

Clearly, the Toronto Military Show, now in its 14th year, is a mostly testosterone event. Men line up for even the 6:30 a.m. early entrance and pay \$25 vs. the more popular \$7 fee for entrance at 8:30 a.m. Some men bring their sons; some, their wives. Regardless, the show has something for collectors of every age, sex, bent, and pocket book, from pure militaria from the World Wars, to North American Native art, and folk art like pairs of picture frames with hand-carved military images. (The Fall 2011 version occurred September 17 at the Etobicoke Olympium, 590 Rathburn Road.)

Most importantly, the show offers all visitors a visual and tactile history lesson. It feels good to run a finger along the silver of a rifle on a WWI frame and experience vicariously the carving of it. It feels good to clutch the

coarse fabric of a WWII uniform and be thankful you don't have to wear it. It feels good to feel the heaviness and pitted texture of an early Native stone axe head and wonder what skulls it cracked.

Collector Mark Murphy, Windsor, Ontario, was touring the show for the first time. He ferrets out "Canadian-type stuff" like Essex Scottish Regiment material and other Canadian military equipment from WWII.

Burt Lewis, Toronto, has been coming to the show for six years now. He is also particular. He hunts for Crimean War material, as his ancestors served in the war. Sir Colin Campbell of the Highland Brigade was in command of the battle portrayed in *The Thin Red Line*, and Lewis carries the movie poster with him as a reminder.

On the other hand, senior Bob Simpson,

Loretto, Ontario, thinks big. He owns two WWII jeeps, a 1943 MB and a 1952 M38. He also owns a M106 trailer for his jeeps and two WWII 10-set radios with aerials on top. For his recent birthday he got a WWII Canadian or British battle dress of jacket and pants like the WWI example hanging in the booth of EMEDALS.ca, Burlington, Ontario. But the WWI example came with provenance. It belonged to Canadian-born Lieutenant John H. Smith of the Royal Flying Corps, and was \$2,500.

Many booths offered standard uniforms, weapons, photos, badges, etc. But one of the more inviting booths was that of the ubiquitous Sally and Sam Stuart, Brooklin, Ontario. Their variety included a \$125, WWII, carved, wooden male figure, Philippines, sent back to California during the war; a few knives of Military Show continues on page 48

The Toronto Military Show

A haven for history buffs
by John Norris



E.MEDALS.ca, Burlington, Ontario, offered a Royal Flying Corps WWI uniform of Canadian-born Lieutenant John H. Smith for \$2,500.



Terry Wallace, Watford, Ontario, knew (large) size did not count. His Boer War cap badge to the Lord Strathcona Horse Cavalry Regiment, 1899-1902, was \$1,000. "It's very hard to get and it was used from 1903-1901 only," he said.

Military Antiquarian Ianya Ursula, Kenora, Ontario, offered a "very rare," framed, Canadian Expeditionary Force, recruitment poster, 199th Battalion, Irish Canadian Rangers, Montreal, for \$675.

Mike Krupa, Toronto, had a Porter, New York, 1851 patent, repeating turret rifle with completely unique design, the lever of which Winchester later adapted, at \$10,000. (Refer to L. Winant's *Tirannos Curiosa*.)

Among Sam and Sally Stuart's potpourri of militaria was a \$125 WWII Philippines wood-carved male figure sent back to California at the time.

Military show continued...

every size and description from \$65-\$385; paper memorabilia, such as a certificate for serving under George V at \$85; canes from \$145-\$225; three photo albums from \$175-\$400, the latter with three images of Rommel inside; a circa 1830, Toronto, red and cream drum at a bargain \$125; and a \$275, three-piece red uniform with provenance: It belonged to Lieutenant-Colonel W.T. Brown.

Not for sale were very historic items in the booth of The Canadian Military Studies Museum, Limehouse, Ontario, directed by the very knowledgeable Frank Grant. He had a Titanic life ring/buoy, stowed aboard lifeboat #109, which washed up on shore two months after the sinking; the White Star Line's CPO's life jacket whistle, seen in the movie *Titanic*; the *London Free Press* issue, April 20, 1912; huge American Civil War Bowie knives and cases;

"Lovely" Jaime Cline, manager of Marway Militaria, Inc. had flown from Winnipeg just to exhibit at the show. Her \$575 tunic and trousers belonged to Major Fife of the 141st Battalion, Rainy River, Ontario, later Colonel of the Kanosa Light Infantry.

Robert Boyle Antiques, Mississauga, Ontario, was asking \$6,000 for his 1860 case containing a Colt army pistol, actually used in the American Civil War, bullets, flask, etc.

a large, Sioux, heavy, buffalo skinning knife with bone handle, and beads and quillwork on the sheath, circa 1850-80; a Northwest Trading, Montreal, trade axe, circa 1800; the very uniform of Lieutenant-General Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1890-1969; a Macedonian iron helmet, circa 1000-1200 B.C., typical at the siege of Troy; and a rare Sioux peace pipe in the form of a soapstone carving of a buffalo with hole in the hump, circa 1850-80, where the pipe would be inserted, then smoked to symbolize the spirit of the animal.

Related were two small Iroquois pouches, early 20th century, \$80 and \$100, and a few points/arrowheads, circa 1900, at \$12 each, in the booth of Reyn Richardson, Shelburne, Ontario.

At every Toronto Military Show, the Etobicoke Olympium bristles with frenetic energy. Dealers gossip with their peers, with collectors, who, in turn, gossip with other collectors. It's a fraternity, a reunion of spirits well worth attending.

Tim and Jean Burt of Hamwic House, Fergus, Ontario, offered a selection of English Viking brooches, 800-1100 A.D., to hold the clothes together on the upper shoulder, ranging from \$100-\$200.

"It's just a hobby with me," said Jim Johnson, Melbourn, Ontario, whose helmet and cap badges and plates ranged from \$65 to \$450 for a 30th Wellington Rifles helmet plate. "All are scarce," he said.

Some of the best historical material was in the booth of the Canadian Military Studies Museum, Limehouse, Ontario. Included were Titanic items, with a life ring/preserver stowed aboard lifeboat #10. It washed ashore two months after the Titanic sank, and was NIS.

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