



Letters to the editor ...



ROBBIE

Dear Editor,

This is in reference to the article by ex-S/Sgt. G.L. Soper which was featured on page 28 of Vol. 59, No. 3, Summer 1994 edition of the *Quarterly*. Recently, Insp. C. Butt (retired) brought this article to my attention, and loaned me his copy of the *Quarterly* so that I could read it. We are both of the opinion that the man referred to as "Robbie" in the article was my late father — Reg. No. 12263, ex-Constable Ernest Wilson Roberts, who had worked in the Carpenters' Shop at Marine Division, in Halifax.

I would like very much to confirm that the person referred to in this story was indeed my late father, who passed away on September 18, 1968, of a heart attack (see *Quarterly* Obituaries, Vol. 34, No. 3, January 1969.)

I know that my father was sent out from Halifax into the Northwest Territories (Fort Smith and other locations) in 1948/49, to inspect and report on RCMP patrol vessels and to make recommendations on whether they should be maintained, repaired or condemned. He received this assignment on the basis of his vast experience with small marine craft, such as those in service with the Force. Prior to the RCMP Marine Division, he had served with the old Canadian Customs Services, the fore-runner of the RCMP Marine Division.

From September 6, 1939, my father served as a Warrant Officer in the RCAF Marine

Division, with the 102nd Marine Squadron, based at the RCAF Station in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, for the duration of World War II, returning to the RCMP Marine Division in September 1945.

After reading your article, I was convinced that the "Robbie" referred to was indeed my father, and considering that the manpower strength of the RCMP Marine Division was quite small at that time, it seemed unlikely that anyone else with that name could have been sent to Fort Smith in 1948.

Just to set the record straight: although most people who knew him called him "Robbie", my father also went by the nickname of "Essie", not "Ezzie", as indicated in the article. Also, he was not a Newfoundlander, but a Gaspésien from Ship Head, Gaspé County (Quebec) — although, given the distinctive accents peculiar to both regions, it is understandable that someone unfamiliar with the areas might confuse the two. There were many Gaspésiens in the RCMP Marine Division, with names like Roberts, Coffins and Boulet. My father was a smoker; he smoked cigarettes but never, to my knowledge, did he ever smoke a pipe, as the article suggests.

The following are some facts about my late father which coincide perfectly with your article:

- he wore the blue barret of the Marine Section;
- he always carried a well-used jackknife wherever he went;