "mega bucks" for the privilege of experiencing the learning curve. Depressed already? Never despair! The International Trade Committee of The Oakville Chamber of Commerce has come to the rescue. The largest independent Michigan accounting firm of Plante Y Moran and Butzel Long, a leading Michigan law firm, are sending tax and legal specialists to the Chamber's "Doing Business in the United States" seminar on Thursday, November 18th, 1999. **This will be a sellout, so book now by calling: 845-6613 and ask for Karen Pomfret.**

Both firms enjoy a long and venerable history assisting businesses to establish and expand operations in the U.S. A primer on trade financing and governmental trade programs, will be provided by the Royal Bank of Canada and Detroit's Canadian Consulate's representatives, based in Michigan.

Apparently, our own representatives "south of the border", along with the Americans are thrilled at the opportunity to support growing businesses in this region. Grant Buchan-Terrell, the Chair of the International Trade Committee, states that in order to access such valuable resources, members would be looking at a costly investment in multi-day programs, or the retaining of expensive international trade specialists.

The day will be divided into six intense, consecutive modules, starting at 8:00 a.m. with Customs and finishing at 12:15 p.m. with a U.S. trade update from the Canadian Consulate in Detroit.

We can only book 40 people at \$40 for our Oakville or Burlington Chamber members and \$45 for non-members. If your business is in the booming Automotive sector and/or associated industries, this is an absolute "must" for your newer staff members and refresher course for top executive.

Do it right the first time - call your Chamber now.

Bronte Legion named after World War II hero

By Claudia D'Souza
SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

"The meek are a hell of a long way from inheriting the earth."

This hardy sentiment uttered by the late Major General Chris Vokes reveals a lot about the World War II hero. It's bold, opinionated and realistic. The man for whom the Bronte Legion is named had all of these qualities and more.

Distinctive with his stylish, tailor-made wardrobe and handlebar mustache he could be hardheaded, surly and brash as a commander. But he was fair and had strong convictions on justice and serving one's country.

A long time Oakville resident after the war, Vokes is remembered as an unforgettable character that led a life precious few can relate to today. To most, his military destiny played out like a feature film replete with war-torn imagery, personal tragedies, resounding victories, and ear-splitting gunfire. But this was no Hollywood production - the blood, sweat and tears were real.

Vokes' military fame was sealed when he commanded the 1st Canadian Division, 15,000 men in all, in Ortona, Italy, landing on Sept. 3, 1943, as did the British. Benito Mussolini, Italy's fascist dictator, had just surrendered and Adolph Hitler had already taken over Rome and was headed for Ortona. Together, the Canadians and British captured the mediaeval town that became known as 'Canada's Little Stalingrad,' smashing their way through walls and buildings using a manoeuvre known as "mouse holing."

In charge of what was called the 'Spaghetti League' in Sicily and Italy, Vokes also drove out the Germans from Leonforte - a key milestone of the Sicilian campaign and his military career. No troops under his command ever lost a battle.

At the end of WWII, King George VI decorated him with three awards: the Companion of Bath, Commander of the Order of the British Empire and the Distinguished Service Order.

He was born April 13, 1904, in Armagh, just north of the border between Northern Ireland and Eire to Major 'Paddy' Frederick Vokes and wife Elizabeth. Shortly after his birth his father was stationed in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon), India (where his only brother, Frederick was born in 1906), and then Dublin, Ireland.

In his autobiography, *Vokes: My Story*, co-written with author John Maclean shortly before his 1985 death at Oakville-Memorial Trafalgar Hospital, his recollections revealed a natural born leader who knew his vocation early on.

At age five he watched a military funeral of a British soldier in Phoenix Park in Dublin with great pathos and curiosity. He decided, then and there, he would be a soldier. "These soldiers impressed me not by their (scarlet) uniforms but by their attitude. I made my decision. I, too, would be a soldier," he said with determination.

In 1910, his father was commissioned to the Canadian Army to be an instructor in military engineering at the Royal Military College (RMC) in Kingston, Ont.

Growing up he and brother, Fred, dreaded the sailor suits his mother insisted they wear "for an eternity." Obvious targets in a rough neighborhood they negotiated every week on the way to Sunday School, they'd return home with the suits in rags. The torment he endured made the timid little boy tough, and he learned to listen to his father's advice elicited during their rough and tumble boxing matches: "Hit him first. If you hit first, the battle is

half-won." It was advice he never forgot.

In Kingston, Vokes learned to love track and football and began cultivating his national pride. He sang *O Canada* in school long before it was the national anthem. He realized he belonged to something worthwhile. As he considered attending Queen's University to play football, his father asked him one day if he wanted to be a jock or "make something of himself and go to RMC?" During a football game that ended in a free-for-all between RMC cadets and Queen's, he made up his mind. In the spring of 1921, at age 17, he wrote the RMC entrance exam, for the second time, and passed.

The strapping young cadet, a shade over 6-ft. tall and 190 lbs, dubbed the regimen, primitive living conditions and hazings "hell on earth." Exhausted, he thought he'd made a mistake but later admitted the greatest thing he learned at RMC was to not be brutal, but always administer discipline with humility and humanity. His second greatest lesson was self-discipline and that it's essential to everyone.

In 1925, he graduated with 'Distinguished' in drills and exercises, although he failed astronomy miserably. Stationed in Halifax, he cultivated a huge mess hall bill and discovered women.

It was here he learned a legendary parlour trick that earned him a tidy sum in bets - drinking an entire glass of whiskey and soda while performing a handstand against a wall. His proficiency at drinking upside down astounded many and he performed the odd little trick until 1957 when his neck finally surrendered.

"One can get awfully drunk doing it," he concluded. "It has to do with the blood rushing to one's head."

He applied for and was accepted as a lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Engineers. In 1927, he graduated as a civil engineer and was posted to The School of Military Engineering in Chatham, England, for two years.

Stationed in Winnipeg in 1929, he met Connie Waugh. They were married in January 1932. His first son Fred was born in December 1932.

Vokes was transferred from his "boring and unfulfilling" desk job to England as war broke out in 1939, but didn't see action for another three and half years. As fate would have it, he rose quickly through the ranks to Major General.

Like his parlour trick, the man himself was legendary. An unflappable disciplinarian, he dealt with absenteeism by establishing an unprecedented field punishment camp that subjected the offending soldier to a period of intensive military training, a shaved head and no cigarettes.

In his post-war days, Vokes settled his family in Oakville. From 1946 to 1951 he was first commander of Ontario's central command for the Canadian Army at Ortona Barracks.

Ortona Barracks, a former orphanage run by the Independent Order of Foresters at Kerr and Bond Streets, is today Oaklands Regional Centre. It was one of five command stations established across Canada after the war.

He and his family then moved to Edmonton where Vokes was the west commander before returning to Oakville in 1959 when he retired from the army at age 55.

They lived at four different addresses in Oakville between 1959 and 1969, the year Vokes' wife of 37 years, died. He enjoyed 26 more years before dying peacefully at nearly 81, at Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, on March 28, 1985.

(See 'Vokes'... page B7)

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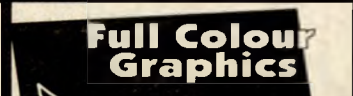
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