

# *Chums In Arms: Comradeship Among Canada's South African War Soldiers<sup>1</sup>*

Carman MILLER

*This study uses the Canadian contingent in the Boer War to examine the importance of personal relationships and comradeship in the creation and function of military forces. The author suggests that recruits in the Canadian contingent were drawn from a narrow social and ethnic base, and were already tied into small units by bonds of friendship, family, and membership in regional militias. These bonds offered emotional, material and moral support from the outset and increased during the soldiers' tour of duty. Thus, networks established during civilian life were readily adapted to the military situation, providing support that the military institutions did not.*

*L'exemple du contingent canadien dans la guerre des Boers est utilisé dans cette étude afin de montrer l'importance des relations personnelles et de la camaraderie dans la création et dans les fonctions des forces militaires. L'auteur avance que le recrutement des soldats pour le contingent canadien s'est effectué dans une couche sociale et ethnique restreinte, ce qui était déjà un trait caractéristique des liens familiaux et amicaux des petites unités des milices régionales. Dès le début ces liens offraient un soutien affectif, matériel et moral, et ils se consolidèrent ensuite, lors des tours d'opération des soldats. Ainsi, les réseaux établis durant la vie civile s'adaptèrent aisément aux conditions de la vie militaire, y créant des liens et des soutiens que l'institution militaire proprement dite n'assurait pas.*

The attempts of late-nineteenth-century professional soldiers<sup>2</sup> to create "une armée de métier", a systematically trained, efficient, military machine, free from divisive social, sectarian, ethnic and personal loyalties and political interference proved a difficult and in some respects unpractical task. The values, habits and loyalties which defined a soldier's civilian life were not easily erased or substituted by other, more impersonal codes of behaviour, particularly in hastily recruited, ill-trained voluntary units. Nor were these personal relationships, habits or values necessarily detrimental to military efficiency and combat performance, as some professional soldiers then seemed to assume.

Since then, both professional soldiers<sup>3</sup> and scholars have come to recognize the importance of the "barracks brotherhood" in the making of a professional military organization. Although the phenomenon is probably as old as warfare itself, one of the first

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented to the History Department, Acadia University, January 1984.

2. By professional I mean the attempt to organize and control an occupation upon the basis of "expertise, responsibility and corporateness". See Samuel P. HUNTINGTON, *The Soldier and The State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975) pp. 8-10. By expert I mean to imply, among other things, impersonal, objective codes of management and behaviour. In Canada and elsewhere this professionalism often produced conflict between soldiers and politicians. There is, of course, an extensive literature on the subject of military professionalism: see Kurt LANG, *Military Institutions and the Sociology of War: A Review of the Literature with Annotated Bibliography* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1972), pp. 158-280. The only full length study of professionalization of the Canadian Militia is: Stephen John HARRIS, "Canadian Brass: The Growth of the Canadian Military Profession 1860-1919", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1979, 297 pp.

3. One of the first professional soldiers to recognize their importance was J.F.C. FULLER, *The Foundations of the Science of War* (London, 1925).

scholars to appreciate the importance of friendship networks, "mateship", in the making of a professional military organization was C.E.W. Bean in his study of the Australian soldier in World War I.<sup>4</sup> S.L.A. Marshall's *Man Against Fire* (New York, 1947), Roger W. Little's "Buddy Relations and Combat Performance"<sup>5</sup>, Robert Middlekauff's "Why Men Fought in the American Revolution"<sup>6</sup>, Eric J. Leeds' *No Man's Land* (Cambridge, 1979) and Tony Ashworth's *Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System* (New York, 1980), however, have demonstrated that this phenomenon was not confined to a particular time or place. The purpose of the following micro-study of Canada's South African war contingents is to provide another example of the importance of personal relationships and comradeship in the recruitment, management and development of soldiers. It is a study designed to suggest how the friendship networks which defined the civilian life of young, single Canadian males were adapted to military exigencies.

According to the *Montreal Star's* correspondent, Richmond Smith, the 1,019 men of Canada's first South African contingent, who left Quebec City for Cape Town on October 30, 1899, were little more than "an armed mob", composed of men "who had never met one another before".<sup>7</sup> Smith's impressions of this, or subsequent contingents, were quite wrong. Hastily recruited and scantily trained, the 7,368 Canadian men who served in nine different contingents during the South African war, October 1899 to May 1902, were far from strangers to one another.<sup>8</sup> Still less were they that mirror image of Canadian society,

4. C.E.W. BEAN, *The Story of the Anzac: The First Phase, Vol. I*, (Sydney, 1937).

5. Roger W. LITTLE, "Buddy Relations and Combat Performance", *The New Military*, Morris JANOWITZ (ed.), (New York, 1964), pp. 195-223.

6. Robert MIDDLEKAUFF, "Why Men Fought in the American Revolution", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 1980, vol. 43 (2), pp. 135-148, suggests that men were sustained in battle by their relationship with their comrades.

7. *The Montreal Star*, 3 Nov., 1899.

8. Between October 1899 and May 1902 some 7,368 men, officially 20-40 years of age, left Canada to fight in the South African war. All were volunteers. Most were amateur citizen soldiers, not soldiers by profession, but men with little or no previous military training or experience. Recruited in the Autumn and winter months, they left Canada in nine separate (consignments or) contingents. The first, an infantry regiment designated the 2nd (Special Service) Battalion Royal Canadian Regiment, left Canada in October 1899. All the rest, except a brigade division of field artillery in the second contingent, were mounted men. After the first contingent, the next two, the 1st Regiment Canadian Mounted Rifles and Lord Strathcona's Horse, left Canada in January, February and March 1900. The fourth, the South African Constabulary, left in March 1901. The fifth, the 2nd Regiment Canadian Mounted Rifles, left in January 1902. And the rest, the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Regiments of Canadian Mounted Rifles, left in May 1902, too late to participate in the conflict, which ended on the 31st of that month. The status of these nine contingents differed considerably. The first and second contingents were raised under authority of the Canadian Militia Act. Recruited, equipped and despatched to South Africa at the expense of the Canadian government, they possessed the status of temporary units of the Canadian Militia. To emphasize its Canadian militia status the first contingent bore the designation the 2nd (Special Service) Battalion of an existing regiment of the Permanent Militia, the Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry. Similarly, the artillery component of the second contingent bore the designation of Royal Canadian Field Artillery; and the 1st battalion of Canadian Mounted Rifles had its name changed to the Royal Canadian Dragoons, all to emphasize their relationship to the permanent militia. The third contingent, the Strathcona Horse, was raised under the authority of the United Kingdom's Army Act. Raised at the expense of Canada's wealthy High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Lord Strathcona, with the Canadian government acting as agents of Strathcona, this contingent possessed the status of a temporary unit of the British Army. The rest were similarly raised under the authority of the United Kingdom's Army Act, recruited, equipped and despatched to South Africa by the Canadian government at the expense of the British government and, like the Strathcona Horse, temporary units of the British Army. The exception was Major-General Robert S.S. Baden-Powell's South African Constabulary, a police force of some 10,000 men, 1,200 of whom were Canadian. Recruited between October 1900 and June 1901 as a permanent local police force, the Constabulary came under the civil authority. Men were given three-year contracts, as opposed to the one-year maximum signed by the other Canadians, and were encouraged by a land reserve policy, to settle in South Africa and assist in its "British reconstitution".

that representative cross section of Canada's peoples, regions and classes, depicted by contemporary imperialist rhetoric. On the contrary, the social profile of Canada's South African war soldiers possessed a number of very distinctive features. All were males, predominately unmarried (91.5 percent), young (82.2 percent were under 30 years of age) and English speaking (97 percent), recruited primarily from the urban, white- and blue-collar and service sectors; and, of the Canadian workforce, 16.3 percent of whom came from sales and clerical occupations alone. Other social traits characterized Canada's South African soldiers as well. Over 40 percent of the recruits were Anglican in religious denomination as opposed to 12.8 percent in the general Canadian population; and 29.4 percent were British-born immigrants, whereas only 7.8 percent of the general Canadian population in 1901 was British-born.<sup>9</sup>

Drawn from a narrower social base than contemporaries seemed to believe, many of Canada's South African war soldiers attended the same schools and churches. They belonged to the same recreational, fraternal, voluntary and patriotic associations and were bound together by an elaborate network of personal, family and fraternal relations as will be revealed by a closer examination of Canada's first contingent, the 2nd Battalion (Special Service) Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry.

A regiment containing some 1,019 officers and men, the Royal Canadian Regiment was organized on a territorial system, which institutionalized personal linkages. The regiment was divided into eight companies of 125 men and each company possessed a distinctive regional character, which made this special service regiment a sort of "community of communities", its company officers, non-commissioned officers and men being drawn largely from a specific geographic location. A Company contained the men from British Columbia and Manitoba; the men in B Company, recruited in London, Ontario, came from south-western Ontario; C Company was known as the Toronto Company; D Company was composed of men from Kingston and Ottawa in numbers almost equally divided between the two cities; E Company was the English Montreal Company; and F Company, the Quebec City unit, was called the "French" Company, even though the majority of men did not speak French. Large numbers in this company came from the surplus of volunteers from St. John, New Brunswick and Amherst, Nova Scotia; G Company contained the New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island volunteers, the Island providing 32 men to the Company; and H Company was the Nova Scotia Company, recruited largely in Halifax.

Moreover, many of the men were already acquainted through previous militia experience. All but two percent of the men in Canada's first contingent claimed to have had some former military association, a few acquiring that claim by joining a unit on the eve of war in order to qualify for service. Most of the recruits, 84 percent, came from the country's non-permanent Active Militia, a volunteer citizen force composed largely of young men from civilian occupations, who agreed to undergo a minimum of 12 days military service per year for a period of three years. Another 13 percent of these volunteers came from the Permanent Active Militia, a force of regular, professional soldiers charged with training the non-permanent Active Militia and maintaining the Militia's garrisons and supplies. An additional one percent of the men were drawn from Canadian police forces, or American and British military units. That most men in the first contingent possessed a militia affiliation is scarcely remarkable since membership in the militia or the North West

---

9. See Carman MILLER, "A Preliminary Analysis of the Socio-Economic Composition of Canada's South African War Contingents", *Histoire Sociale — Social History*, November 1975, pp. 219-237.

Mounted Police was a condition of service for both the first and second contingents (exceptions permitted), though not for the subsequent contingents recruited in Canada for military service in South Africa.

What is significant, however, is the peculiar representation, distribution and concentration of these militia units within the first Canadian contingent. Most of the men who volunteered for this contingent came from city militia corps. Ten city militia corps alone supplied close to one-third of all the men in the contingent, and two or three of these active city corps dominated each of the first contingent's eight companies. For example, close to 70 percent of the 125 men in A Company came from two units, Victoria's 5th Regiment of Canadian Artillery, which provided 48 men, and Winnipeg's 90th Winnipeg Rifles, which contributed 35 men. The contingent's B Company was dominated by the 26th Middlesex Light Infantry, the 7th Fusiliers and the 21st Essex Fusiliers, which together counted for almost one-half of the men in this company. Similarly, the Queen's Own Rifles, the 10th Royal Grenadiers and the 48th Highlanders represented almost 50 percent of C Company. In D Company, perhaps the most cohesive company, two Ottawa corps, the 43rd Ottawa-Carleton Rifles and the Governor-General's Foot Guard, made up 46 percent of the strength of this unit. In Montreal's E Company the 5th Royal Scots, the 1st Prince of Wales Fusiliers and Quebec City's anglophone 8th Royal Rifles accounted for 55 percent of this company's strength. The three largest Active Militia corps represented in G Company, the 62nd St. John Fusiliers, Prince Edward Island's 82nd Queen's County Battalion and the 3rd Regiment of Canadian Artillery, constituted 44 percent of the men in this Company. That percentage rises to 65 percent if one includes the 15 men from the Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry recruited from the Permanent Militia's infantry school at Fredericton. In Nova Scotia's H Company 44 percent of the men came from two Halifax city units, the 66th Princess Louise Fusiliers and the 63rd Halifax Rifles.

Of the first contingent's eight companies, Quebec City's F Company, the so-called "French" company, was the most heterogeneous, and in some respects unique unit. Given the difficulty of raising Quebec City's quota of men, an area where the militia was weak and opposition and indifference to the war was strong, the military authorities decided to transfer to F Company the overflow of recruits from other areas, principally from "loyalist" New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Consequently, a sergeant and 12 men from the 62nd St. John Fusiliers and 11 men from Nova Scotia's 93rd Cumberland Regiment were sent to Quebec, both units of which provided more men for F Company than the 9th Voltigeurs, the city's best represented militia unit in the company. None contributed as many men to F Company as Montreal's francophone regiment, the 65th Mount Royal Fusiliers, sent to Quebec in exchange for the volunteers from Quebec City's anglophone regiment, the 8th Royal Rifles. Despite the military authorities' attempt to concentrate francophones in one company and provide it with francophone officers and non-commissioned officers, the "French" Company remained at least two-thirds anglophone. It also contained 31 men from the Permanent Militia, stationed at the Citadel, the largest number of Permanent men in any one company.<sup>10</sup>

Those who came from active city corps were more than casual acquaintances. The heart of the Canadian Militia, urban units offered a wide range of educational, social and recreational services, quite apart from martial skills. Thanks to active reserve associations

---

10. The Militia unit affiliation of the volunteers is taken from *Canadians in Khaki* (Montreal/Toronto, 1900).

a unit's armoury might contain any or all of the following: a reading room stocked with books, magazines and illustrated papers, a club room with whist tables, a bowling alley, billiard room, shooting gallery and gymnasium. Many corps organized bowling teams, cricket clubs, field days, minstrel shows, bands, concerts and excursions. They offered St. John's Ambulance courses, occasionally assisted the civic power, and supplied the pomp and circumstance for public occasions. Their social calendar included dances, smokers and at-homes; and their church parades, tattoos, field days and sham battles attracted large, enthusiastic crowds of admiring spectators.<sup>11</sup> Little wonder, then, that the Adjutant-General of the Canadian Militia found that "many of the city corps" maintained more officers and men than their pay establishment permitted, and that they drilled in excess of the 12 days for which they could draw pay. Indeed some enthusiastic militiamen even refunded their pay to assist with regimental expenses, field days and excursions.<sup>12</sup>

Urban militia corps were particularly popular among clerks, students and out-of-town men,<sup>13</sup> between the ages of 18 and 24. To the British immigrant<sup>14</sup> the militia was a familiar, indeed popular, institution before the Great War.<sup>15</sup> To the urban migrant, British or native, city corps helped facilitate their integration into the host community. They were also useful, inexpensive social clubs at a time when sports and recreational clubs were increasingly beyond the means of low paid white-collar workers.<sup>16</sup> Membership in the militia provided a badge of respectability, a confirmation and enhancement of social status. It offered young men a suitable place to make friends, useful social contacts, and possibly an opportunity to improve one's employment prospects, since a unit's senior officers were sometimes large employers and its NCOs often well placed to recommend a promising applicant. In major cities, such as Montreal, militia units possessed a certain social homogeneity or distinctive ethno-religious character, which strengthened the unit's cohesiveness and sense of community.<sup>17</sup> For example, Montreal's 65th Mount Royal Rifles was a francophone corps; the 5th Royal Scots attracted the city's Scottish Presbyterians; the city's Irish Roman Catholics preferred the 1st Prince of Wales Fusiliers, while the Victoria Rifles was a mixed Protestant unit, 70 percent of whose members were clerks.<sup>18</sup>

Within the companies of Canada's first contingent, blood ties, occupational, recreational and associational links reinforced these regional and regimental bonds. Eighty-

---

11. Montreal's Victoria Rifles possessed all of these facilities; see McCord Museum, *Victoria Rifles of Canada, Scrapbook*.

12. Canada, *Sessional Paper No. 13*, (1891) p. 2.

13. Only 36 percent of the 1,853 young men who joined the Victoria Rifles between the years 1888 and 1906 were born in Montreal; see, Jeremy S. ELBOURNE, "The Victoria Rifles as a Social Institution, 1888-1906", unpublished seminar paper, McGill University, April, 1985. It is also interesting to note that ten of the 29 Canadian volunteers for South Africa from the 62nd St. John Fusiliers were born outside New Brunswick, and only five of Victoria's 48 men from the 5th Regiment who volunteered for service in South Africa were born in British Columbia.

14. Anne SUMMERS, "Militarism in Britain before the Great War", *History Workshop*, (Autumn, 1976), pp. 104-123.

15. Thirty percent of the men who joined the Victoria Rifles between the years 1888 and 1906 were foreign-born, largely British. ELBOURNE, *op cit*.

16. PAC, Montreal Amateur Athletic Association Papers, *Minute Book No. 6*, 7 May 1900. See also Alan METCALFE, "The Evolution of Organized Recreation in Montreal 1840-1895", *Histoire Sociale — Social History*, May 1978.

17. A good example of this sense of community occurred during the despatch of the first contingent when 18 of the 5th Royal Scots, 26 officers went down to Quebec to say good-bye to the volunteers from that regiment. Ernest J. CHAMBERS, *The 5th Regiment Royal Scots of Canada Highlanders* (Montreal, 1904), p. 82.

18. McCord Museum Archives, Victoria Rifles Papers, Enrollment Registers, 1887-1907.

six volunteers had brothers in the first contingent, usually in the same company, a phenomenon not confined to the first contingent. In the second contingent there were at least 68 sets of brothers among the two battalions, or 704 men of the Canadian Mounted Rifles; and 34 sets of brothers among the contingent's other unit, the Royal Canadian Field Artillery, whose strength consisted of some 539 men. "It is a common thing in the Artillery", wrote Lieutenant E.W.B. Morrison, a subaltern in the second contingent's artillery, "to have two brothers driving — that is, riding the gun horses — in one gun detachment. In fact it is a combination much encouraged, because they usually work well together from mutual interest".<sup>19</sup> How many other blood relatives Canada's South African soldiers possessed is difficult, if not impossible, to determine. Somewhat easier to determine are occupational bonds. For example, 14 of the 20 volunteers from Quebec City's anglophone 8th Royal Rifles were clerks, some working in the same establishment, occasionally residing at the same boarding houses,<sup>20</sup> a phenomenon similar to the pals contingents of Kitchener's New Armies of World War I, or some British voluntary units in the South African War.<sup>21</sup> The playing fields, too, contributed their share of friendships, as an examination of the closely knit Ottawa men in D Company will suggest.

Of the 64 men in the first contingent who were drawn from Ottawa, all but eight were then members of either the 43rd Ottawa-Carleton Rifles or the Governor-General's Foot Guard. Those who did not belong were far from strangers to the men of the company. Among the eight who did not belong to one of these two units at the time were such prominent Ottawa men as Henry Cotton (the son of Lieut.-Col. W.H. Cotton, Assistant Adjutant General of the Canadian Militia), a graduate of Queen's University, a former member of the Ottawa Rough Riders and the Ottawa Rowing Club, at the time of his enlistment a bank clerk at the Bank of Montreal in Montreal, and a member of the 3rd Company of the Victoria Rifles; Zachary R.E. Lewis (the son of Dr. R.P. Lewis and the nephew of Dr. P.R. Lewis, the Anglican Bishop of Ontario), the former "fair-haired page of the House of Commons",<sup>22</sup> and sometime member of the Governor-General's Foot Guard who had studied law in Toronto before joining the North West Mounted Police;<sup>23</sup> or the high-spirited, 28-year-old clerk working in Ottawa at the wholesale grocery firm of H.N. Bate and Sons, Edouard (Teddy) Deslaurier, "the life of the Ottawa boys",<sup>24</sup> a former member of the North West Mounted Police, a prominent cross country rider, and a corporal in the Princess Louise Dragoon Guards, who unfortunately became the contingent's first "casualty". Four days after the contingent left Quebec City, Deslaurier died from what the attending physician discreetly called "heart failure" but what the Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Col. William Otter, and Deslaurier's comrades privately diagnosed as "delirium tremens".<sup>25</sup>

Sometimes referred to as "the gentlemen's Company", the Ottawa boys counted among their number sons of many prominent public men including Allan Gilmour, whose

19. E.W.B. MORRISON, *With the Guns in South Africa* (Hamilton, 1901), pp. 98-99.

20. PAC, R.G. 9 II, 7, Vol. 10, Special Service Pay Lists, South African War.

21. One British volunteer later wrote "we were boys together, and joined the regiment together; early in the battle we were fighting side by side". James MILNE, *The Epistles of Atkins* (London, 1902), p. 131-132.

22. Gaston P. LABAT, *Le Livre D'Or* (Montreal, 1901) p. 125.

23. *Ottawa's Heroes* (Ottawa, 1900) p. 19.

24. PAC, W.H. Cotton Papers, *Scrapbook*, newsclipping, n.p., n.d.

25. PAC, William Otter Papers, Diary, 3 November, 1899; Jesse Carl Biggs Papers, Jesse Biggs to Aunt, 26 November, 1899; J.W. Jeffrey Papers, J.W. Jeffrey to John and George, 24 November, 1899; Mrs. Charles Bennett Papers, Arthur Bennett to mother, 8 November, 1899.

father, John Gilmour, was a large lumber manufacturer;<sup>26</sup> Will Ritchie, whose father was the late Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada; Billy Latimer, whose father, James Latimer, was Deputy Chief of J.B. Booth and Sons;<sup>27</sup> Cameron McCulloch, the son of George W. McCulloch, a large coal merchant; St. John Malloch, the son of Dr. Edward Malloch; and A.J. Matthews, whose father, A.J. Matthews, owned a large pork packing company in Ottawa.<sup>28</sup> Drawn from a relatively narrow social base and members of the same militia units, in civilian life many of the Ottawa men had lived in close proximity to one another, attended the same schools and churches, and had been members of the same snowshoe, rowing, lacrosse and football clubs, or fraternal and patriotic societies. For example, at least five volunteers had played with the Ottawa Rough Riders and six others had been members of the Governor-General's Foot Guard's bugle band.<sup>29</sup> Others belonged to the Queen's Own Lodge, Sons of England or the Masonic Order. (A meeting of Masonic brethren on board the *Laurentian*, a boat carrying 339 men of Canada's second contingent, produced 25 members, one-half of whom came from Ottawa)<sup>30</sup>.

The Ottawa boys formed a natural brotherhood, "one happy family", as the Ottawa volunteers never ceased to boast to their friends and relatives back home.<sup>31</sup> Their camaraderie was evident even in Quebec City before the first contingent left Canada, where reporters noted that the Ottawa men, "the Hot Bunch"<sup>32</sup> as they called themselves, were "the jolliest boys in barracks".<sup>33</sup> Using the Ottawa Rough Riders football yell for purposes of identification, for three days they ate, drank and caroused about the town as a group, challenged other companies to football games and, during the Saturday night smoker for the men before they sailed for South Africa, came close to precipitating a fight with the Quebec City men.<sup>34</sup> While members of the same company, the Ottawa and Kingston men remained quite separate entities.

Other companies were composed of similar cohesive groups. For example, Frederick William Coombs, a 24-year-old clerk born in Prince Edward Island, residing in St. John, and a member of that city's efficient 62nd St. John Fusiliers, served as a corporal in G Company. Twice Captain of the popular Mohawk's hockey team, Coombs brought to South Africa several members of his team. This company also contributed eight men to the first contingent's 15-man band, the eight men coming from two New Brunswick bands, one in Fredericton and the other in Sussex.<sup>35</sup> In E Company five of the volunteers were members of Montreal's Amateur Athletic Association.<sup>36</sup>

Nor were these friendship networks confined to the first contingent as Lieut. M.O. McCarthy, a subaltern in E troop of the South African Constabulary, discovered.

26. *Ottawa City Directory*, (Ottawa, 1899), p. 245.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 291.

28. PAC, W.H. Cotton Papers, *Scrapbook*, Richmond SMITH, "This is Good Stuff", *Montreal Star*, n.d.

29. PAC, W.H. Cotton Papers, *Scrapbook*, unidentified newsclipping.

30. E.W.B. MORRISON, *With the Guns in South Africa* (Hamilton, 1901), p. 37. Otter, the C.O. of the R.C.R. was himself a prominent Freemason. See Wallace McLEOD ed., *Whence Come We: Freemasonry in Ontario, 1764-1980* (Hamilton, 1980), p. 256.

31. PAC, W.H. Cotton Papers, *Scrapbook*, unidentified newsclipping; Mrs. Charles Bennett Papers, Arthur Bennett to mother, 8 November, 1899.

32. PAC, Mrs. Charles Bennett Papers, Arthur Bennett to mother, 8 November, 1899.

33. PAC, W.H. Cotton Papers, *Scrapbook*, unidentified newsclipping.

34. *Ibid.*

35. PAC, Albert Perkins Papers, Albert Perkins to mother, 25 November, 1899.

36. PAC, Montreal Amateur Athletic Association Papers, *Minute Book*, No. 6, 6 November, 1899, p. 174.

McCarthy explained to his captain that his men had been recruited in the Maritime provinces and came largely from “shop and factory hands in Halifax, N.S. and St. John, N.B.” and had been “pals at home and belonging to the same baseball clubs”.<sup>37</sup> While examples might be multiplied, sufficient evidence has been cited to demonstrate that all but a few of the men of Canada’s first contingent were bound together by a complex network of pre-war relationships.

Moreover, the military organization, physical intimacy and the exigencies of warfare reinforced, rather than weakened, these pre-war civilian ties. The regional composition of companies gave units a certain sense of community but this was not the only nor perhaps the most important source of cohesion. Stronger ties were forged from the extended “family” groupings and buddy systems within companies, associations encouraged by the internal organization of the companies. Composed of some 125 men, each company possessed four sections, and they in turn were divided into four sub-sections, called squads or tent groups, with eight to 12 men to a tent. Almost invariably former civilian friendships determined membership in these sections and squad groupings. The “bunch from Windsor” naturally found themselves in one tent, sharing quarters as they had during the previous summer’s militia camp.<sup>38</sup> Similarly it is no surprise to learn from one man in C Company that “our section is composed entirely of Queen’s Own Rifle men, about 30 of us, so we have a congenial crowd”.<sup>39</sup>

The reason for these family groupings is not difficult to understand. “The [nine] boys from the O[ntario] A[gricultural] C[ollege] kept fairly close”, E.F. MacCormick, a bugler in the second contingent’s artillery recalled, “only because we knew each other before”.<sup>40</sup> Col. Sam B. Steele, the Commanding Officer of Lord Strathcona’s Horse and a shrewd manager of men, went further and attempted to institutionalize the process. In organizing his force he issued regimental orders instructing officers “to tell off the men in groups of fours, who are friends, ... paying particular attention to their being friends and comrades”. He also insisted that “The Officer must come from the same district if possible as the men”.<sup>41</sup>

Although pre-war friendship and associational ties largely determined membership in these extended “family” groups, the exigencies of war gave these groups functions which strengthened inter-personal bonds, particularly when regiments were broken up and companies were assigned different postings, and were physically separated for extended periods of time. Under the supervision of a corporal, who usually came from the same community and militia unit as most of his men, a sub-section or squad household worked, slept and ate together. The men shared their letters, papers and parcels from home. (The familiar character of the group gave letters and local papers a more than private interest.)

37. P.R.O., C.O. 526, Vol. 3, South African Constabulary, M.O. McCarthy to Assistant Division Staff Officer, 26 June, 1903.

38. PAC, Jesse Carl Biggs Papers, Jesse Biggs to Aunt, 20 January, 1900.

39. PAC, J.F.J. Ussher Papers, Jack Ussher to Edge, 30 December, 1899. Similar arrangements existed within mounted contingents. There the smallest formal unit was a group which consisted of four men. Where these proved too small, one group joined another. For example, in the 2nd Troop of B Squadron, the Royal Canadian Dragoons, nine men from the Virden area of Manitoba, who had trained together the previous summer, volunteered for service in South Africa, and stuck together throughout the war. See PAC, A.E. Hilder Papers, “Comrades All” MS, p. 44.

40. Public Archives of British Columbia, E.F. MacCormick Papers, *Memoir MS*, p. 37.

41. Glenbow Museum, S.B. Steele Papers, Lord Strathcona’s Horse: Regimental Order No. 5, 8 February, 1900.



They exchanged clothing, loaned money and equipment, and assisted, cared for and protected one another.

Together they devised survival strategies, which went well beyond the formal structures of military organization. To improve their material welfare, they established "tent messes" to buy extras and scrounge what they could not purchase. One man in Canada's second contingent explained the system thus:

We found that our first two groups (four men composed a group in the mounted regiments) who had been in Virden Camp in Manitoba together in the summer of 1899, would be better off if we pooled our food resources ... Bellamy (George A.) was appointed chief rustler, and he did a swell job. We never went hungry, it was he who got the turkey for supper. None of us had any money, so we didn't buy the food he got for us. The others in our two groups rustled wood, and we were never without a fire. By pooling our rations, we always had enough and carried some for reserve.<sup>42</sup>

Variations on this system operated in all the contingents.

The hazards of death, sickness, loneliness and physical deprivation intensified the bonds of friendship and solidarity. According to Lieut. M.O. McCarthy of the South African Constabulary, who knew his men well, once this solidarity was established these groups "always appeared to place loyalty to each other before *all* other principles. They might be termed extremely clannish".<sup>43</sup> One of their captains, H.R. Pousette, put it another way: "Their idea of duty appeared to be to stick by one another in all rows".<sup>44</sup> Closely knit, supportive and often exclusive, these "family" tent groups resembled "the small welfare states" or "trench households" composed of the "mucking in pals" described by Tony Ashworth in his *Trench Warfare 1914-1918*.<sup>45</sup>

Within the larger impersonal military organization, these small, more intimate family groups provided a focal point of reference or identity; many men found that it was "a great comfort to have a few friends with one among so many blokes".<sup>46</sup> Group solidarity also gave men a measure of autonomy and control over the governance of their squad, which they used to secure additional rations, immunity from petty military regulations or alterations in the distribution of military assignments. The growth of solidarity gave the men a greater influence over their non-commissioned and junior officers, who frequently collaborated with the men to circumvent the regulations, such as turning a blind eye on looting, scrounging, foraging along the line, or drawing rations for those on sick parade. Those officers who refused to collaborate faced resistance from their men. As one volunteer reported to his parents: "all but one of the NCOs are popular with the boys, and unless he changes his ways his section will rebel and say they will go to the clink rather than submit to his tyrannical ways. He is a sergeant".<sup>47</sup> Normally such drastic action was unnecessary.

Most officers came from the same communities as their men, and were sensitive and responsive to their men's needs. The officers' interest in their men, who were often sons

42. PAC, A.E. Hilder Papers, "Comrades All" MS, p. 44. See too, PAC, J. Kennedy Hill Papers, *Diary*, 12 May 1900.

43. P.R.O., C.O. 526, Vol. 3, South African Constabulary, M.O. McCarthy to Assistant Division Staff Officer, 26 June, 1903.

44. P.R.O., C.O. 526, Vol. 3, South African Constabulary, H.R. Pousette to Assistant Division Staff Officer, 26 June, 1903.

45. Tony ASHWORTH, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System* (New York, 1980), p. 155.

46. PAC, J.G.H. Ussher Papers, John Ussher to mother, 11 November, 1899.

47. PAC, W.H. Cotton Papers, *Scrapbook*, unidentified newsclipping containing the letter.

of friends, associates or notables at home, went well beyond the requirements of a professional relationship. Company captains such as D Company's Maynard S. Rogers, a major in the 43rd Ottawa and Carleton Rifles, who brought 35 of his militia unit's men to South Africa with him, made every effort to secure the welfare of his men, and thought nothing of carrying the rifle or pack of an exhausted, ill or injured private, and encouraged his lieutenants to do likewise. Indeed the first contingent's very professional and exacting Commanding Officer, William Otter, believed that some of his more "popular, responsive" company captains had quite lost control of their companies.

Many of the company officers saw things differently. They understood the importance of communications and found that their men always worked better if they were treated as responsible persons, and told the purpose or reason for their mission or instructions. Those officers who "condescended to make clear the reason for a certain move"<sup>48</sup> found their men more willing to adapt to changing circumstances, and think their way out of a difficult situation, qualities which some British generals professed to admire in colonial troops. The more responsive company officers understood and appreciated the strength of personal ties and exploited them to build strong, loyal fighting units. Aware of the importance of these basic friendships and local loyalties, experienced officers of the first and second contingents, Lord Strathcona's Horse and the South African Constabulary, who recruited Canadian men for subsequent contingents, made a point of promising "that men from one district shall be squaded together as far as possible" and retain their locally recruited officers, promises the men stoutly insisted that they honour.<sup>49</sup>

The clannish bonds of friendship, loyalty and familiarity, those qualities which gave groups their identity, strength and solidarity, also limited a man's liberty and imposed restraint and discipline. Men who may have enlisted to escape the inhibitions and constraints of civilian life soon found their scope limited. In South Africa, one Canadian artillery lieutenant explained: "As a rule, each corps keeps to its own lines and does not know even the name of the corps lying next to it, though their tents may be only a hundred yards away. A few enterprising spirits may go visiting about, but the large majority never care to wander from their own fireside ..."<sup>50</sup> (Those who wished to wander found their opportunities reduced after Roberts reached Pretoria in June, 1900, and the Canadian infantry and artillery were frequently divided into their constituent companies, half companies, batteries and sections and assigned to line of communication duty, separated from their comrades in other companies and batteries for long periods of time.) Surrounded by friends and sometimes relatives, the familiar values and codes of civilian behaviour continued to define and govern their conduct.

In other ways, too, the constraints and scrutiny of family, friends and community followed the men to South Africa. Largely a literate and articulate body of men, a flood of letters, which took about a month to reach the recipients, reunited the war to the home front. In the days before military censorship these letters were frank and explicit. And since they described the activities of comrades, who were mostly familiar local boys, the letters were passed about the neighbourhood or published, with small deletions, in the local press. Men who tampered with the truth or whose behaviour did not meet the local standard were subject very shortly to sanctions from their community and comrades. The knowledge that

48. S.M. BROWN, *With the Royal Canadians* (Toronto, 1900), p. 136.

49. P.R.O., C.O. 526, Vol. 3, South African Constabulary, Minute re. Mrs. K.S. Massiah, 7 January, 1902.

50. E.W.B. MORRISON, *With the Guns in South Africa* (Ottawa, 1901), p. 108.

their activities were subject to careful community scrutiny exercised restraint and discipline. In these circumstances the moral distance from home was infinitely shorter than the physical distance. Closely knit family groupings, therefore imposed a self-discipline and acted as a barrier rather than a stimulus to mob disorder. Indeed perceptive officers, such as Col. S.B. Steele, the Commanding Officer of Lord Strathcona's Horse, as well as the Canadian component of the South African Constabulary, realized that the community character of squads helped to underwrite, not undermine military discipline.

Much depended, however, upon a group's character, leadership and circumstance. After the Great War, J.F.C. Fuller, a keen observer of men in combat, advised professional soldiers not to try "to efface" these primary loyalties, but to subordinate them to the larger unit:

That is to say, a section of ten men should not only be endowed with a special group spirit, but this section group spirit should form part of a platoon group spirit, which, in turn, forms part of a company group spirit and so on through battalion, brigade ... until it forms part of the national group spirit — the ultimate group.

Arthur Currie, Canada's celebrated corp commander in World War I, would have agreed, since Currie believed that each man ought to be made to "feel not merely that he was part of a big batallion, but that he was one of a little group of chums".<sup>51</sup>

Otter's great difficulty with the Royal Canadians was that group loyalty never reached beyond the company level. He realized that his companies' regional rivalry and jealousy could only create tensions at home and within his regiment. Therefore, he was more than a little alarmed when the brief but well publicized engagement of C Company at Sunnyside on January 1, 1900 — the Royal Canadians' first engagement — was described in the press as the work of the Toronto Company. Whatever Otter might like to think, however, in reality C Company was the Toronto Company. As the war continued, and company solidarity grew, Otter found his regiment more difficult to handle, and indeed occasionally out of hand, as it was during the unfortunate controversy over the prolongation of service, a decision made largely along company lines.<sup>52</sup>

The strength and cohesion of most companies, sections and squads were based upon an elaborate, informal network of nuclear relationships, a buddy system whose importance was enhanced by the changing conditions of warfare. Although the family and nuclear relationships were not exclusive or competitive, on campaign chums, as they were called then, assumed some of the functions of the family squad grouping. The section and squad still existed and served as an organizational unit for provisioning, work assignments and comradeship; the physical conditions of battle, however, and the changing composition of sections, owing to sickness, wounds and death, weakened their importance, while strengthening a man's dependence upon his chum.

Even before active campaigning began many men possessed special or privileged relationships with one or more members of the tent group, squad or section, often based upon civilian friendships. It is no surprise to find that Frederick H. Dunham's chum was Douglas McPherson. Although Dunham was a New Brunswick-born stonemason and McPherson an Ontario-born labourer, both were Presbyterians and members of the 48th

---

51. J.F.C. FULLER, *The Foundations of the Science of War* (London, 1925), p. 138. Daniel G. Dancocks, *Sir Arthur Currie* (Toronto, 1985), p. 89.

52. Desmond MORTON, *The Canadian General Sir William Otter* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 227-231.

Highlanders.<sup>53</sup> Nor is it surprising to learn that Jack Ussher's chum was William McGivern. Both were 23 years old, members of the Queen's Own Rifles and clerks in the Canadian Mutual Loan Investment Company in Toronto.<sup>54</sup> Similarly Albert J. Perkins and John H. Wilson of G Company became mess mates; both were members of the 71st York Battalion, Perkins a store clerk and Wilson a farmer.<sup>55</sup> Another example is Joseph William Jeffrey, a 32-year-old printer born in London, Ontario, working in Montreal, who enlisted with "his nearest friend",<sup>56</sup> Fred Wasdell, a 22-year-old Ontario-born butcher, also working in Montreal, and both members of the 3rd Company, Victoria Rifles.<sup>57</sup> With them went another "good chum", Horace Weldon Coates, a 27-year-old student in his third year of medicine at McGill University, from Bass River, New Brunswick, and a member of the 5th Royal Scots. In E Company they worked together as stretcher bearers and "pulled together well".<sup>58</sup> When Paardeberg claimed Wasdell, Coates, Wasdell's "greatest friend in the army",<sup>59</sup> was with him until he died. Jeffrey, who was not with Wasdell when he died, was devastated by his friend's death, lost interest in the war and wanted to return home. He and Coates, however, remained close chums, working and living together, and, on one occasion, sharing the close confines of the "clink" for insubordination.<sup>60</sup>

Chums were rarely the only or even a sufficient reason to volunteer for military service in South Africa. Most men had other reasons as well: material incentives, the desire for professional advancement or temporary social security. Many were driven by a sense of adventure and by boredom or a desire to escape difficult personal relationships. For others, social pressures, appeals to loyalty, manliness, rank and position made enlistment difficult to resist.<sup>61</sup> "Where is the son of the Minister of Militia?" demanded the Conservative Halifax *Herald* on its front page the day the first contingent sailed for South Africa. The Minister's only son, Harold L. Borden, a third-year medical student at McGill University and a major in the Kings County Hussars, volunteered for service with the second contingent, against his father's wishes. Six months later Borden lay dead, killed by an Irish-American sniper fighting with the Boers. Similar, though subtler social pressures may account for the large number of sons of prominent military and political families, particularly in the first and second contingents. On the eve of a federal general election Liberals and Conservatives kept a careful body count of the sons of prominent partisans who enlisted for service in South Africa. Families, too, occasionally incited their sons to enlist to defend the Empire as their fathers and grandfathers had done;<sup>62</sup> others enlisted against the will of their families, to escape over-protective or difficult parents.<sup>63</sup>

53. PAC, F.H. Dunham Papers, *Diary*, 4 February, 1900.

54. PAC, J.F.H. Ussher Papers, Jack Ussher to Edge, 30 December, 1899.

55. PAC, Albert J. Perkins Papers, Albert Perkins to mother, 18 January, 1900.

56. PAC, J.W. Jeffrey Papers, J.W. Jeffrey to George and John, 18 March, 1900.

57. Wasdell also seems to have been at one time a member of the 5th Royal Scots. See Ernest J. CHAMBERS, *The 5th Regiment Royal Scots of Canada Highlanders* (Montreal, 1904), p. 82.

58. PAC, J.W. Jeffrey Papers, J.W. Jeffrey to George and John, 18 March, 1900.

59. Gaston P. LABAT, *Le Livre D'Or* (Montreal, 1901), p. 126.

60. PAC, J.W. Jeffrey Papers *Diary*, 12 October, 1900.

61. For more information see Carman MILLER, "A Preliminary Analysis of the Socio-Economic Composition of Canada's South African War Contingents", *Histoire Sociale — Social History*, November 1975, pp. 219-237.

62. *Souvenir Toronto Contingent of Volunteers for Service in Anglo-Boer War* (Toronto, 1899), n.p.; Gaston P. LABAT, *Le Livre D'Or*, (Montreal, 1901), p. 136; Captain Jack RANDALL, *I'm Alone* (Indianapolis, 1930), p. 44.

63. PAC, Frederick Lee Papers, Frederick Lee to father and mother, 13 December, 1899; PAC, George Smith Papers, George Smith to mother and father, 27 October, 1900; PAC, 396, Edwin McCormick Papers,

Although friendship may have been only one of several influences upon a man's decision to seek military service abroad, in the constricted context of warfare, chums assumed a position of primary importance. From the start special, privileged relationships existed or developed between men within the extended family squad grouping, chums with whom one preferred to work and relax, and in whom one confided. On campaign men became increasingly dependent upon these chums to provide mutual aid, material, moral and emotional support during periods of deprivation and stress. They pooled their resources to procure what they needed, or to purchase, scrounge and pilfer food when rations were scarce; they joined forces to construct habitable joint living quarters while on the march, when they were more often than not without canvas and exposed to the violent extremes which characterized the South African climate. They shared their blankets, clothes, parcels, papers and letters from home. In short this nuclear relationship assumed and supplemented many of the functions of the squad, that extended family of friends and acquaintances.

The men's numerous letters and diaries underline the importance of chums. Arthur Bennett, a 22-year-old stenographer, in D Company, made that perfectly clear to his mother. "Norman Cluff [a 22-year-old druggist], and I", he wrote, "always sleep, eat and chum together." He went on to explain how on campaign "we used to put a rubber sheet under us & 2 blankets over & that is the way we slept through all the rainy & cold nights".<sup>64</sup> In another letter he continued: "Everything I get I share with him and he does the same with me".<sup>65</sup> Edward Ward, a 25-year-old Halifax carpenter in H Company, and formerly a sergeant in that city's 66th Princess Louise Fusiliers, boasted of a similar arrangement. "My chum", [T.J. Walsh, a 22-year-old, Newfoundland born printer from the 66th Princess Louise Fusiliers] Ward assured his mother, "will do anything for me ... What he has is mine and I the same".<sup>66</sup>

Some arrangements were positively domestic. George Smith, a 22-year-old English-born printer in the second Canadian contingent, wrote his father and mother:

"My chum ... Boths and I are very comfortable in our shack [constructed of tin and whatever other material they could secure]. We have pictures on the wall, a cupboard, sacks on the floor & our lamp enables us to sit up at night and write. We always have plenty of visitors. The boys come round to have a talk & a game of cards".<sup>67</sup>

Next to the subject of food and water, or put another way, hunger and thirst, chums were probably the most frequently mentioned topic in the volunteers' numerous letters and diaries. Judged by their letters chums were infinitely more important than squads, companies, battalions and regiments or the officers, commissioned or non-commissioned, who administered these formal organizational units. Moreover, the frankness with which the men described their relationships with their chums in their countless letters "to mother and father" suggests that the degree of physical intimacy was well within the bounds of accepted late-Victorian morality. Although physical relations which went beyond those bounds are unlikely to be reported in letters, especially to parents, no evidence has been found that

"The Big Stirups" MS, n.p.; Public Archives of British Columbia, Walter Bapty Papers, "Memoirs of Walter Bapty" MS. p. 31.

64. PAC, Mrs. Charles Bennett Papers, Arthur Bennett to mother, 16 March, 1900.

65. PAC, Mrs. Charles Bennett Papers, Arthur Bennett to mother, 28 March, 1900.

66. PAC, Edward Ward Papers, E.B. Ward to mother, 29 January, 1900; Public Archives of Nova Scotia, South African War *Scrapbook*, Edward Ward to Lieut. Stewart, n.d., unidentified newsclipping.

67. PAC, George Smith Papers, George Smith to mother and father, 27 October, 1900.

these friendships were anything but “chaste”, to use Paul Fussell’s description of similar male friendships in World War I.<sup>68</sup>

The importance of close personal relationships is difficult to appreciate, unless one understands the claustrophobic world of a soldier, his limited perspective in battle, his constricted, disjointed and timeless world, a point brilliantly underscored in John Keegan’s *The Face of Battle*, as well as in the letters of Canada’s Boer War soldiers. “One would think that at least we should know what’s going on out here”, wrote Jack Heron, a young University of Toronto student in Canada’s second contingent, “but we don’t know what the Army is doing or what its going to do or whether the war’s over or not: in fact, we only know what we are personally doing & we wouldn’t swear to that either!”<sup>69</sup> In these circumstances, food, shelter, physical comfort and companionship assumed an inordinate importance.

The function of chums was various. In sickness chums cared for one another, frequently long after it was wise to do so, rather than trust their friends to the notorious British medical services. (And it should be remembered that sickness claimed more men than Boer bullets.) During battle physical contact “helped men control their fears”.<sup>70</sup> When organization broke down, as it so frequently did, and groups of men were cut off and far from help, food, drink and communications, chums provided material assistance, comfort, courage and the will to continue the struggle. Contrary to the assertion of one author, they also provided “a rescue discipline for the wounded”.<sup>71</sup> “We [the Quebec City boys] all look for each other after each engagement”, Frederick Lee, a 22-year-old Quebec City clerk who had been transferred to Montreal’s E Company, explained to his anxious mother and father, after the final Battle of Paardeberg.<sup>72</sup> The Quebec City volunteers were no exceptions; others did likewise.<sup>73</sup> For example, Jack Ussher attributed his survival to his chum, William McGiverin, who carried him wounded from the field during the first Paardeberg engagement and was himself wounded in the effort.<sup>74</sup> Julius G. Sievert, a 22-year-old Nova Scotian from the 93rd Cumberland Battalion in F Company, was less fortunate. During the second Paardeberg battle he was fatally wounded while carrying back to the trenches the body of his dead chum, George Orman, another 93rd Cumberland Battalion man in F Company. In death chums executed their comrades’ last will with scrupulous attention to details; after the war some erected plaques and donated religious objects to commemorate their fallen friends whom they had come to regard as “brothers

68. Paul FUSSELL, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York 1975), p. 272; see also his chapter VIII “Soldier Boys”.

69. PAC, J. Heron Papers, Jack Heron to Maggie, 1 July, 1900.

70. Robert MIDDLEKAUFF, “Why Men Fought in the American Revolution”, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 1980, 43 (2), p. 141.

71. In his article entitled “Gunshot Wounds of the South African War”, *South African Medical Journal*, 9 October, 1971, p. 1093, Theodore James claimed that the British died of haemorrhage because they “had no rescue discipline for the wounded. With the Boer it was different. They went into battle somewhat like the warriors of the Trojan war each of whom had a friend to fight by his side and whose duty it was to do his utmost to save his friend should he be incapacitated by injury, or recover his body if killed for decent burial. Father and son often constituted such a unit”. A British volunteer in the London City Imperial Volunteer regiment tells how a comrade “is kept alive, despite his wounds through a night bivouac, by two comrades who lie close on either side, sheltering him, keeping him warm”. James MILNE, *The Epistles of Atkins* (London, 1902), p. 141.

72. PAC, Frederick Lee Papers, Frederick Lee to mother and father, 8 February, 1900.

73. Gaston P. LABAT, *Le Livre D’Or* (Montreal, 1901), p. 128; E.S. MACLEOD, *For the Flag* (Charlottetown, 1901), p. 91.

74. PAC, J.F.H. Ussher Papers, unidentified newsclipping.

in all but blood".<sup>75</sup> A Canadian artillery subaltern, E.W.B. Morrison, attempted to summarize the functions of a chum in the following rhyming dedication to his book *With the Guns in South Africa* (Ottawa 1901):

Where would I be when my throat is dry? Where would I be when the bullets fly? Where would I be when I come to die? Why som 'ers a-nigh my chum; If he's liquor 'e'll gimme some; If I'm dyin' 'e'll 'old my 'ead, An' e'll write 'em 'ome when I'm dead.

In short a chum was an ever present help in time of trouble, a companion and confidant, who helped a soldier cope with fear, sickness, loneliness and adversity.<sup>76</sup>

Canada's South African War soldiers then were far from strangers to one another, men wrenched singly from their homes by the call of "race and religion". Although drawn from a much narrower, more homogeneous social base and induced to enlist by more material considerations than contemporaries contended, the men's decision to enlist was shaped more by the collective claims of community, family and friendship than by personal, ethnic or religious considerations. In South Africa the male friendship networks which had defined the civilian life of young, single Canadian males were easily adapted to military exigencies.<sup>77</sup> Hastily recruited, poorly trained and organized into extended family squads, Canada's citizen soldiers devised survival strategies, the type of personal support system which our contemporary professional soldiers have come to value and strive to institutionalize. This system offered men what the existing military structures did not, emotional, material and moral support, and a degree of autonomy and identity during periods of severe deprivation, stress and strain. It provided discipline and a rescue system for the wounded and if the studies of Marshall, Little and Middlekauff have validity it may well have improved the battle performance of the men: it gave men the will to fight and endure the rigors of war. Professional officers who resented and resisted the system did so at their peril; those who appreciated the importance of these civilian-born relationships and built upon them constructed strong, loyal fighting units, which made a marked contribution to the British cause during the South African War.

---

75. James MILNE, *The Epistles of Atkins* (London, 1902), p. 205.

76. There was, of course, a rougher side to military life. This rougher side, of deception, jealousy, drunkenness and quarrelling will be dealt with elsewhere. Evidence on these subjects is more likely to be found in regimental disciplinary records than in memoirs, diaries or letters, particularly those addressed to "mother and father".

77. An interesting insight into the network of relationships which defined the life of British working class immigrants to Canada can be found in: Ross McCORMACK, "Networks among British Immigrants and Accommodation to Canadian Society: Winnipeg, 1900-1914", *Histoire Sociale — Social History*, (November 1984).