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APPENDIX 4

Prior to the Reserve Army being called out on flood duty it became quite evident from the newspapers that the Fraser River was going to flood very badly and that the situation for all the people in the Fraser Valley was going to become very serious.

Volunteers were being called for hourly to help improve the dykes throughout the lower Fraser Valley and numerous rumors were flying of the reserve Army being called up. The unit commanders and senior N.C.Os were besieged with telephone calls about when we were to go out. The regiment was put on two hours' notice to move at noon on Saturday, May 29.



Movement order came through at 0430 hrs May 30 and we reported to the east

entrance to Lulu Island bridge at 0800, total strength being officers and ORs. The 6th Field Squadron figured they had 107 percent turnout, as they had seven men who had not attended a parade for over a year. We had been told to await further instructions at the above R.V., so we waited for two and one-half hours. No instructions were forthcoming, so at the request of local civilians we split into two groups, one went to the Imperial Oil warehouse and one to the foot of Jardine road both serious weak spots on Lulu Island.

With plenty of civilian volunteers help we filled and laid uncounted thousands of sandbags and built about 100 yards of plank under roadway across water-sogged fields up to the main dyke. Toward evening, under Lt.-Col. Minshall's personal direction, we started to drive sheet piling the front of the dyke at various weak spots in an attempt to block muskrat holes which were seriously weakening the dyke. While the effects of this effort were not immediately apparent, the dyke was strengthened against further onslaughts of the river. We assumed responsibility for this portion of the dyke until 0800 hrs, May 31 when we were to be relieved by the ~~smstemiakms~~ Westminster Regiment (R).

Administrative problems at this time were fairly great, as no one knew how long we were to be there or what exactly our role was. However, the 22nd Field Squadron played host to the 6th and the embryonic 54th Field Park, and SQMS Flatt for the meals and essential administration going. Major Allan Webster became chief scrounger and kept the supplies coming from many and varied sources.

May 31, 0800 hours, rest, and well earned, too. Most people had had little or no sleep Saturday night and no sleep Sunday night, and an unaccustomed broiling hot day in the sun all Sunday. We were scheduled to take over 24 hours on and 24 hours off, with the Westminster Regiment on Lulu Island, but as usual plans change, and at a meeting at 1500 hours May 31 the 7th Field Engineer Regiment was given responsibility for the South shore from Port Mann to the elevators



on the boundary of Delta Municipality. Lt.-Col. Minshall had been recalled to civilian life for urgent duty on flood work in the interior in connection with bridge construction. Major Allan Webster was appointed engineer advisor to Lt.-Col. Cummins of the Westminster Regiment, who was commander of Zone 6, which included Queensborough and the south shore in the vicinity of South Westminster. Major Allan was appointed commander of the South Westminster area. Thus we moved into Operation Shovel at 1900 hours, May 31.

Claude Harvie, former municipal engineer for Surrey, had been in charge of the diking for the South Westminster area before our arrival and had the situation for the immediate future well in hand on our arrival. He knew the area very well and had the support of all the local population, who had started sandbagged wells and installed pumps to take care of seepage.

There were several points where the river could be conveniently reached and much of the line of defense was railway trackage, which greatly assisted transportation of sandbags and saved the long carrying which was necessary on Queensborough.

The main points of attack were:

- (1) The Great Northern Railway, which at this time was sufficient dyke to hold the water.
- (2) A secondary dyke which was in the process of being constructed with dump trucks through the Timberland Mill from the Great Northern tracks to the main dyke of the river. This was necessitated because the main dyke along the river between Timberland and the elevators was in very poor condition and already breached in several places. The land there was all bush country and could be sacrificed without damage. This decision had been made on May 31 by Mr. Starr, the recently appointed municipal engineer, and work had gone ahead immediately to complete it before high tide at 0400 hours, June 1. This was a terrific task, but by the use of the whole Timberlands Mill crew and all available dump trucks in the area it was completed as a temporary Job.
- (3) The foot of Tannery road where two 4-inch pumps had been installed, with tractors providing the motor power.
- (4) The Brownsville Mill at the foot of the Old Tale road where a 20-inch pump was being installed, but which was not yet working.

- (5) Under the Pattullo bridge, where sluice gate and a permanent 8 -inch pump were installed. At this point there was an 8-foot head of water against the main dyke. This was the main danger point at this time, but plans had been laid to sandbag along the railway outside the main dyke should it fail. Bags were placed in readiness for this operation and a 24-hour watch maintained.
- (6) The section from the Pattullo bridge to Flannagan's Mill was covered by the raised C.N.R. railroad bed, which was in good shape.
- (7) The foot of Flannagan's road to the C.N.R. Port Mann shops. This section was reinforced along the railway tracks by a sandbag wall varying in height from 8 inches to 3.5 feet.
- (8) The Bergstrom road, which had been raised by dumping loose sand about one foot.
- (9) The area to the east of Bergstrom road was higher till you came to Port Mann, which was already flooded.

This dyke system, about two-thirds of which had been planned and built in the past 48 hours, protected an area about six miles long and varying in width from one to two miles.



Fortunately the dyking was well in hand, because we were given the responsibility at 1900 hrs May 31 and high tide was about 0330 hrs June 1. Local civilians, who had had little if any sleep recently, were on watch at all points. The local civilians included all ages from seven years to one old gentleman with a long white beard who was 81 years old and was packing sandbags along with everyone else.

A sandpit was organized and functioning with two power shovels at various points for loading sandbags by hand.

The ladies of the district had canteens organized and one hall at which 40 beds were available for volunteer workers.

Our take-over was of necessity gradual. None of us had more than four hours sleep for two days. Our administration was somewhat rocky and no one knew the area, nor had we had more than a casual look at it in daylight. The nights of May 31, June 1 we stood by for any emergency till after high tide. No emergency occurred so we retired for some sleep when the water cleared the sandbag dyke on the main river.

At 0700 hrs June 1, we got a call of a break through at Timberlands. Lieut. George Peck was despatched with a section to repair it. The reports on the progress were all different, but indicated that it was not of a major nature. Finally it became clear that it was a major break about 20 feet long and with a 4-foot head of water against it, and another section was despatched with local

civilian help it was patched at 1000 hrs, but it then broke again, and it was not until 1430 hours that it was finally repaired. To effect this repair Peak drove 4x4 stakes in at the rear and then just piled sandbags in front of them. Some 2500 sandbags were used. We then realized that the high tide water took about three hours to come across the bush country to the temporary dyke and the Great Northern tracks from the main river. Rather Late! However, a major catastrophe was narrowly averted.

The water which came through this break was sufficient to flood the surrounding countryside and the roads in places had one foot of water on them. It was only necessary to close one short stretch of road, which was only used by sightseers, so our operations were not impaired except that the trucks hauling material were practically without brakes at all times, and as they had to use the main road up the valley we were lucky to have no accidents.

We attempted to set up wireless communications with our own 19 sets to Port Mann and Timberlands, but our operators, having had only two hours a week for about six weeks, training, were not up to the task.

Tuesday, June 1 was spent pouring material into Timberlands, which -was the chief weak point, and also to Port Mann shops and Flannagan's, The improvised dyke at Timberlands was built up and reinforced. In the afternoon and evening volunteer labor started to arrive and our headquarters at Shepherd's Garage became a mad house. One room served as a canteen, a



headquarters, a labor exchange, a telephone exchange, a despatching office for trucks and a complaint bureau for all the surrounding countryside, all at one and the same time.

Supplies of sandbags were very good and we had only to ask to receive - -this was good.

The volunteer labor was unpredictable, some of the organization was appalling, but a lot of willingness and eagerness made up for it and we accomplished a tremendous amount of

work and passed another night without incident. Even the late tide at the Great Northern tracks didn't catch us napping this time. However, there was a lot of water piled up against the Great Northern tracks and it was washing through the navyjack ballast. June 2 the Great Northern track crews raised the track and we started sandbagging along the side of the track. The water was coming up all the time, every day another couple of inches. We were filling and laying about 35,000 sandbags a day in the area and had about eight dump trucks operating eight hours a day

as well as up to 15 flat-deck trucks and several light deliveries. Response to appeals for volunteers was wonderful. By this time we had an electrical crew operating, which was working 20 hours a day installing lighting at all vantage points throughout the area with both mobile generating sets and by tapping existing lines. Our sand pit was lit by a double 25 KVA generating set and looked like a playground.

We called in Capt. Innes, R.C.C.S., to set up a radio network for us, but his efforts were to no avail. There was too much local interference and communications were not positive, we eventually resorted to field telephones to all vantage points.

We installed two more small 6-inch pumps at the foot of Tannery road, but the water level was still high and the roads flooded. The pump at Brownsville was not yet operation. We had to get a new man in charge of the installation and finally got it operating June 3. This made a tremendous difference to the pumping capacity. At the same time, after rushing headlong into some local politics, we were able to get a 14-inch and a 12-inch pump installed near the foot of Tannery Road. Between these we were able to dry up the area and remove the flooding from the road which had been so dangerous to the traffic.

We now set in to reorganize ourselves and we drew up duty rosters and released such personnel as we could who had to get back to their civilian jobs.

But the June 3 and June 4 volunteers were beginning to drop off; they were all tired out. Our task was becoming more difficult. The Great Northern brought in two work trains loaded with sand and we built a sandbag wall two and one-half feet wide by five feet deep along three-quarters of a mile of the track. The railway had a 40-man crew on 24 -hours a day, but we had to supply sandbags and shovels as well as some supervision and up to 120 voluntary laborers. We finally eliminated all seepage through the track.

In addition we helped to raise the secondary dykes through Timberlands to a roadway wall 11 feet wide by about six and one-half feet deep, all built up with sandbags so that seepage wouldn't wash it out. The Timberlands crew looked after reinforcing the main dyke across the front of their area.

The water kept on rising every night. The local civilians had organized and were looking after Flannigan road and the Port Mann area, but we had supervision on at all times and whenever possible we assisted them with manpower.

Civilians and civilian trucks did not always report on and off at Shepherds, so it was almost impossible to keep accurate track of what we actually had in the area. We then appointed Sgt. A. Duncan and one of the local truck drivers to look after the supply of materials to all points. We kept a section standing by with a full load of filled sandbags at all high tides in case of emergency. They were used only once, but in that instant they prevented a major crisis developing by being on the spot in time.

June 4 was spent in preparing our organization to build up all dykes over the week-end, when we expected to have plenty of volunteer labor. The peak tides were expected on Wednesday, June 9,

and Thursday, June 10, and we had to be ready. The inrush of labor did not arrive, but we made good use of what we did have and by June 7 we had:

- (1) Reinforced the whole Timberlands area to a point we considered safe.
- (2) Laid a dyke one foot by three and one-half feet high from Timberlands to the shingle mill east of Tannery Road.
- (3) Reinforced the area under the Pattullo bridge.
- (4) Built up along the railway track near the gypsun plant and near the Royal City Mills and tied through to the foot of Flannigan road.
- (5) Built up and reinforced the whole wall from Flannigan's road to the Part Yana shops.
- (6) Started building up the road one and one-half feet into the Port Lean shops with dump truck and sandbar, on edge.
- (7) Built up the Bergstrom road another one foot with loose sand which was compacted with a bulldozer and trucks.

June 7, 8 and 9 was spent in reinforcing, particularly in the area immediately around the Port Mann shops, on the Port Mann road near the Bergstrom road and on the temporary dyke across Timberland.

In the meantime a small track crew was working on raising the Great North track dyke. We kept them supplied with material through the rail crossing at Tannery road.

Fortunately the weather throughout was clear and fine, with no wind, so our working conditions were ideal, particularly in the evening.

By Wednesday, June 9 we had tied in all dykes and raised them to a point at least six inches above the anticipated high water level and established dumps of filled sandbags at all points where we could get down to the dyke. We passed another night successfully.

It was during this period that we ran into our first major supply problem. We have been short of flashlights for some time, but through the efforts of our electrical crew, who did wonderful work and the use of lanterns we had been able to get by. Now we had need of 150 shovels, about 50 urgently and 100 for use in case of a serious emergency. We had great difficulty in keeping shovels on the jobs, as the local populace figured their need was greater than ours. We ordered 150 shovels-- three days later we received 20 shovels. We raised a fuss. We were accused (1) giving them to the Great Northern because we owned share in it - -untrue (2) selling shovels on the black market; and were asked for a daily report on the market quotation for shovels we have not yet had a major emergency - -thank God,

We also got involved to a minor extent with local politics on the subject of special police who had been appointed without any authority by a local leading citizen. After various deputations had put in their appearance, we finally obtained some local special police, duly appointed, but in the meantime it fell to our lot to provide traffic control police for three days.

Thursday, June 10, passed without incident. We built up a stock pile of filled bags in the sand pit Friday morning at high tide the water was lower than the day before and that crisis was passed.

Friday and Saturday were spent in routine maintenance, and on Sunday we turned over to a permanent force detachment and Operation Shovel was completed as far as the 7th Field Engineer Regiment was concerned - -we hope.

During the two-week period we had filled and laid in excess of 500,000 sandbags, established lighting and communications throughout the area, repaired one bad break and averted another. Few members of the unit worked less than an average of 12 hours a day and many worked far in excess of it.

We had no unpleasant incidents with any of the local population. There was one case of suspected attempted looting, but we were unable to catch the suspects, two young boys. The efforts of one of the politicians in the area to run down the army seriously affected the number of volunteers from Vancouver and New Westminster for a couple of days, but fortunately we had enough volunteers in our immediate area who knew the truth to handle the situation.

Unaided, any effort we could have put out would have been futile, but thanks to the wonderful co-operation of civilian volunteer workers and local civilian authorities we were instrumental in saving untold misery and destruction in the South Westminster area.