

l'Esprit Cavalier

by S/Sgt. C. Walker



SINCE 1873, the year the North West Mounted Police came into existence, much history of our Canadian West has been written, and prominent among those who first opened up the North West are certain members of that Force.

Some 300 strong, the first police personnel established a reputation which is enjoyed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police today. They brought law and order to a vast expanse of prairie—then the habitat of Indian and buffalo. With other duties of importance, the protection of the white settler was an ever-present and urgent one. That those duties were performed zealously and well in face of danger and hardship the pages of history testify.

Reg. No. 11632 S/Sgt. Cecil Walker is riding master at the main R.C.M.P. training centre, "Depot" Division, Regina, Sask. He engaged in the Force in 1932 from the former Alberta Provincial Police, of which he was a member for several years, and prior to that served seven years in the 12th Royal Lancers (Imperial Army) during which time he obtained an instructor's certificate from the Weedon School of Equitation, England. In 1927, while a member of the Salford City Constabulary in England, he was awarded championship trophy in a class for Best Mounted Constable at the Royal Horse Show, Olympia, London—a competition open to provincial and metropolitan police forces. His ability and knowledge of equitation have proved to be of a high standard, and since coming to Canada he has won wide recognition in horse shows held in the three prairie provinces.

These men had little if any training to prepare them for their duties, so that considering the highly technical subjects on today's training curriculum—and the sciences used as aids in criminal investigation—the veteran of the '70's was at a decided disadvantage. However, he did possess certain qualifications and was expected to be familiar with one basic science or art upon joining the Force—namely, horsemanship. And, surprising as it may seem today, this qualification appears to have been rated of equal importance to that of physique. A diligent study of *Rules and Regulations*, after appointment, would probably be the limit of police technique and knowledge expected.

Aged records reveal items of interest penned by officers then serving, items that convey vividly problems encountered and seemingly insurmountable difficulties that constantly presented themselves. Into those comments have gone spicy bits of humour, wit, and occasionally a modicum of veiled sarcasm.

A major difficulty was the standard of horsemanship, Commissioner French implies in his report of January, 1875: