From the Director of the Welfare & Benefits Committee

Over the past year, I have often asked retired members why aren't they members of our Association. A few reasons always surface, mostly around what's in it for me…. and then there is the story of Albert Pless.

Reg. No. 18009, Albert Pless passed away on March 8, 2015 in Lundar Detachment’s area. The vehicle he was driving had gone into a ditch. He was found on the ground, near his vehicle, by a passerby, who summoned the police. Albert had frozen to death.

Albert retired from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1972 having completed 20 years of service in the Force. Following his retirement, he worked in a Regina Hospital for many years. He separated from his wife, Marjorie, in 1972. Albert was not a member of our Association.

It is unknown when Albert returned to Manitoba. Sometime, shortly before March 8, 2015, Albert was evicted from his apartment in a Manitoba Housing complex in Inwood. He was basically living in his car at the time of his passing.

The Welfare & Benefits Committee of our Association became involved in this matter after Dennis Hawkins bought it to our attention. We were able to locate his wife, Marjorie, in a personal care home in Regina. Contact was made with the family members in Regina, Winnipeg and Prince Edward Island. None of the family members had the ability to pay for any funeral costs, thus no one would claim the body. Bardal Funeral Service ultimately took possession of Albert’s remains under the direction of the Medical Examiners Office.

Contact was made with Emil Knuth of the RCMP Regina Veterans Association and he agreed to assist Marjorie in the processing of any forms with respect to any pensions and benefits to which she would be afforded.

Since no family members had the financial ability to pay for the funeral costs, a decision was made to make an Application to the RCMP Benefit Trust Fund to secure the monies needed to cremate Albert. That Application was successful and the funds were received. Bardal Funeral Home kindly discounted the funeral costs by $1110.00 due to Albert’s service to this country. Albert was finally cremated on April 2, 2015. His remains will be transported to Regina for burial in the RCMP Cemetery at “Depot” Division.

So goes the story of Albert Pless, but along the way many individuals played a distinct role in bringing dignity to this tragic situation. Dennis Hawkins, Susan Hamilton and Gordon Hollings at the Office of the
Medical Examiner, Kevin Sweryd at Bardal Funeral Home, the Office of the Public Trustee, Murray Milne (RCMP Benefit Trust Fund), Dave Leblanc, Bob Wass, Trevor Lawless, Emil Knuth, Jean Morsett (Chaplain, Depot), Murray McNeill, Morneau Shepell and PWGSC. Without these individuals stepping up and doing what was right and proper, who knows what would have been the final resting place of Albert Pless.

So next time you meet someone who doesn’t belong to our Association because he wonders “what’s in it for me” tell them the story of Albert Pless.

Kind regards,

David Douglas
Director, Welfare & Benefits Committee

RCMP Members including Albert Pless in front of Tham’s Studio Camera Crafts, Saskatoon, SK circa 1960.
Photo courtesy of Sheldon Boles, RCMPVA Vancouver Division