

Major Tam London (1936 – 2019)



Tam was born in Port Alberni, B.C. on November 6, 1936 and entered the military in 1954 at Royal Roads in Victoria as a reserve cadet and subsequently the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario. In May 1958 he joined the 6th Field Squadron RCE in North Vancouver, one week after his graduation from RMC. Tam spent one year at the University of British Columbia to complete his Civil Engineering degree. Graduating in May 1959, he immediately married Beverley Wallis and the two of them drove to Kingston, on their honeymoon, where Tam commenced his first job as a Lecturer in the Civil Engineering Department at RMC. This position allowed him to undertake a masters degree programme, specializing in structural engineering, at Queens University along with his lecturing duties at RMC. Whilst in Kingston, their first son, Tam, was born in September 1961.

Tam and Bev moved to Edmonton in June 1962 where he was employed with the architectural and engineering consulting firm of Rensaa and Minsos. After one unhappy year in Edmonton where they lost their second son Edward shortly after childbirth, they decided to move back to the west coast where Tam secured a job with McKenzie Snowball, a structural consulting engineering firm. After receiving some good basic experience at McKenzie Snowball, Tam went to work at the large civil and hydroelectric engineering firm of Ingledow Kidd in Vancouver as their only structural engineer. Much interesting and varied experience was gained with this company but Tam decided a smaller consulting firm was more to his liking and in 1966 he returned to McKenzie Snowball Skalbania, (Nelson Skalbania had now become a partner) as an Associate and much later as the Vice-President and Chief Structural Engineer. The firm had expanded in 1967 to include mechanical and electrical departments and became a very successful multi-discipline engineering company.

McKenzie Snowball Skalbania ceased to exist in 1986 and Tam started his own company, Triad Engineering. This company merged with another similar company in 1992 to form London Mah & Associates, Consulting Structural Engineers in Vancouver. Tam is still active in the firm.

When Tam returned to Kingston in 1959. While a Lieutenant, in 1960 he helped form a new unit, the 55th Field Squadron RCE. He was then promoted to the rank of Captain in 1961. The unit unfortunately had a short life and did not survive the Diefenbaker cutbacks in 1966.

In Edmonton, Tam was an active member of the 25th Field Squadron RCE and upon returning to Vancouver in 1963 he rejoined the 6th Field Squadron RCE and assumed command of the unit on New Years Day 1965. Upon successfully completing his major qualifying course in Dundurn, Saskatchewan, he was promoted to Major in August 1965. In June 1968 he turned the unit over to his RMC classmate Doug Whiffen.

In 1970 Major Tam London became a staff officer at the new Vancouver District HQ. In May 1973 Tam and Major Hugh Hutchinson, the then CO of the Unit, undertook a visit to the Royal

Monmouthshire Royal Engineers (Militia) in Wales. This was the 6th Field's first contact with this famous British unit and the two units have been very closely associated ever since. In 1974 Tam decided he had done his duty and retired from the Active Militia.

As well as his work and militia interests, Tam has been and is involved in several other endeavours. He is active in his parish church choir as a tenor and was a Warden of the parish in the mid-seventies. Bev introduced him to the world of puppetry in 1969 and after two terms as President of the Vancouver Guild of Puppetry he served as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Puppeteers of America from 1986 to 1990. Tam also got the travel bug and organized and became the tour guide for groups of puppeteers to three international puppetry festivals: Moscow in 1976, Dresden in 1984 and Japan in 1988. Although he does not consider himself to be a puppet performer, he has performed with a professional troupe in Japan and South Korea in 1991 and in Mexico in 1992. Finally, he is active in a local Macintosh computer user group, Apples BC Computer Society, and served as its president in 1996 and 1997.

In his retirement years Tam continued to be involved with 6 Field Squadron RCE and was deeply involved in developing the unit's museum and writing its history.

A celebration of Life was held on April 28th at St Catherine's Anglican Church in North Vancouver and was well attended by Tam's family, the military, former RMC classmates and many people who knew Tam through his work or through his many interests.