

## Bill Hintze's Speech To The 2007 C.R.A. Dinner

Fellow Members,

“When the CRA was founded, it reflected the remarkable spirit and morale, together with a sense of identification, which existed amongst the senior cadets of the 1950s. Christ’s College Cadet Corps had become a Combined Cadet Force Contingent in 1949, the year in which the CCF was created. Christ’s College Cadet Corps is a founding member of that organisation. Within a year Capt Tod Jennings was transferred to and became Adjutant and effectively the senior Training Officer of Christ’s College CCF. As a non-schoolmaster he was able to bring different qualities and a different approach to the job. His leadership engendered great loyalty from senior NCOs. This was reflected by the fact that, almost to a man, on leaving school, senior NCOs for the first time ever continued to serve the contingent in a variety of capacities.

The setting up of a Regimental Association, The Centarian Regimental Association, was a logical result. I doubt whether anyone considered whether this would be a short-term association meeting the needs of recent school leavers . . . . or whether it would have meaningful continuity.”

Fifty years on we know the answer and confidently, as an Association, look forward to 2057!

Those words that I have just spoken were not mine, but those of our late President, Peter Warren Green, who used them as part of his President’s Foreword in the 2003 edition of “Ricochet” our Association’s Journal.

I just thought they were so right for this 50th Anniversary Dinner and they have brought back so many memories since I joined the cadet corps as a sprog in September, 1947.

I feel honoured to be invited to speak tonight as I’ve come to the end of my Presidential year for the Old Finchleians’ Club; honoured that I was lucky enough to be one of the founder members of this Association and honoured that I am able to use this Peter Green Memorial lectern for the first time this evening.

I don’t intend to make this a long, boring speech, but I have to add to Peter’s words to say that the CRA may not have got off the ground if it had not been for National Service – where one did 2 years with the Colours and three years on Reserve, or became a Regular and did a 3 year stint plus Reserve. Most of us who were eligible for it, took the first option. We took our Annual Forces’ Leave at Summer Camp and many week-end leaves were taken up with week-end cadet camps. Our 3 years Reserve had us transferred from whatever unit we were originally sent to by the Army, Navy or Air Force to CCF CCF as Adult Instructors by Tod Jennings’ machinations!

That resulted in a pool of Forces-trained specialists to ease the pressure on the Admin and trainingsides of the unit. Those of us who had been “recruited” in this fashion by Tod formed a working group which then melded in to the basis for starting an association with a committee, followed by many deliberations (over the usual drink or so), forming what is now the Centarian Regimental Association.

How the CENTARIAN bit of CRA became a word is another story, but suffice it to say that it was formed with words of a military nature in mind; “centurion” was bandied about, but wasn’t quite right as it implied “in command of a 100” and there were certainly not that many of us. I guess “centarian” just popped into our collective heads as a result of a brainstorming session!

During our National Service we became experts at changing rank dependent on whether it was a regular or cadet unit we were working with and what rank we were deemed to have achieved, or not, by Tod, Queen’s Regs notwithstanding! Our sewing skills were to the fore when changing rank so rapidly! It wasn’t a problem for me as my RE CO backed me up unofficially and often gave me extra leave to help with CCF, but for someone like Arthur Banham, it could get a little tricky being in The Middlesex Regt as a Private and a Cadet NCO virtually at one and the same time!

I was able to keep working with the unit for a while, but I had other commitments, as a Youth Leader and a founder of the East Finchley Youth Theatre project which is, I understand still going strong, therefore I wasn’t able to continue working with the CCF and CRA after about 1958/59. However, many others stepped into our boots, so to speak, and took over from us “beginners”. A significant number have kept at it for many, many, many years - some of their names slip my mind (?), probably through embarrassment at not having stayed the course alongside them, which happens when one joined the cadets 60 years ago come September.

I find it absolutely amazing that the Centarian Regimental Association is still serving its purpose to this day after 50 years of continuous effort. It is also exceedingly gratifying to know that the concept started all those years ago is still so deeply embedded in the fabric of the Unit in this day and age . . . and long may it be so.

Bill  
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