

1949 January

Story of Exercise Frost Bite Told by Goodmurphy

From Wainwright, Alta., Corporal H. H. Goodmurphy of 6th Field Squadron, Royal Canadian Engineers, has forwarded the following story of "exercise frostbite"

Winter training camp commenced at Wainwright, Alta., on January 28. The 6th Field, 22nd Field, 33rd Field squadrons, R.C.E arrived in good order from their home towns. The 6th from North Vancouver, the 22nd from New Westminster, and the 33rd from Lethbridge, Alta.

This is the first winter training camp these squadrons have attended. The training scheme being carried on up here is one of the most complete we have ever seen. The syllabus of training, was drawn up by the officer in charge of the camp, has stressed a good amount of snow sports, skiing, snow shoeing etc. Even if we are up to our necks in the snow sometimes we are still having a good time up here in that regard.

The purpose of the, camp is to give the engineers an insight as to what would be expected of the R.C.E. in actual battle conditions in a frozen land. The normal training is carried on by the R. C.E. Reserve in the summer time. This has been a far cry from the normal, but it has been very instructive. Things are done a little differently in the zero weather, as are being found out.

The training is made up of a number of technical lectures, and a follow-up with practical demonstrations in the classroom and in the field. These lectures are being given by Capt W. W. Seaton, Captain Veitch and W.O: II E. Fryer. These very competent men have a special knack of getting their information over to the class in such a way that when we get out in the field we don't have any difficulty in applying the lecture to our work. For instance, there are lectures on demolitions in the field, water supply, purification, setting up camps, mine warfare. These subjects from the practical point of view, are the finest kind of knowledge any sapper or N;C.O. can have. This training we are sure, would appeal to those of you that are mechanically minded and are young and would like to belong to the proud outfit we do, the R.C.E.

The day we arrived at Wainwright, we were met by the Service Corps, and transported to the camp proper. We were given a very fine chicken dinner, and, by the way, all the meals in this camp are very well prepared and are enjoyed by the men.

We slept in on Sunday after a very busy week of training, skiing and snow shoeing. Sailing down the snow covered slopes is certainly a fine way of spending winter We were issued with a very fine parka outfit upon arrival and it sure has proven its worth in this zero weather. The temperatures have been anywhere from zero to 49 degrees below zero. That is cold. We were also issued with snow-shoes, skis, moccasins, and overshoes. The skis and the snow-shoes seem to be very popular with the fellows, "Fellows," if you like 'the army, and like winter sports, summer sports, explosives, you are missing something by not being in the R.C.E.

We put on a demolition show for Major-General Penhale, G. O.C. The general seemed to enjoy himself and so did we. It was a lot of fun setting up the charges and watching half of a hill-side

go up in smoke and debris. It is quite a thrill to make up demolitions like that and be responsible for a thunderous blast of smoke and fire and debris. It was quite a sight to see the tons of material going skyward. The general, I am sure, thinks so too, and understands our enthusiasm.

Only part of the training is going on in the camp. Erecting derricks, and field engineering is one of the most interesting types of training. We learn all this as well and many other things in the R.C.E.

The camp is rather well put together. The men's quarters is gas heated, there is plenty of water for showers and plenty electric light. There is a canteen across the street from us and it sells everything a person wants in a camp. Spare time is used in skiing and snow shoeing and playing ping pong. This place always draws a good crowd in the evenings.

This camp breaks up for the season February 12. We are sorry to be leaving it. What we have seen and done here in regards to the winter training and Alberta. in general, has left a favorable impression on us.

We would stay on here indefinitely if we could but all good things must come to an end, so we will leave happy and look forward to the next training camp. With the knowledge and skill gained here, the next camp will be even better. We look forward to getting more out of it.

This has been a very brief report on the activities here, and of our attitude toward those activities. We feel as every outfit feels, that we would like to share our knowledge and fun with others.

So, you young fellows (18-40), how about joining up with us and our outfit. We would welcome you at any time in the R. C.E. and you would benefit, a hundred fold.

In addition to the Wainwright winter camp, there is a Royal Canadian School of Military Engineering at Chilliwack, B.C. The training there during the summer is for the reserve R.C.E.