

RCMP "Geritol Gang" takes Namibia by storm

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When the announcement came over the news that October night, my first thought was, "How I wish I was still in the Force, I would have volunteered to go." The announcement was that the RCMP would be sending 100 police officers to Namibia, South-West Africa on a joint peace-keeping mission with the United Nations (UN). Our members would be gone for six months, serving as observers during the course of the Namibian general election.

Many times during the fall, there were news items about the RCMP troop in Namibia and I found myself wishing I was still a member. Imagine my surprise when I received a telephone call on November 3, 1989, asking me if I'd like to be part of a 10-person team of ex-members going to.... Namibia!

To suddenly come out of retirement along with nine other veterans of the Force and go to Windhoek, Namibia was, to put it mildly, a **surprise!** We had one thing in common — experience in fingerprinting and identification.

The call was from a member of St. John's Identification Section asking if I was the member who had worked in Ident. Section several years before. As I was that member, I was asked if I would be interested in working for the Force in Namibia, Africa, looking at a "few" fingerprints, and was instructed to call Chief Superintendent Bruce King, Identification Services, Ottawa, for additional information.

I called C/Supt. King, who assured me he would refer my name to Staffing and

Personnel Branch and they would contact me. Staff Sergeant Dale Smith, Staffing, called next, exchanged information with me and told me someone would call again the next day.

Smith called me again on Saturday with my instructions. He told me to bring \$500 (U.S.) cash, to pack lightweight cotton clothing, that I would be gone approximately two weeks, and to be at St. John's Airport the next morning for a 06:25 flight. Smith also told me to call Frank Pierpont in St. John's, because he was going too. We were to go to the Chimo Hotel when we arrived in Ottawa on Sunday evening and would be picked up there Monday morning. The rest of Saturday was frantic. Finding \$500 in American funds was bad enough, but trying to locate lightweight cotton clothing in Newfoundland in November is no easy chore! Packing, making arrangements for someone to look after my real estate business, making necessary phone calls, and trying to get some sleep kept me occupied. After about three hours sleep, it was time to go to the airport.

I met Pierpont at the airport; we flew to Ottawa, and checked into the Chimo. After a meal, we located some of the other exmembers who were going to Namibia: ex-Staff Sergeants Ken Anderson (White Rock, B.C.), Ward Bertram (Vernon, B.C.), Jim Smith (Sherwood, P.E.I.), ex-Sergeants Pat Dornan (Truro, N.S.) and Carl Potter (Pickering, Ont.), and spent the evening together, catching up on each other's news since