



**REDCOATS MEET PLAINS INDIANS** A statue depicting the establishment of friendly relations between the NWMP and the Indians sits atop a hill overlooking Fort Walsh. A visitor's centre, located nearby, provides a record of the history of Fort Walsh and events which occurred in the surrounding Cypress Hills.

Photos by Chris Paul, friend of Bill Mellberg and professional photographer

on to Fort Macleod, one of the earliest outposts of the Force, in the foothills of the Rockies. Our last stop was Fort Steele, near Cranbrook, British Columbia. At each of these sites, the history of the Force came alive, and the accounts of so many books took on new meaning.

It is unfortunate that Hollywood has ignored or misrepresented the true story of the Force, and the many bigger-than-life individuals who are so much a part of its history. Yet, in some respects the myths are not all that bad. While the image of Nelson Eddy singing "The Mounties", at the head of a column of mounted policemen might be a bit embarrassing, it is better than the image Chicago still suffers of a city controlled by Al Capone and his mobsters. Most Americans have never heard the motto, "Maintiens le droit." But even if their popular image of the Mounties is a somewhat false one, at least that romantic view is still one which commands respect. If only Americans could be convinced that Canada still has Mounties who ride in automobiles like police everywhere!

I am grateful to those individuals who have helped to enhance my own knowledge of the Force — its history as well as its role in today's changing society. My image of Sergeant Preston is gone forever. But in its place are names such as Sam Steele, Alick Pennycuik, Edgar Millen, and Francis Fitzgerald. More importantly, when I think of the Mounties now, I think of those women of Troop 14, standing proudly at their graduation, and of the other recruits I saw in Regina. Not everyone could withstand the mental and physical challenges they meet at Depot and throughout their careers.

Canadians have cause to be proud of the Force. For the Mounties are more than a part of folklore. They are a vital part of Canada's history... and of its future. I recommend the Red Coat Trail to anyone interested in following a great, true Mountie story. ■

*Bill Mellberg is a political satirist and impersonator from the Chicago, Illinois, area. He has a keen interest in the Force, its history and traditions. — Ed.*