

**THE GLAMOUR AND THE HORROR:
A SOCIAL HISTORY OF WARTIME
NORTHWESTERN BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1939 - 1945**

by

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ABSTRACT

During the Second World War, the communities of Prince Rupert and Prince George, British Columbia underwent a dramatic social transformation. Both towns were chosen as sites for Canadian and American military bases; the arrival of the military more than doubled the populations in these communities, created stress on existing recreational facilities, and brought the isolated inhabitants into contact with many different people. These were the circumstances surrounding daily wartime social relations in Prince George and Prince Rupert. This thesis is a social history of these two communities which became hubs where many segments of military and civilian society converged: Americans, Canadians, volunteers, conscripts, women in uniform, young civilian men, white civilian women, and Native women.

Through the use of oral history interviews and a variety of written sources, including newspapers, city council minutes, diaries and military records, this thesis argues that national wartime issues led to a segmentation of society in these base towns. People ceased to be seen as individuals, rather as representatives of the groups in which they were placed. This divisiveness of society affected social relations; it manifested itself everywhere -- in the beer halls, ballrooms, and businesses of Prince George and Prince Rupert. By examining recreational events, gender relations and crime, this thesis demonstrates that the social relations borne out of segmentation were diverse, ranging from extreme glamour to the horrors of assault.

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Introduction

In recent years, the Second World War has re-emerged in popular media and historiography.¹ Perhaps this should not be surprising, as World War II was one of the few events in history that involved the world on such a large scale. Globally, there were few people unaffected by the war, and the ramifications of it reach us today. In Canada, a young country in 1939, the war had a great impact on its history and definition. Canada suffered more than 40,000 deaths², yet for those on the home front, many have said, "I wouldn't have missed it for the world."³ Although civilians in Canada mourned the death of loved ones who fought and died overseas, they appeared to have reveled in their own war experiences on the home front.

The very nature of the word 'home front' implies that civilians were relatively safe in Canada, but were united in their own theatre of war – to supply and support the men who would defeat the Axis. Thus, historians and participants often propagate the idea that there was a singularity of aims and experience on the home front, disregarding individual beliefs and social divisions. This is evident in the terms used to describe the events and activities on the home front; the 'war effort', 'keeping the home fires burning', and 'for the duration'.⁴ These terms imply that social relations in Canada were suspended for the war, when in fact the war often heightened conflicts on the home front, as this thesis will demonstrate. This notion of singularity also neglects the many distinct

¹ A discussion of the historiography follows; in popular media, the interest Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* and Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line* has generated points to a renewed interest in World War II.

² WAB Douglas, *Out of the Shadows, Canada in the Second World War* (Toronto: Dundern Press, 1995), 288. Army: 22 971, Airforce: 17 101, Navy 2 024.

³ Barry Broadfoot, *Six War Years* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1974) vii.

⁴ See Bruce, Jean. *Back the Attack: Canadian Women During the Second World War – at Home and Abroad*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1985 and Pierson, Ruth Roach. *"They're Still Women After All": The*

groups that made up wartime society in Canada, not the least of which were Canadian and American servicemen and women who were stationed on the home front at bases stretching from Goose Bay to Victoria.

This thesis uses the communities of Prince George and Prince Rupert, British Columbia, as loci for examining the intricacies of wartime society and military-civilian relations in the Second World War. The establishment of Canadian and American bases in the towns of Prince George and Prince Rupert vastly changed the nature of society in Northwestern British Columbia. The citizens struggled with the task of housing and entertaining military personnel, and also the less tangible task of incorporating this new element of society into their lives. Yet, contrary to what one might expect of the home front, the residents of Prince George and Prince Rupert did not wholeheartedly embrace all of these newcomers as part of the 'war effort'; rather they carefully delineated which sections of the military they would accept, and how they would be treated. Perhaps this was a coping strategy for the citizens to deal with their new status as a base town; however, the way the townspeople distinguished acceptability between Americans and Canadians, and conscripts and volunteers, point to national concerns. Not to mention that soldiers also coded wartime society according to larger national issues: for example the prevalent racism towards First Nations Peoples, and the campaign to chastise men who had not enlisted. Thus, both soldiers and civilians contributed to the compartmentalization of wartime society in Prince Rupert and Prince George that affected daily social relations. Due to this segmentation, the subsequent relations proved to be both satisfying and disheartening. The dichotomy of experience is one element this

Second World War and Canadian Womanhood. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc, 1986 for the usage of these terms.

thesis will address. This dichotomy is evident from the title of this thesis, "The Glamour and the Horror", a derivation of the title of the controversial CBC series "The Valour and the Horror." The elation and abomination of war was not limited to the battlefield, but was evident in the home front as well. When young, anxious soldiers were added to small, isolated, northern communities, a range of social interactions resulted: from a glamorization of romance to the horrors of assault.

This thesis is written at a time where there is a Second World War "home front boom" in western historiography.⁵ Roger Lotchin assesses these studies in the United States in his article, "The Historians' War or the Home Front's War?: Some Thoughts for Western Historians." He analyzes home front literature written over the last twenty years and concludes that although this literature is original because it treats subjects previously ignored or neglected, it "lacks diversity and context."⁶ He lists subjects which have garnered much attention, such as the role of Hollywood, and subjects which require more thought and analysis, such as urban and transportation studies. Lotchin also questions the validity of the transformation hypothesis, the theory that the war 'transformed' the west in a progressive way. He concludes that "much of the experience of the war led to neither a gloomy nor a glowing future; it was, instead remarkably ephemeral."⁷ However, although Lotchin reviews what has been studied, and what should be studied, he does not mention the aspect of military-civilian relations in newly formed 'base towns'. This is one area of the home front that merits more study. The presence of the military, or what is sometimes called an 'army of occupation' if the army is friendly but

⁵ Roger W. Lotchin, "The Historian's War or the Home Front's War?: Some thought for Western Historians" in Western Historical Quarterly (1995), 185.

⁶ Ibid., 186.

⁷ Ibid., 195.

foreign, presents an incongruity to home front studies. As mentioned previously, historians and participants often write about the home front as a place away from battle and military ideals, yet when there is occupation of civilian space, the two fronts are juxtaposed.

However, Lotchin's assessment ignores one groundbreaking study of society where this juxtaposition occurred: Beth Bailey and David Farber's The First Strange Place: Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii. The book's first purpose is to study cultural contact in Hawaii which, the authors argue, was a 'strange place', a place of extremes. In Hawaii, there was not one identity; people were divided by gender, race, class, nationality and religion. Thus, the authors create a multicultural history, a history of "the ways people meet, act, interact, and thereby form the warp and woof of American history."⁸ The First Strange Place is organized into five thematic essays which all deal with this broader topic. Although the area of military-civilian social relations is not the authors' primary interest, much can be gleaned about it from these five essays. The strategic importance of the Hawaiian Islands as a staging area brought almost a million servicemen and women there throughout the Second World War.⁹ The authors contend that Hawaii was not a true 'home front', for it was too close to the Pacific war zone, and was under martial law for most of the war, resulting in the control of the civilian population and general 'war nerves'.¹⁰ However, with the exception of the Bailey/Farber study, American historians have been slow to examine military-civilian relations.

⁸ Beth Bailey & David Farber, The First Strange Place: Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 18.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 27 – 29. Military rule in Hawaii lasted from December 7, 1941 to October 24, 1944.

In contrast, Australian scholars have viewed this paradigm as essential in their historiography for a number of years. Perhaps this is not surprising since Australia was chosen as the base of the American Pacific operations in 1942, with about one million American servicemen passing through a country with a population of only eight million.¹¹ One of the premier historians on military-civilian relations between Australians and Americans is Marilyn Lake. She has written several articles and given several papers on this subject. In one of her articles, "The Desire for a Yank: Sexual Relations between Australian Women and American Servicemen during World War II" she uses diaries, advertisements and popular women's magazines to look at why so many Australian women actively sought out American soldiers for romantic relationships. This is a departure from the historiography of military-civilian relations in Australia as she explains that most studies focus on either the impact of American defense policy on Australia or the attempt by various organizations to control vice and stop the exploitation of Australian women.¹² This article refutes the notion that US servicemen victimized women. Instead, the women were the initiators of romance and sexual liaison, because, as Lake concludes, Hollywood had a pre-war role as coding American men as glamorous lovers. Furthermore, the military dress quelled individuality and objectified the soldiers, allowing women to visually judge them. Thus, there was a reversal of gender stereotypes as men were now viewed as sex objects.¹³ In another article, Lake is more forward in arguing that "the stationing of foreign troops in a country has the effect of sexualizing the

¹¹ Marilyn Lake, "The Desire for a Yank: Sexual Relations between Australian Women and Servicemen during World War II" in Journal of the History of Sexuality (1992), 621.

¹² Ibid., 622.

¹³ Ibid., 627 – 632.

local female population.”¹⁴ This is one lens with which to study the impact of the American services on the Australian home front.

This is not to say that consensual romantic and sexual relationships were the only elements involved in relations between Australian civilians and the US military. Michael Sturma considers the darker aspects of the army of occupation in his 1989 article, “Loving the Alien: The Underside of Relations Between American Servicemen and Australian Women in Queensland, 1942 – 1945.” In this article he looks at such factors as competition and violence between American and Australian servicemen over Australian women, the spread of venereal disease and the intimidation of women. He argues that sexual assault was the extreme in a “continuum of coercion.”¹⁵ He also cites day-to-day harassment and economic exploitation as being on this continuum. Sturma does not attribute this sort of unseemly behavior just to individual soldiers; he sees it as a broad-based representation of American militarization. He argues that the presence of an occupying army inherently entailed a measure of violence and exploitation, and such things as sexual assault “often exemplify (albeit in an exaggerated form) certain attitudes and values, a style of social interaction, which can be taken as representative of many American soldiers.”¹⁶ The two different conceptions that Lake and Sturma put forth about military-civilian relations in Australia demonstrate the breadth of the topic, and the contradictions--agency versus victimization--that are inherent to it.

The studies discussed above are quite specific in location and circumstance, but there are two very good general studies of the social aspects of the Second World War,

¹⁴ Marilyn Lake, “Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II” in Australian Historical Studies (1992), 275.

¹⁵ Michael Sturma, “Loving the Alien: The Underside of Relations Between American Servicemen and Australian Women in Queensland, 1942 – 1945” in Journal of Australian Studies (1989), 6.

which could be applied to many nations' home front studies. The first of these is John Costello's Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed our Social and Sexual Attitudes. This is an expansive study of sexuality and shifting gender roles based mostly on American and British material. He covers many topics including the role of popular culture, whirlwind marriages, illegitimate births, and the impact of American GIs in Britain and Australia. As the title suggests, Costello ascribes to the transformation hypothesis that Lotchin describes. Costello argues that "the impact of 'total war' on people's lives proved to be so pervasive that it became a powerful accelerator of the process of social change."¹⁷ Yet, in his concluding chapter, 'The Seeds of Sexual Revolution', he is rather vague about how sexual morals were permanently changed. In dealing with areas of women's emancipation he states that equality eluded women after World War II, but it laid the groundwork for women's liberation in the 1970s.¹⁸ Throughout the study Costello uses primary accounts garnered from magazine articles, letters and other sources which presents an immediacy to the topic, and a form of identification for the reader.

In this respect, Paul Fussell's Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War is similar to Virtue Under Fire. A veteran of World War II, Fussell uses oral histories and other primary accounts to relate the horrors and confusion of war. His aim is to investigate the "psychological and emotional culture of Americans and Britons...[and the] intense frustration of desire in wartime and some of the means by

¹⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹⁷ John Costello, Virtue Under Fire: How World War II changed our Social and Sexual Attitudes, (Toronto: Little, Brown & Company, 1985), 2.

¹⁸ Ibid., 274.

which desire was satisfied.”¹⁹ This book is largely written the point of view of a soldier stationed overseas on the battlefield. Although many topics are covered, each conveys the sense of puzzlement, dread, and anxiety soldiers felt. However, there are some areas in the book, such as the chapter entitled ‘Drinking Far too Much, Copulating too Little’, which describe military-civilian relations through oral histories and written accounts. In this chapter Fussell concludes that romantic relationships were risky in an “ambience of public puritanism and sexual anxiety.”²⁰ Although sometimes clouded by Fussell’s biases, this book presents a rare glimpse into a combat soldier’s mind, indeed exploring understanding and behavior in World War II.

In Canada, military and social historians have largely ignored military-civilian relations in World War II. Instead, most histories focus on the regimental and military aspect of Canada’s involvement.²¹ Even the advances since the 1970s in women’s and gender history have ignored home front relations and have mainly measured wartime society by women’s changing economic conditions, and the change in status inherent in them. Within the limited literature on women in Canada during World War II, historians have focussed on those who enlisted in the services and took on munitions or factory work, resulting in an imbalance of historical inquiry as the majority of women did not engage in either of those occupations. In the definitive study of Canadian women during World War II, entitled They’re Still Women After All: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood, Ruth Roach Pierson focuses on both these occupations in assessing the impact of the war on women’s emancipation. After detailed discussions of

¹⁹ Paul Fussell, Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), ix.

²⁰ Ibid., 107.

government and military policy towards women in war work, the services, and to a lesser extent homemakers/consumers, she finds that there were 'war time jitters over femininity' as one of her chapter titles aptly puts it. Pierson does not subscribe to the 'transformation hypothesis'; she concludes that the advances women made were 'only for the duration' and "the war's slight yet disquieting reconstruction of womanhood in the direction of equality with men was scrapped for a full-skirted and redomesticated post-war model, and for more than a decade feminism was once again sacrificed to femininity."²² Pierson's colleagues in studying Canadian woman and the Second World War have also ignored some aspects of the Second World War, one of these being military-civilian relations.²³

Kenneth Coates and William Morrison's, The Alaska Highway in World War II: the US Army of Occupation in Canada's Northwest does examine the role of military-civilian relations, an exception in Canadian History. The title belies the true nature of the study. This is not a book about the actual building of the Alaska Highway, but "an attempt to explain the social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects of the American invasion of the Northwest between 1942 – 1946."²⁴ Particularly interesting and insightful in the realm of military civilian relations is the chapter entitled "Men, Women and the Northern Defense Projects." Here, the authors chronicle wartime social relations in very isolated regions. There is abundant evidence that the military and

²¹ See for example, Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson. The Gunners of Canada. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972. As well as WAB Douglas & B. Greenhous. Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War. Toronto: Dundern Press, 1995.

²² Ruth Roach Pierson, "They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc, 1986), 220.

²³ See for example, Carolyn Gossage, Greatcoats and Glamour boots: Canadian Women at War, 1939 – 1945. Toronto: Dundern Press, 1991.

²⁴ Kenneth Coates and William Morrison, The Alaska Highway in World War II: The U.S. Army of Occupation in Canada's Northwest, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 12.

civilian workers were unhappy with the scarcity of non-Native women and were discouraged, through the propagation of racial stereotypes, from seeking relations with Native women.²⁵ The authors examine other areas in the “complex social relations of wartime” including prostitution, venereal disease and sexual assault.²⁶ However, they conclude that the demographics of the region limited the amount of sexual activity that occurred, and the cases of assault and abuse particularly toward Native women paled in comparison to other areas where an army of occupation came in contact with civilians.²⁷ Coates’ and Morrison’s monograph is the only substantial study in Canada which focuses on military-civilian social relations.

The limited literature on wartime social relations is varied and contradictory. Many ascribe to the transformation hypothesis, while others see the social relations as a unique intermission in social and sexual mores. Furthermore, much of the literature in Canada and Australia focuses on the US army of occupation and ignores the impact of their own military on social relations. Nevertheless, within this limited literature, there is a broad range of interpretations and material to draw from in looking at wartime relations. The impact of militarization of civilians and the resulting relations that ensued was an international phenomenon and deserves more historical inquiry.

Perhaps the lack of literature on military-civilian relations is a reflection of the difficulty of researching such a topic. In Northern British Columbia the ‘boom and bust’ nature of the resource-based economy led to a transient worker population, as a result, few people wrote down their experiences for posterity. As well, there were few instances when social relations generated documents. People’s day-to-day relations, were not part

²⁵ Ibid., 149.

²⁶ Ibid., 148.

of the bureaucratic system, therefore, not many records exist. Coates and Morrison explain the difficulty of this type of research in terms of sexual relations,

Assessing the nature of those sexual encounters that did occur is not easy, since information on the subject is rare, and when available impressionistic. It is also tilted toward the pathological side of sex, in particular to rape, prostitution, and venereal disease; there are no statistics at all on friendly, disease free, consensual sex.²⁸

However, this does not mean that this history cannot be recovered. In this thesis I used both oral and written sources. My most valuable methodological tool was oral history interviews. As Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack state, "For researchers, taped interviews preserve a living interchange for present and future use; we can rummage through interviews as we do through an old attic – probing comparing, checking insights, finding new treasures the third time through, then arranging and carefully documenting our results."²⁹ As Anderson and Jack indicate, there are treasures and tidbits of information to be found in oral histories. But more than that, oral interviews give the researcher an immediacy to the topic. Unlike written sources the words of the interviewee come with emotion and depth, and allows the researcher to 'read' the source in a more meaningful way. Oral history interviews are valuable for information that may have never been recorded, but more importantly they present the researcher with individual perspectives and emotions about historical events.

Researchers must conduct oral history interviews carefully. There is always the possibility that the researcher will dominate the interview by bombarding the interviewee

²⁷ Ibid., 157.

²⁸ Coates and Morrison, 143.

²⁹ Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses" In Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History eds Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (New York: Routledge, 1991) 11.

with questions.³⁰ To avoid this pitfall I used a collaborative approach in oral history. I did not have a set of questions for all of my interviewees, instead I used just a few general opening questions tailored for each interviewee. In this way, the interviewee directed the interview, telling me about what they found important about the wartime social atmosphere. As they brought various issues to the fore, I would further question them about those issues. Thus, each interviewee and myself constructed the parameters of the interview together.

The information gleaned from the interviews was cross-referenced with newspaper accounts and archival material. In most cases, my interviewees' recollections were consistent with the documentary historical record. In those cases where no supplementary evidence could be found to validate the interviewees' information, I decided not to discard that information. Censorship is a large factor in any war, and the Second World War was certainly no exception. In fact, during my research, I uncovered a telegram within a unit diary that stated that all information pertaining to a specific, but unnamed, event in Prince Rupert had been destroyed. If the military went so far as to eradicate all evidence of this event, of which we will never know the true nature, there were doubtless many other incidents in Northwestern British Columbia which were never recorded and filed. Therefore these holes in military records, due to censorship, should not make my interviewees' recollections suspect. The fact that some events do not appear in the historical record should not be used to shed doubt on the information gleaned from oral history interviews. But in spite of this, I have been careful not to take unsubstantiated evidence as fact, rather describing this information as a feeling, a rumor,

³⁰ Ibid.

or a perception. Memories can be faulty about specific events; rarely about personal feelings.

During my research I conducted twenty oral history interviews with people, both male and female, who were involved in the many facets of wartime society. I interviewed two former members of the Canadian Women's Army Corps, who were stationed in Prince Rupert, as well as a civilian woman who had worked for the military, one for the Canadian Navy in Prince Rupert, the other at the base in Prince George. I also interviewed a former sailor in Prince Rupert, and a soldier who hailed from Prince George. As for civilians, I interviewed seven women who were very involved with the social scene in Prince Rupert and Prince George, and several women who had husbands (civilian and military) and families during the war years. I interviewed two male civilians as well, one a young shipyard worker during the Second World War, the other an established businessman in Prince Rupert. I feel that my interviews represent a broad range of wartime society.

Although most of the people I interviewed for this thesis decided to forgo the anonymity clause I included in the consent form, I have assigned each of them a pseudonym anyway. Throughout the writing of this thesis, I came to realize that I held a lot of power over my interviewees' recollections. Penny Summerfield notes that "anonymity screens interviewees from the ultimate manifestation of the power imbalance in the oral history relationship, the historian's interpretation and reconstruction in the public form of print of intimate aspects of their lives."³¹ Further, the nature of this thesis examines the thoughts and prejudices different segments of wartime society held toward

³¹ Penny Summerfield, Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives (New York: Manchester University Press, 1998) 26.

each other. As most of my interviewees still live in Prince George and Prince Rupert, and some are very prominent in their communities, I did not want them to have to defend what they believed about another group in wartime society fifty years ago. Thus, to avoid causing any possible discomfort to those people who generously shared their time and recollections with me, I have protected their anonymity by changing their names.

My documentary research also represents the many elements of society in wartime Prince George and Prince Rupert that produced written records. As mentioned above, few documents exist that chronicle social relations between service personnel and civilians, consequently, I had to widen my search in looking at documents which dealt with any facet of World War II and Northwestern British Columbia, finding scattered bits of information to piece together a social history of this area.

My search started in the local area, consulting wartime city council minutes from both Prince George and Prince Rupert, city bylaws, minutes from service clubs, and a few letters that still exist regarding wartime conditions. Local newspaper accounts from the *Prince George Citizen* and the *Prince Rupert Daily News* were also valuable in reconstructing the perceptions of townspeople, as the arrival of the military was an unprecedented event and many activities of the services were related in the local newspapers. Editorials and letters to the editor recorded people's reaction to the presence of the military. As well, the American base newspaper from Prince Rupert provided a unique American military perspective of the social relations in Prince Rupert. Finally, there were several good published memoirs of wartime in Prince George and Prince Rupert that I consulted, which, along with the oral history interviews, provided individual perspectives on the social mood in each town. The most notable of these were Phylis

Bowman's We Skirted the War! and Second World War Memories! The first is a memoir of Bowman's experiences in the Canadian Women's Army Corp (CWAC), and contains an interesting preamble about the arrival of troops to Prince Rupert. The latter is a scrapbook of photographs and reminiscences of the war years in Prince Rupert.

Exhausting local sources of information about the Second World War, I then turned to provincial and national sources. I consulted wartime criminal case files and liquor license files at the British Columbia Provincial Archives and Record Service in hopes of gleaning more information about society in Prince George and Prince Rupert. At this point in my research I was still lacking a Canadian military perspective, and as such, found it necessary to consult the National Archives in Ottawa. While there, I examined over three dozen diaries of units stationed in Prince Rupert and Prince George, as well as various military records at the Directorate of History of the Department of National Defense. This provided a military perspective and many valuable and surprising insights about wartime society in Northwestern British Columbia. Prince Rupert, as a reflection of its larger service population and military importance, was represented more in these records than was Prince George, and as a result, will be represented more in this thesis. This is not to say that the relations in Prince George should be discounted, rather that they mirror Prince Rupert, albeit on a much smaller scale. The two towns complement each other in terms of military-civilian relations, and studied in conjunction make a meaningful contribution toward the understanding of wartime relations in British Columbia, and Canada.

This thesis argues that the presence of sizable military installations and the conversion to 'base towns' created a unique social atmosphere in Prince Rupert and

Prince George. Prior to the war, these communities, although somewhat transient, were ethnically homogenous and isolated; thus many members of society shared the same worldviews. The introduction of large numbers of service personnel, as well as wartime conditions, drastically altered the homogeneity of society in these two communities. Both elements of wartime society, civilians and military personnel alike, were faced with people different from themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, and personal beliefs. These divisions segmented home front society in Northwestern British Columbia; people did not put aside their personal differences for the sake of the war effort, instead the war created a fragmentation of society. The military ethos of ordering and hierarchy quickly spread to wider society creating not just two segments of society, military and civilian, but a many groups based on these differences. This compartmentalization galvanized around larger national political and moral issues, namely anti-Americanism, the conscription crisis, women in uniform, and racism against First Nations Peoples. These compartments tended to be quite rigid, reinforced by stereotyping and nicknaming.

The segmentation of society resulted in a multitude of wartime experiences for people in Prince Rupert and Prince George. Depending on which of the above groups one was perceived to belong, others adjusted their conduct accordingly. The alliances and antagonisms between groups manifested themselves in daily relations ranging from extreme glamour to the horrors of intimidation and assault, creating a continuum of social relations in wartime Northwestern British Columbia.

The first chapter, "From Boondocks to Base Town" introduces the circumstances in which the military moved into Prince Rupert and Prince George, the

initial reactions of the townspeople to it, and the wartime conditions in which social relations took place, that contributed to the fragmentation of society. The next chapter entitled "Wartime Society and Strained Relations" examines the process of the compartmentalization of wartime society based on the larger political and moral issues described above. This chapter also examines some of the common frictions between social groups, which were widespread amongst wartime society. Chapter Three, "Glamour: The Romance and Hedonism of Wartime", considers one end in the continuum of social relations, that of glamour and romance. At the other end of the spectrum, Chapter Four, "Horror: The Darker Aspects of Wartime Relations", examines the more odious elements of wartime relations, that of crime, intimidation, and physical and sexual assault. These chapters constitute the range of social interactions that resulted from the militarization of Prince Rupert and Prince George and contribute to the understanding of wartime society and the social ethos of World War II in general.

Chapter One

From Boondocks to Base Town

In early September 1939, Canada was thrust again into a world war. When the British declared war against Germany, Canada followed one week later, on September 9, 1939.¹ Despite the horrors of the First World War, many Canadians supported action against Germany and hoped that it would end the long economic depression that plagued them. Many Canadians, including those from Prince George and Prince Rupert, also felt a strong loyalty to their British counterparts, and enlisted for active service immediately after Canada declared war. Others, who felt no loyalty to Britain or had their own reasons for not enlisting, were only brought into the military by Mackenzie King's 1940 National Resources Mobilization Act, which conscripted them for home defense.² Of those who voluntarily enlisted, one division was immediately sent overseas, while the rest were trained and drafted to posts within Canada.³ These posts were largely in Eastern Canada; the West Coast was at first of secondary importance to Allied strategists since they were not yet at war with Japan.

However, these strategists had realized years before the declaration of war that Prince Rupert could be of military importance. British military officers had toured the Prince Rupert area in 1937 and 1938, setting up guard points and forts at Barrett Point on the Western end of Kaien Island and Frederick Point on Digby Island, installations that were completed in early 1939.⁴ Construction of the Seal Cove airbase began early in

¹ WAB Douglas & B Greenhous, Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1995) 26.

² J.L. Granatstein & Desmond Morton, A Nation Forged in Fire: Canadians and the Second World War 1939 – 1945 (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989) 29.

³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴ Phylis Bowman, Second World War Memories (Prince Rupert: Independent, 1987) 6.

1939⁵, after the House of Commons approved \$327,000 for the base, which would house 200 airmen.⁶ The Department of National Defense created local army and navy units, and stationed a small force of the Irish Fusiliers and the Canadian Scottish Regiment in the Prince Rupert area at the beginning of the war to assist in defense including the local dry docks and the railway, facilities which were vital in wartime shipping and construction and repair of naval vessels.⁷ By 1940, the dry docks employed around two thousand shipyard workers, who built and repaired a multitude of vessels.⁸ However, until the Pacific theatre opened, an attack on the West Coast seemed remote and it remained of secondary importance.

With the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Prince Rupert found itself receiving more attention from Canadian and allied military officials. The area was seen as vital in the war against Japan. A memorandum from the Canadian Chiefs of Staff indicated its importance: it was the “western terminus of the most northerly transcontinental railway line in North America”; it contained “drydock [sic], ship-building, port and seaplane facilities”; it was “the only Canadian Naval Base on the Pacific Coast north of Esquimalt”; and “By Great Circle Route, it is approximately 450 miles less to the Aleutians and Japan from Prince Rupert than from Vancouver or Seattle.”⁹ The Americans also immediately recognized the value of Prince Rupert and arrived there thirty-five days after the attack on Pearl Harbor to bolster the defense of the

⁵ R.G. Large, Prince Rupert: A Gateway to Alaska (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1960) 64.

⁶ Prince Rupert Daily News, January 26, 1939, 1.

⁷ Large, 65.

⁸ Prince Rupert Daily News, October 1 & 8, 1992. The dry docks were constructed by the Grand Trunk Pacific Development Company in 1916 to service a fleet of passenger liners and freighters. This plan was never realized and the dry docks fell into disuse until the Second World War. During the war four minesweepers, twelve 10,000 ton freighters and two China Coasters were produced. As well, 825 vessels were repaired, overhauled and refitted in the yard.

Northwest and particularly Alaska. The area, including nearby Port Edward, became a staging area for the embarkation of American troops, supplies and equipment for Alaska.¹⁰ From March of 1943 to August of 1945, a total of 73,884 Americans passed through Prince Rupert of their way to Alaska, 46,865 military; 27, 019 civilian.¹¹

Canadian involvement was also stepped up in the area, as well as in other parts of the province including Prince George, because British Columbians were clamoring for a stronger defense against an anticipated Japanese invasion.¹² Headquarters Pacific Command in Vancouver controlled home defense in bases all around the province: in Vancouver, Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Victoria, Esquimalt, and a command reserve in Vernon.¹³ The Canadian 8th Division, based in Prince George, Prince Rupert and Terrace oversaw the Pacific Northwest Defense Command, which was created early in 1942.¹⁴ This command served as “a last line of defense against Japanese invasion as well as a support area for the Aleutians, should the Americans try to mount an offensive there.”¹⁵ The army reached peak strength on June the 12th 1943 with 34,316 soldiers for home defense in British Columbia. As the army and the other Services poured into the Northwest from 1942 to 1945, Prince George and Prince Rupert truly became ‘army towns’; housing thousands of soldiers prepared to defend Northern British Columbia.

⁹ DND. Memoranda of the Strategical [sic] Importance of Prince Rupert from an Extract from Minutes of 243rd Meeting of Chiefs of Staff Committee held on 3rd August 1943. 193.009 (D22).

¹⁰ Gilbert Tucker, The Naval Services of Canada, 235. Port Edward had been a fishing village, with several canneries, and a small residential area.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 237.

¹² J.L. Granatstein & Peter Neary, The Good Fight: Canadians and World War II (Toronto: Copp Clarke Ltd, 1995) 4.

¹³ C.P. Stacey, Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1957) 175.

¹⁴ Tom Makowsky, “Prince George at War” in Sa ts’e: Historical Perspectives on Northern British Columbia (Prince George: College of New Caledonia Press, 1989) 443.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 443.

Prior to their conversion to base towns, Prince George and Prince Rupert were small, isolated, resource based towns. The construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific was significant in the early history of both. Although the settler history of Prince George can be traced back to 1807 when Simon Fraser established a fur trade post in the area, it was not until the early 1910s that development started around the speculation of a Grand Trunk Pacific station in Prince George.¹⁶ Prince Rupert's settlement history began when the Grand Trunk Pacific chose it as the western terminus of the transcontinental railway in 1906.¹⁷ An influx of white settlers and the construction of businesses resulted from the arrival of the G.T.P in both areas, but the railway alone could not sustain the young towns. Fishing and timber soon became the main industries of Prince Rupert and Prince George, respectively, attracting more white settlers.

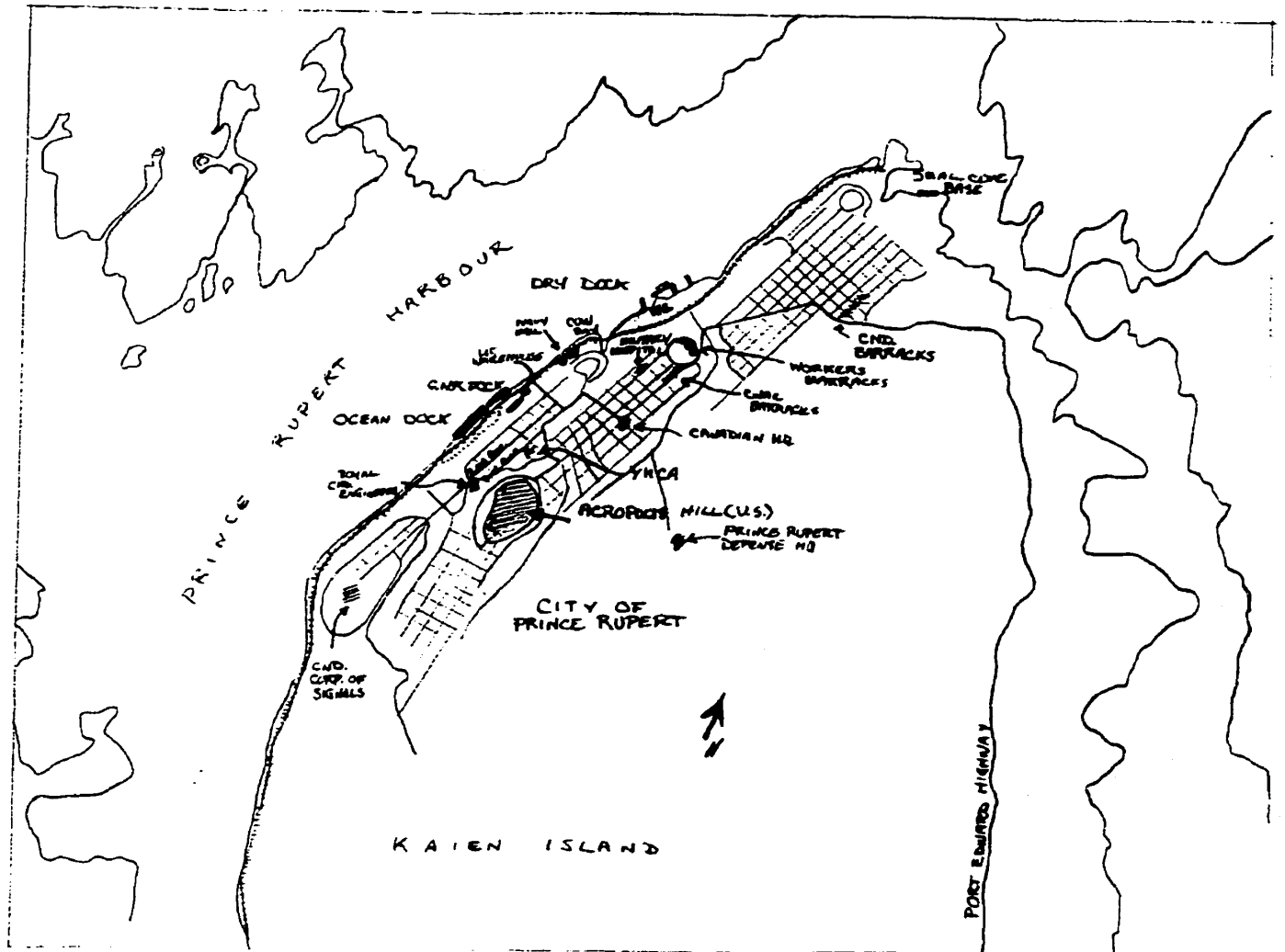
Even with these industries, the towns remained small and remote. Furthermore, the ethnic make up remained homogenous during this small population boom, attracting mainly Euro-Canadians as railway development did. For example, European descendants made up 94 percent of the population in Prince George and 92 percent in Prince Rupert, while those of British and Northern European descent accounted for over 80 percent of the populations in each town on the eve of World War II.¹⁸ Although there were a few Asian Canadians and First Nations recorded in the census, these were by and large white communities. The white inhabitants of the towns also generally shared the same values and attitudes; Gordon Hak characterized Prince George in the

¹⁶ Bev Christensen, Prince George: Rivers, Railways and Timber, (Windsor: Windsor Publications Ltd, 1989) 17 – 43.

¹⁷ Large, 1.

¹⁸ Census of Canada, 1941 Volume II: Population by Local Subdivisions (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1944) 506 – 507.

Figure 1.1



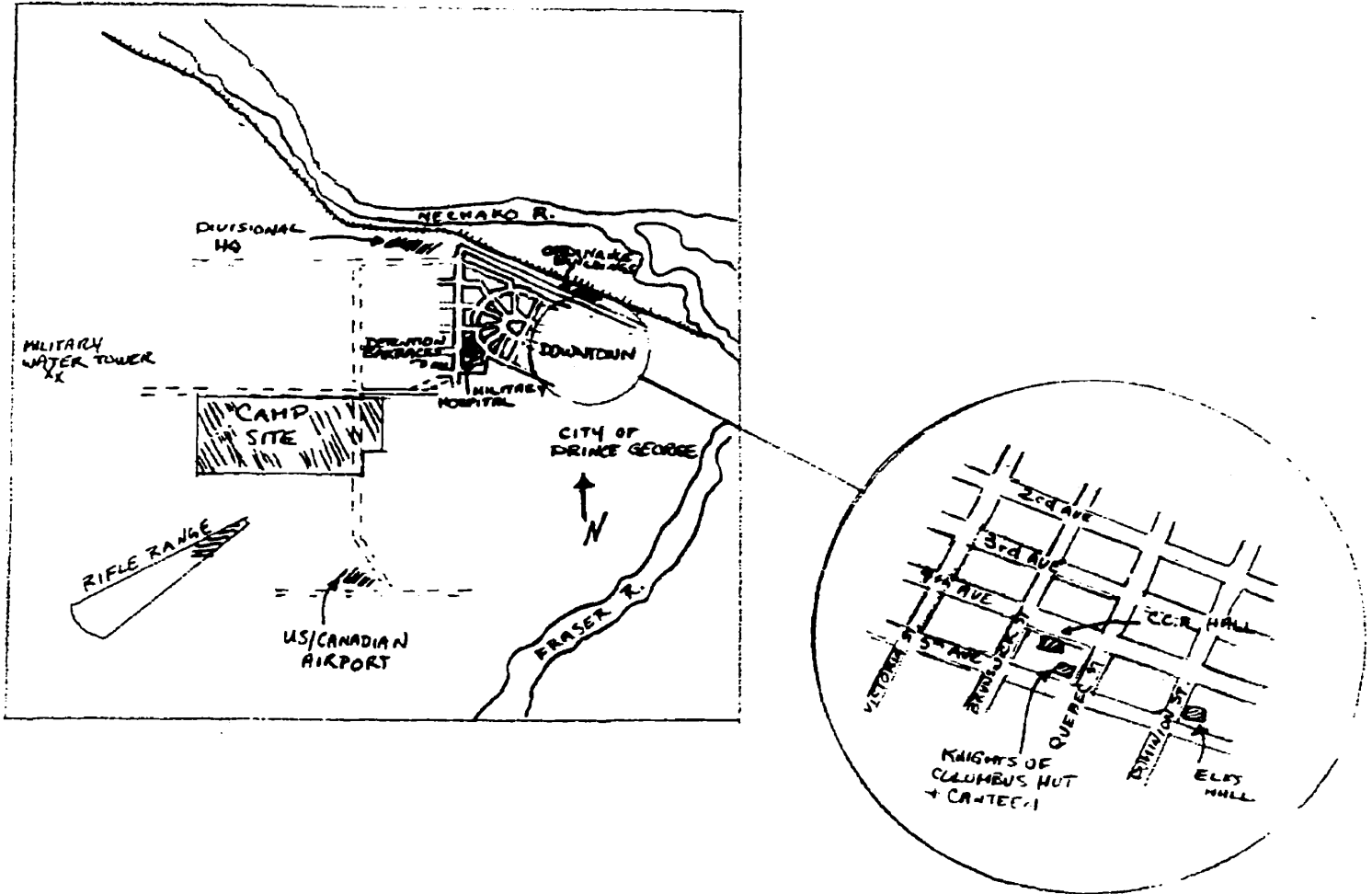
Prince Rupert During Wartime.

Adapted from:

Map of Docking Facilities, Prince Rupert City and Regional Archives, LM984.3.18.1, and Bowman, Phylis. Second World War Memories! Prince Rupert: Independent, 1987.

54.

Figure 1.2



Prince George During Wartime

Adapted From: Brigade Group Camp Map, Fraser Fort George Regional Museum Archives, Map Cabinet; Runnells, Rev. F.E. A History of Prince George. [n.p.] [n.d] 1946, and Oral History Interviews.

inter-war period as a stable, respectable community.¹⁹ Inhabitants of Prince Rupert and Prince George seldom encountered people different from themselves. Until the Second World War, there was not even a road that connected Prince Rupert to Terrace and other provincial highways.²⁰ Debra Newman recalls that prior to the war Prince Rupert was characterized as an “isolated little fishing port.”²¹ Prince George was even smaller than Prince Rupert; one citizen described it as “the boondocks.”²² The Canadian census of 1941, which was taken prior to the great influx of the services after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, indicates that Prince George’s population was a mere 2,027.²³ Prince Rupert’s population in 1941 was 6,714.²⁴ As these numbers suggest, it was quite an adjustment for the towns and the citizens to incorporate what must have seemed to be massive numbers of servicemen and women.

The citizens of Prince George had to contend with an army, approximately three times larger than the civilian population, around 6,000 servicemen²⁵ At the height of the war in 1943, Prince Rupert’s Service population rose to 23,000.²⁶ Furthermore, the Service personnel were not concentrated in one or several parts of each city; they were

¹⁹ Gordon Hugh Hak, “On the Fringes: Capital and Labour in the Forest Economies of Port Alberni and Prince George Districts, British Columbia, 1910 – 1930,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Simon Fraser University, 1986) as paraphrased in David Peterson del Mar, “Pimping and Courtship: A 1940 Court Case from Northern British Columbia” in Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia ed. R.W. Sandwell (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999) 213.

²⁰ Large, 68.

²¹ Debra Newman, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 22 October 1997.

²² Barbara Turner, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 10 April 1996.

²³ Census of Canada, 1941 Volume II: Population by Local Subdivisions (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1944) 640. The total population of the Prince George area including the Shelley reservation was 5, 253.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 641. This number is artificially high due to the influx of shipyard workers since 1939. The total population of the Skeena area was 10,554, including Terrace and Metlakatla.

²⁵ Makowsky, 443, and Mary Bates and Irene Thomas, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 31 March 1998.

²⁶ Tucker, 239.

present throughout Prince Rupert and Prince George. As mentioned above, the Prince Rupert area had a RCAF base at Seal Cove, forts at Barrett and Frederick Point, and a US army staging area at Port Edward. In addition, Ridley Island had a Canadian Naval Post. In the centre of Prince Rupert and civilian business, the Americans had a base on Acropolis Hill, and the Canadians built barracks in various sections of town.²⁷



Figure 1.3 Aerial Photograph of Acropolis Hill, Prince Rupert. Prince Rupert City and Regional Archives.

One resident recalls “it was very difficult at that time not to come into contact with the military because the town was swarming with men from all services, the Canadian and

American forces on top of it.”²⁸ Similarly, military buildings and encampments surrounded Prince George. North and west of the city there were barracks and training facilities, while to the southeast the American army corps built an airport as a stopover point to Alaska, which maintained a staff of 200.²⁹ Canteens and an army bakery lay within the town’s core. Residents were also likely to intersect with servicemen doing maneuvers far outside the city. Donna Clarke, a Prince George resident, remembers a time when soldiers interrupted her holidays at Summit Lake, fifty kilometers north of the city. “I can remember one summer going out to Summit Lake and staying on an Island with a girlfriend. I think the idea was that parents wouldn’t be keeping an eye on us or anything for a couple of weeks. We were only out there for a few days and three hundred soldiers came out there.”³⁰ Citizens could not escape seeing service personnel anywhere around the city.

Like other military bases around the province, Prince George and Prince Rupert experienced acute housing shortages. In Prince Rupert, there was not only the military to house, but also several thousand shipyard workers.³¹ One worker was fortunate to have a sister in town to stay with when he arrived, until worker barracks were built, but others were not so fortunate to find housing.³² Besides the shipyard workers that contributed to overcrowding, throngs of wives and girlfriends followed servicemen to Prince George and Prince Rupert. In her memoirs, Jessie Bond Sugden recalls the extent some went to find accommodation: “Spare rooms attics, basements, garages, and yes, as far fetched as it sounds, even chicken houses were ‘done over’, converted and rented” in Prince

²⁷ See Figure 1.1.

²⁸ Charlie Davis , interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

²⁹ Makowsky, 443. See also Figure 1.2 for complete layout.

³⁰ Donna and Richard Clarke, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 25 February 1998.

George.³³ The Canadian military was sympathetic to the plight of the townspeople, and warned service personnel to stop moving their families with them “owing to the shortage of living accomodation [sic] at Prince Rupert, Vernon, Prince George and Terrace... as they are already overcrowded.”³⁴

Overcrowding was not only limited to housing, but also spilled over into recreational facilities. There were few theatres and other recreational outlets available for soldiers in both small towns. When asked about the availability of recreational facilities, interviewees from Prince George and Prince Rupert had similar sentiments. Most agreed that it was pointless to try to go to a film or eat in a restaurant. The conditions were quite beyond belief for the people who lived there, as one citizen in Prince George attests, “But the crowds! And we weren’t used to lineups. We didn’t know what a lineup was.”³⁵ In Prince Rupert, the situation was the same. One former theatre usher explains how they dealt with the crowds: “it was so busy, the shows were so busy that there wasn’t much to do at four o’clock, you just watched, if two went out you would see where the seats were and two would come in.”³⁶ From the military point of view, there was an acute lack of recreational facilities, which is apparent throughout war records. For example, an early entry in the war diary of the Prince of Wales Rangers in Prince George states “restaurants and hotels were jammed to the doors and it was evident that the populace and facilities of the town have a long way to go to adjust itself to the fact that there are now some 2400

³¹ Charlie Davis, correspondence with author, 22 October 1998.

³² Charlie Davis, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

³³ Jessie Bond Sugden, *In the Shadow of the Cutbanks: A Story of Growing up in Prince George* (Prince George: Spee-Dee Printers, 1985) 29.

³⁴ NAC RG 24, Volume 15292, Serial 194. Daily orders for the Winnipeg Grenadiers, 20 February 1943.

³⁵ Mary Bates, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 31 March 1998.

³⁶ Anna Porter, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

troops in the Camp and that they are going to place a strain on restaurants and hotels.”³⁷

Another unit’s diary indicates that the lack of facilities was the reason for unruly behavior in their ranks; “there is inadequate provisions for them in town ...therefore it isn’t to be wondered at that the boys go off the deep end occasionally [sic].”³⁸ The overcrowding and lack of recreational outlets tended to exacerbate military-civilian tensions, as there was nowhere easy to escape the overwhelming numbers of servicemen.

Although citizens of both towns tried to adjust to, and accommodate, the service personnel into their societies, it was not easy. To evolve from a remote resource town, to a military base within a few short years was a drastic change. The *Prince Rupert Daily News* published a series of editorials that dealt with the changes in their town in 1942. One was entitled “Our Town is Changing”, and recognized the threat the military presented to the homogeneity of the town: “we are having to accustom and attune ourselves not only to different ways but to different ideas” and “today we are becoming a city of strangers. Everybody no longer knows everybody else’s business.”³⁹ The editor feared that militarization would fundamentally change the town and its social mores. An editorial a few days later stated “we realize that this is going to be a fortress city...at the same time, there should also be room for the preservation of the civilian community interest through the time of war to the future when peace will be with us again.”⁴⁰ The newspaper editors realized that the townspeople were becoming more “military minded” and that some feared that “this development of militarism for protection will develop into

³⁷ NAC RG 24, Volume 15149, Serial 1062. War Diary for the Prince of Wales Rangers, 1 July 1942.

³⁸ NAC RG 24, Volume 14741, Serial 817. War Diary for the 15th Canadian Field Company R.C.E., 4 December 1943.

³⁹ *Prince Rupert Daily News*, June 1 1942, 2.

⁴⁰ *Prince Rupert Daily News*, June 5 1942, 2.

a more permanent form of militarism and that it will become a danger.”⁴¹ Perhaps civilians feared the suspension of their civilian liberties; where people could once roam unhindered, they would now be restricted due to national security. This editorial also insinuated that the military might personally endanger civilians. If the townspeople feared a disintegration of their society, they certainly also feared disintegrating personal security in terms of violence and sexual assault, as ensuing editorials affirmed.⁴²

Yet, to younger residents, the arrival of the military also signaled fun and excitement. Generally, when new units disembarked from the train, the towns’ youth embraced them with sincere interest and assistance. In Prince George, Adeline Sanford who was a teenager at the beginning of the war recalls, “we were pretty excited about this, and everyday we would wait and look to see if the army had arrived in the night or something. And then one day we heard, finally they had arrived. We heard a band and we all ran out and sort of watched these lads come in.”⁴³ In Prince Rupert, Charlie Davis, a former shipyard worker, also conveyed this sense of novelty: “well, it was quite exciting for a young fellow. I’d never seen the likes of this before, the shipyards and all the machines...and just that the streets were full of uniforms at the time and ships coming and going all the time. It seemed to me, an exciting time.”⁴⁴ As the war progressed, the drills, sporting events, parties, and dances that accompanied the military also enthralled the residents, creating an aura of sophistication and glamour. Yet, there was also the possibility that civilian youth would put themselves in compromising positions, as they were caught up in the newness and surrealism of the times.

⁴¹ Prince Rupert Daily News, July 27, 1942, 2.

⁴² See Chapter 4.

⁴³ Adeline Sanford, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 28 January 1998.

⁴⁴ Charlie Davis, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 27 April 1998.

As much as the townspeople were entertained by the novelty of living in a 'base town' and the social events the military organized, they also attempted to entertain the soldiers. They recognized that the soldiers were young, away from home, and bored with the few recreational facilities the towns could offer. Many families in both towns opened their homes to service personnel, for coffee, dinners, card games and musical evenings. In her memoirs of the war years, Phylis Bowman recalls that "They were mostly all young lonely boys away from home, catapulted into a strange town in uncertain circumstances...and definitely in need of new friends and a welcoming hand."⁴⁵

Initially then, citizens in both towns seemed to extend hospitality to everyone who made up military society: Americans, Canadians, volunteers, conscripts, and women in the services. However as the war progressed, fissures began to develop in military-civilian relations, and people, both military and civilian, began to carefully delineate between groups as to who was respectable hence, acceptable and who was not. The nature of these fissures will be discussed in the next chapter entitled "Wartime Society and Strained Relations".

⁴⁵Phylis Bowman, We Skirted the War! (Prince Rupert: Independent, 1975) 3

Chapter Two

Wartime Society and Strained Relations

The Second World War strained and complicated social relations across the world. In Prince George and Prince Rupert, and arguably other base towns, the presence of the military created a charged social milieu. Prior to the war, these communities were largely homogenous and isolated and the introduction of a new element of society, the military, wreaked havoc with their ordered existence. Furthermore, the 'military' was composed of diverse people with differing ideologies: volunteer, conscript, Canadian, American and so forth. Both the military and civilian communities 'sized each other up', and made judgments based on larger national issues and racial and ethnic stereotypes. This chapter examines the issues that led to the compartmentalization of wartime society in Prince Rupert and Prince George, and some of the daily relations that resulted from this fragmentation of society.

Since most people in Prince Rupert and Prince George considered themselves fervently patriotic, they respected the Canadian servicemen who volunteered for active service, and were stationed in their towns. Most of the young men from both towns had already enlisted and were stationed elsewhere; the incoming soldiers, sailors, and airmen were welcomed almost as 'replacement' sons.¹ Great fanfare and celebration accompanied their arrivals and departures. Citizens gathered at the railway station to send them off; one resident of Prince George explains "they were just like celebrities then."² Generally, Canadian soldiers who enlisted for active duty were well liked, welcomed, and respected. The commanding officers did not want to jeopardize the good

¹ Men could not be conscripted for the Navy or Airforce so they were only considered 'active duty', thus for the purposes of this thesis they are often considered under the term 'soldier' unless otherwise stated.

standing that they were accorded. For example, the Oxford Rifles in Prince George were instructed to take care of themselves as, "the appearance of troops at all times is considered to reflect the discipline and standing of their unit."³ Unless a volunteer soldier seriously violated rules of conduct, they were accepted and highly regarded. As a group, the citizens compartmentalized them as model servicemen; substitutes for the local men who had enlisted and were no longer in Northwestern British Columbia. Thus, they were embraced by local families, and encouraged to date their daughters. However, this applied only to those who had a General Service (GS) distinction on their uniform to show that they had voluntarily enlisted in the services.

The other element of the Canadian army, those men who were conscripted for service under the National Resources Mobilization Act, were unpopular throughout Canada including Prince George and Prince Rupert. The National Resources Mobilization Act, or NRMA, was devised by Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1940 to increase Canada's military manpower and free more volunteers for duty overseas. This act authorized the conscription of single men between 21 and 45 for home defense in Canada. The duration of service was first only 30 days, then 4 months, and following April of 1941, they were required to serve for the duration of the war.⁴ They trained and were stationed with General Service soldiers, but were always distinguished apart from the volunteers, first by the lack of a GS badge on their uniform, then by their perceived characteristics. The conscripts were a focal point for much resentment within both communities, since so many local young men had voluntarily enlisted for overseas, while

² Jeanette Carlson, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 22 April 1998.

³ NAC RG 24, Volume 15131, Serial 1068. Daily Orders for Oxford Rifles, 26 October 1942.

⁴ WAB Douglas & Brereton Greenhous, Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1995) 253.

these 'zombies' as they came to be called, were safe within their own country. As mentioned previously, volunteer Canadian soldiers 'replaced' the local men who had enlisted and were stationed elsewhere, but the NRMA men replaced no segment of local men – thus, their position in society was ambiguous, for civilians were not sure where to place them. This, compounded with the stereotype that conscripts were cowardly, tended to put their masculinity in question. As a result of their forced conscription and their subsequent perceived emasculation, local residents often snubbed them. Young women preferred to date the Canadian soldiers who had volunteered since they were considered brave and masculine. As well, dating volunteers demonstrated one's loyalty and support of the war effort. A Prince Rupert woman explained how local women could tell the difference between conscripts and volunteers: "if you joined up voluntarily, well you got a GS [a badge on the uniform], and if you didn't join up, volunteer, well you had no GS. And the zombies would come and ask you to dance, and we would say 'where's your GS?' [they would say] 'haven't got one', [we'd say] forget it."⁵ Likewise, a Prince George woman recalls, "if he wasn't volunteered to go overseas, we didn't associate with them. It was just hopeless for them to go to dances, the girls just wouldn't dance with them."⁶ The Mackenzie King politics of conscription were manifested in wartime dance halls in two towns far from Ottawa. The citizens of these towns adjusted their behavior toward the NRMA men as dictated by national politics. Furthermore, the treatment NRMA men received was reinforced by name-calling; General Service men gave the conscripts the derogatory nickname 'zombies', which was then adopted by the general

⁵ Debra Newman, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 22 October 1997.

⁶ Donna Clarke, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 26 February 1998.

populace.⁷ This nickname had many connotations. Most importantly, it eliminated individuality and sexuality, conjuring up a mass of dull-eyed, cowardly androgynous idiots. One Prince Rupert resident echoed these sentiments: “You know what a zombie is, don’t you? They have them in the horror shows – a living body with a dead mind controlled by someone else, usually the bad guys. Ugh!”⁸ With these perceptions, they were easily stereotyped and dismissed by townspeople.

As the NRMA personnel were easily compartmentalized, few townspeople bothered to become acquainted with individual conscripts. Even fewer citizens cared why they had not voluntarily enlisted. Instead of being sympathetic to these reasons, they chose to judge them as cowardly and unpatriotic based on the image of the ‘zombie’. Citizen’s attitudes towards the conscripts were strengthened when Ottawa increased pressure on the conscripts to change to GS status, making them seem disloyal.

Throughout 1943 and 1944, Mackenzie King and his ministers began to recognize the need for more Canadian reinforcements overseas, particularly in Italy and Northwestern Europe. King was reluctant to change his stance on conscription, even though it appeared that the reinforcements could only come from the 60,000 trained NRMA soldiers.⁹ Thus, there was a short-lived campaign to urge the ‘zombies’ to volunteer for overseas. Although far from Ottawa, the NRMA soldiers in Prince George and Prince Rupert were not immune to this pressure. For example, one unit’s orders included a compelling address calling for volunteerism, which played heavily on guilt, belittlement, and nationalism. It admonished, “many men in the Army in Canada today,

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Phylis Bowman, We Skirted the War! (Prince Rupert: Independent, 1975) 5.

⁹ J.L. Granatstein & Desmond Morton, A Nation Forged in Fire: Canadians and the Second World War 1939 – 1945, (Toronto: Lester & Orphen Dennys Ltd, 1989) 229.

in spite of a realization of their responsibilities, seem unwilling to shoulder their share of the burdens” and “we, in this regiment, have built up a high morale and a regimental spirit second to none...I ask you to put forth this further effort, only because I feel sure you will realize that the need is much greater over there than it is here.” In a military town, being unwilling to face their responsibilities to fight for their country implied weakness of character and unmanliness. Further, it played on the ‘zombie’ fear of being seen as slow-witted: calling any rebuttal of volunteerism “unintelligent”.¹⁰ However, this campaign had little impact. On November 23 1944, King was forced to invoke conscription of 16,000 men overseas.¹¹ A consequence of this action was unrest and protest among the NRMA soldiers throughout Canada, the most notable being the weeklong mutiny at Terrace, a small town midway between Prince Rupert and Prince George.¹² The mutiny at Terrace was not an isolated protest, however. Prior to the November 23 announcement, ‘zombies’ had used silent protest against their plight in Northwest British Columbia. Several people in Prince George recall an incident that happened at a large gathering, which points to this conclusion. One said:

I always remember once at a hockey game, I only experienced this once. They sang *O Canada*, and an awful lot of the soldiers didn’t get up, they didn’t stand up and sing, so we knew they weren’t active soldiers or GS what they called them, or volunteer soldiers. I just couldn’t believe...everyone was just looking around, I just couldn’t believe being in the Army, not standing up to sing *God Save the Queen* or *O Canada*.¹³

Another woman who related this incident remembered the resentment people in the stands felt, and the actions they took, “the ones that came back from the war grabbed

¹⁰ NAC RG24, Volume 14502, Serial 1346. War Diary for the 29th Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Appendix VI.

¹¹ Reginald Roy, “From the Darker Side of Canadian Military History: Mutiny in the Mountains – The Terrace Incident” in *Sa ts’e: Historical Perspectives on Northern British Columbia* (Prince George: College of New Caledonia Press, 1989) 427.

them by they scruff of the neck, and told them to stand up ... this is what they fought for.”¹⁴ Similar events appeared to have taken place at Prince Rupert, as an inspection report states that “in any event recent incidents have created a civilian antipathy toward NRMA personnel.”¹⁵ One of these incidences involved soldiers leaving places of gathering before or during the playing of the National Anthem or *God Save the King*. The 29th Anti-Aircraft Regiment, a unit comprised of both conscripts and volunteers, were warned not to leave ‘Y’ shows until the latter was played¹⁶, and the Winnipeg Grenadiers had these orders to follow, “men in uniform have been noticed leaving places of entertainment while The National Anthem was being played. All personnel are advised that this is a discourtesy which will not be tolerated, nor will Grenadiers leave a public place or gathering immediately prior to the National Anthem being played.”¹⁷ The orders do not state which soldiers left during the song, but civilians assumed that only ‘zombies’ would participate in such disloyalty. The citizens certainly would not believe that the volunteers, who replaced the fine local men who had enlisted, would be involved in these actions. Thus, townspeople and GS soldiers first scorned the NRMA personnel because of their status in the army, then because of their perceived disloyalty. The conscripts constituted one distinct segment of wartime society, who were treated very poorly by the rest of society based on the national issue of conscription.

Another factor which shaped the citizens’ perceptions of the ‘zombies’, was the large percentage of French Canadians in their ranks. The French-speaking majority in Quebec were long opposed to conscription, a sentiment which dates back to the First

¹²Ibid.

¹³ Donna Clarke, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 26 February 1998.

¹⁴ Jeanette Carlson, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC 22 April 1998.

¹⁵ DND. Visits and Inspections. 169. 012 (D36).

World War. This was illustrated in a 1942 plebiscite asking “are you in favour of releasing the Government from any obligations arising out of any past commitments restricting the methods of raising men for military service?” Eighty percent of French Canadians opposed any changes to the NRMA, while over seventy percent of English Canada voted for amendments.¹⁸ Although there were 55,000 French-speaking volunteers in the Canadian military, most English-speaking Canadians believed conscripts would be of French Canadian origin. In British Columbia’s Northwest, the terms French Canadian and ‘zombie’ became almost synonymous, as this quotation from Anna Porter, a Prince Rupert resident, attests; “the French Canadians didn’t want to be active. They were never sent overseas. They had a nickname for them, they called them Zombies.”¹⁹ A Prince George resident voiced similar sentiments “And a lot of the French Canadians didn’t [volunteer]. Well then there got to be a little bit of animosity amongst the people toward them.”²⁰ Thus, French Canadians were categorized as ‘zombies’. Again, wartime politics and ethnic differences and loyalties filtered down to daily relations in wartime Prince Rupert and Prince George. Furthermore, language problems intensified tensions within the military and between soldiers and civilians.

Prior to the great influx of servicemen in 1942, around 3 percent of people living in Prince George and Prince Rupert were of French *origin*, and they perhaps did not even speak French.²¹ Certainly, few other residents of these towns spoke French. In fact many were quite puzzled with the language; one interviewee stated, she “couldn’t make out a

¹⁶ NAC RG 24, Volume 14502, Serial 1346. Daily Orders for the 29th Anti-Aircraft Battery, 13 May 1944.

¹⁷ NAC RG 24, Volume 15292, Serial 194. Daily Orders for the Winnipeg Grenadiers, 27 April 1943.

¹⁸ Douglas & Greenhouse, 255.

¹⁹ Anna Porter, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

²⁰ Richard Clarke, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 26 February 1998.

word they were saying.”²² Another interviewee shared a humorous story, but it reveals a lack of understanding and tensions that would have been prevalent in some relations between French Canadian personnel and civilians. The story takes place at a dance hall at Six Mile Lake, outside of Prince George.

After the dance it had been kind of muddy and the hill up out of there was treacherous at certain times of the year. So he’s [a Prince George citizen] driving out, he’s got his truck and there’s a car stuck – they can’t get out. So Fred said, ‘I’ll pull you out’. He gets out and in the back [of the truck] there’s a chain. And they hook this chain up. Now, these are French Canadians. So, he pulls the car out of the ditch and backs up a little. Sits there a while and then looks back. Anyway, Fred says ‘unhook the chain’. This [one] guy says ‘*unhook the chain*’. Nobody does anything. [Fred] says ‘unhook the chain’, ‘*unhook the chain*’. Finally he gets out of the truck, [and says] ‘unhook the damn chain’, ‘*unhook the...*’. This guy is repeating what Fred is saying. He doesn’t know what he’s saying and the other guys don’t understand.²³

The civilian narrator of the story seems to equate the actions of these French-Canadian soldiers with those of the ‘zombies’: unintelligent. This is particularly true since they ventured out of town without chains – revealing a lack of knowledge of local conditions, and to a degree, manliness. In a town that was resource-based and the site of military backwoods training, a component of masculinity was being able to survive outdoors. The fact that these soldiers left without adequate preparation, and had to be rescued, would have made their masculinity suspect.

This story also illustrates the difficulty in accomplishing a task when there is a language barrier between French Canadian personnel and civilians. Between French and Anglo servicemen, it was even more difficult. French speaking personnel encountered

²¹ Census of Canada, 1941 Volume II: Population by Local Subdivisions (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1944) 504 – 507. In Prince George, there were 63 people of French origin for the 2,027 population; in Prince Rupert 225 for 6,714.

²² Barbara Turner, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 10 April 1996.

²³ Richard Clarke, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 26 February 1998.

serious difficulties when assigned to an anglophone unit, which was the case for half of the French speaking volunteers. Historians WAB Douglas and Brereton Greenhous argue that of the volunteers, they “did not even stand a chance of being accepted in a fighting capacity unless he spoke English” furthermore, in some bases “not only was English the working language, but the speaking of French was forbidden.”²⁴ In Prince George, the situation was acute, for many of the officers were from Ontario and did not speak French. This is reflected by two telegrams that the Oxford Rifles sent to Headquarters in Terrace in 1944 regarding new personnel who were transferred to Prince George. One telegram said, that they “are French speaking personnel and cannot speak English. This unit has no French speaking Officers or N.C.O.s. May permission be granted please to return this personnel to depots concerned.”²⁵ In Prince Rupert, the situation seemed slightly better as the larger Service population contained more French speakers. However, there still was concern over the cohesion of the military, as the anglophone writer of the Winnipeg Grenadiers war diary indicates, “Third Fd. Bty of 22nd Regt. R.C.A move into camp with 3 officers and 65 other ranks. This being a French Canadian unit the Grenadiers camp now represents a real cross-section of Canada and it is *hoped* that we will be able to set an example in harmony. This was stressed by the O.C.”²⁶ French Canadian personnel perplexed and worried both the Anglo soldiers and civilians, the military made efforts to assimilate them, while citizens remained standoffish.

Based on Mackenzie King’s conscription crisis and the reluctance of many French Canadians to enlist voluntarily in the army, civilians in Northwestern British Columbia

²⁴ Douglas & Greenhous, 257 – 258.

²⁵ NAC RG 24, Volume 15132, Serial 1068. Telegrams in War Diary of the Oxford Rifles, February 11 & 12, 1944.

made judgements about the Canadian military, in effect parceling the troops into discrete categories. Those soldiers (General Service) who agreed with the patriotic attitudes of the townspeople were openly welcomed and treated with respect. As some interviewees attested, they were often viewed as heroes – representing the same caliber of men that had left the safety of Northwestern British Columbia to fight for the preservation of Canada. On the other hand, the men conscripted under the NRMA were an anomaly in Prince George and Prince Rupert, and their resistance to voluntarily joining the military did not conform with the citizens' worldviews. As such, these men were stereotyped, derided, and placed well below the General Service soldiers in terms of respectability. As well, with the nickname 'zombie' and the cowardliness that was ascribed to them, their intelligence and masculinity were often questioned. French Canadian troops were also questioned, as some citizens assumed they were also 'zombies'. NRMA Personnel and French-Canadians both represented an element of society that was antithetical to most citizens' attitudes.

As much as civilians judged the military, the military also drew distinctions regarding the civilian community. There was little social interaction with those who did not 'meld' with the recreation the soldiers sought, such as young Caucasian and Aboriginal men. However, older men who were not in competition with soldiers for females, and could supply entertainment, were befriended and assisted. Eligible women were generally separated into two categories, 'moral' and 'loose'. Owing to the racism of the times, and the policies aimed toward Aboriginal people, Native women fell into this latter category. Thus, soldiers also contributed to the codifying of wartime society.

²⁶ NAC RG 24, Volume 15292, Serial 194. War Dairy of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, 22 February 1943, Emphasis added by myself.

One element of civilian society that was compartmentalized by soldiers and most civilians were young civilian men, who, for whatever reason were not in uniform. Some were employed in essential services or had a physical ailment that prevented them from enlistment. So many of the local men had enlisted that these men were highly visible and were stigmatized to an extent by the local community and the servicemen. If there was nothing visibly wrong with them, they were often questioned, as one Prince George woman explained: "And sometimes you wouldn't believe it. Flat feet? Yeah right!"²⁷ Sometimes disbelief evolved to resentment, particularly from the soldiers who either volunteered out of patriotism or conscripts who were forced to serve. Mary Bates, from Prince George, recalls the derision her husband (who had failed the physical exam required for enlistment) suffered at the hands of the military community: "my husband wasn't in uniform so consequently we didn't dare go to the show or something. The soldiers would just come along and shove him out."²⁸ Men who could not enlist had to be wary of the resentment of some soldiers, lest they suffer worse consequences than this interviewee's husband. In Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War, veteran Paul Fussell explains that in the type casting of war, these men were objects of contempt, "the most despised on categories, the 4-F or physically unfit and thus defective, the more despicable the more invisible the defect, like a heart murmur, punctured ear-drum or flat feet."²⁹ Perhaps soldiers also viewed these 'defects' as evidence of local men's femininity. Soldiering is based on body type, as Jean Bethke Elshtain describes in her monograph Women and War; women did not engage in war

²⁷ Donna Clarke, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 26 February, 1998.

²⁸ Mary Bates, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 31 March 1998.

²⁹ Paul Fussell, Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 116.

because they are life-giving, while, “male bodies, straight, hard, are more fit for combat and toughening”, thus life-taking.³⁰ If local men’s bodies were not fit for the military, hence life-taking, they were not seen to function like the majority of men (soldiers) in Prince George and Prince Rupert, thus they were considered the opposite – weak and womanly.

The issue of dating also pitted civilians against servicemen. However, it was not much of a contest. Women much preferred to date the volunteer servicemen that were considered more ‘manly’, than civilians. One shipyard worker recalls that dating prospects were “bad. Particularly if you weren’t in uniform...from a civilian standpoint everything was more open if you had a uniform on than if you were in civilian clothing.”³¹ Women’s chose to date servicemen because, as one ‘Rupertite’ recalls, “we wouldn’t be seen with a civilian, because you wouldn’t be patriotic to the country.”³² The skewed gender ratio also affected dating patterns; the few eligible women had an abundance of men from which to choose. Teenaged girls entered the dating scene earlier than before, and with older men. This left teenaged boys ‘out in the cold’. One interviewee said, “it was difficult for the young fellows who were 16 or 17, who weren’t old enough to join up. You know, to get a girlfriend.”³³ As the towns took on a more metropolitan feeling, women and teenaged girls wanted to associate with people who had different views from the homogenous pre-war days. One woman in Prince George, who was in high school during part of the war, said, “high school boys that you went to school with weren’t very interesting. You know, because you had a rich fabric of other people

³⁰ Jean Bethke Elshtain, Women and War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 165.

³¹ Charlie Davis, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

³² Teresa Nicholson, interview with author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 30 April 1998.

³³ Donna Clarke, interview with author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 26 February 1998.

entering your lives.”³⁴ Thus, civilian men often felt neglected in terms of dating, and jealous of men in uniform.

However, there were incidences of civilian men and soldiers forming fast friendships, when the civilian men were not in competition with them. For instance, Arthur McKay was a married businessman when soldiers started arriving in Prince Rupert in 1939. His business prospered because he supplied the materials for the construction of various military buildings, but he also sold hardware to individual soldiers. As well, he took many soldiers fishing and invited them to his home for dinner. As such, he was well known and respected by the soldiers, and a reciprocal relationship resulted. He recalls,

I used to smoke and some of the fellows on Port Utilities up on the Hill [Acropolis] didn't smoke, but I think they got a carton or two cartons a week. And two of them used to bring me down a carton of cigarettes to the store every week...And I'd pack them up in the back. When the war ended and they left here, a big truck pulled up in front of the store. These fellows, I think they took about 5 of these 60 carton cases out of the truck, wheeled them into the back of the store and [said] 'there you are Joe, we had to get rid of these so we left them here'. I smoked Camel cigarettes for years afterwards.³⁵

This story illustrates the generous and helpful nature of some of the servicemen toward civilian men. These types of relationships benefited both: giving the servicemen a break from the drudgery of base life, and companionship to civilian men. But, for the most part civilian men were not of major interest to the soldiers.

Soldiers seeking companionship and romance were keenly interested and preoccupied with young eligible women in Prince Rupert and Prince George. Their scrutiny created particularly rigid divisions: women were perceived as being either

³⁴ Adeline Sanford, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 28 January 1998.

³⁵ Arthur McKay, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 28 April 1998.

'moral' or 'loose'. Military officials encouraged soldiers to date white civilian women, who were coded as moral and acceptable, not Native or military women. In addition to this delineation, physical space also defined which women were moral; moral women (civilians) would meet servicemen at appropriate places. Like the communities along the Alaska Highway, where "there were organized activities where 'decent' women could be met – dances, picnics, church gatherings and the like"³⁶ military and civilian society in Prince George and Prince Rupert also organized and chaperoned dances, and arranged rides for young white women. There were, of course, ways to bypass these precautions for illicit purposes, but the fact remains that these women were seen as acceptable and moral. Thus, this categorization largely encompassed most civilian Caucasian women.

On the other hand, by reputation, women of the Canadian Women's Army Corp (CWAC), and by race, Aboriginal women, fell into the category of amoral or 'loose' women. The CWACs were not present in Prince George, but less than two hundred were stationed in Prince Rupert, creating a small, but visible group. Further, as Ruth Roach Pierson explains in 'They're Still Women After All' The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood, there was a national whispering campaign about Servicewomen as being 'loose' because, "wearing a uniform, marching, standing at attention, and saluting were, traditionally, masculine behavior. The woman who behaved so appeared unconventional, 'unwomanly', and it was thus easy to assume that she would have broken with moral conviction as well."³⁷ Some citizens in Prince Rupert also engaged in these whispering campaigns, as rumors about the CWACs were rampant. One former

³⁶ Kenneth Coates & William Morrison, The Alaska Highway in World War II: The US Army of Occupation in Canada's Northwest (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992) 142.

³⁷ Ruth Roach Pierson, 'They're Still Women After All': The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1986) 174.

CWAC recalled that an older woman told her “well, you know what the girls are sent over there for, it’s to service our Canadian boys.”³⁸ Another woman recalled that in Prince Rupert “they were called hussies and groundsheets and they were just treated very badly.”³⁹ A former CWAC, Sue Ward, addressed the reputation they were given in her memoirs: “We were all lonely. Not one of these young women whom I had been involved with were tramps. They were experiencing great upheavals in their lifestyles, exactly like the male members of the armed forces. Barrack life was so sterile.”⁴⁰ The loneliness the CWACs experienced was compounded by the attitudes of the civilians, which one CWAC, Betty Atkinson, recalls as having “a jaundiced eye as far as we were concerned.”⁴¹ Volunteer male soldiers were offered unconditional companionship at civilian homes with invitations for dinner and entertainment, however members of the women’s services were not, as they were compartmentalized and perceived as amoral or ‘loose’ by civilians. The same CWAC related how, in her two years in Prince Rupert, she had never heard of any of her peers spending time in civilian homes. She recalled, “one of the loneliest nights of my life was Christmas night in Prince Rupert. And we were walking, several of us on the sidewalk for something to do, and we would see the families, civilian families, celebrating Christmas in their homes, and you were on the outside looking in, and there weren’t any that I know of that opened their house to you.”⁴² Thus, the amoralizing effect civilians believed that the military had on women, regulated civilian behavior towards members of the Canadian Women’s Army Corp in British Columbia’s Northwest.

³⁸ Debra Newman, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 22 October 1997.

³⁹ Helen Colette, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 19 January 1998.

⁴⁰ Sue Ward, One Gal’s Army (Prince George: Caitlin Press, 1996) 148.

⁴¹ Betty Atkinson, interview by author, tape recording, Barrhead AB, 17 May 1998.

Aboriginal women were considered to be especially 'loose' and, more importantly, sexually available. The sexualization of Native women has occurred since colonization in British Columbia, as Jean Barman explains,

The assumptions newcomers brought with them shaped attitudes, which then informed actions. By the mid-nineteenth century Europeans perceived all female sexual autonomy to be illicit, especially if it occurred in the public sphere, considered exclusively male. Aboriginal women in British Columbia not only dared to exercise agency but often did so publicly, convincing men in power that their sexuality was out of control.⁴³

To the same extent, this coincides with the perceptions of the CWACs. By stepping outside of the role Euro-Canadian men had slated for them, by using agency, or wearing a uniform, they challenged preconceived notions about gender roles, which were then explained away by their 'rampant sexuality'. Indeed, into the twentieth century and World War II, white society considered Aboriginal women to be rapaciously sexual. The incoming servicemen recognized these perceptions about Native women, as is illustrated by Figure 2.1, the cover of the American base newspaper which depicts Aboriginal women in various stages of undress, which are supposedly 'off limits'. Although, the nearby Native village of Metlakatla was out of bounds for Canadian troops and certainly for American troops as well, it appears that the sign in the picture is not referring to geography. This caption seems to be little more than an ironic statement, as Coates and Morrison explain in *World War II British Columbia* "the attitude toward sexual relations with Native women generally started with racist assumptions, particularly that they had a different attitude toward sex, placed little value on virginity, thought nothing of promiscuity, and so forth – all ideas relieving non-Native men, in their own minds from

⁴² Ibid.

any responsibilities for their own actions.”⁴⁴ Thus, Native women were not considered off-limits in terms of sexual relations. The realities of the relations that resulted from



Figure 2.1.

From the Acropolis News,
14 August 1943. Prince Rupert
City and Regional Archives,
987.22.

these perceptions, and the idea that non-Native men were absolved of responsibilities in their relations with Native women, will be further examined in Chapter Four.

Aboriginal women, as they were already coded as ‘loose’ whether they initiated relations with soldiers or not, became seen as the ‘pick-ups’ or ‘amateurs’ similar to those in Britain or Australia. These were “sexually active wom[e]n, neither prostitute nor married woman” whom cavorted with servicemen, expecting only pleasure.⁴⁵ These ‘pick-ups’ were defined by physical space – they often picked up soldiers (or vice versa) outside on

⁴³ Jean Barman, “Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850 – 1900” In BC Studies 115/116 (1997 – 98) 241.

⁴⁴ Coates & Morrison, 149.

the streets and had sexual relations in parks, cars, alleys and wherever they might go unnoticed by the authorities. Similarly, in certain surroundings, Native women in British Columbia were seen as even more sexually available. From the mid-nineteenth century, “unescorted Native women seen out at night or in certain places - taverns, ice cream parlours or parks – were seen to be prostitutes.”⁴⁶ The Caucasian citizens and soldiers of both towns had notions of Aboriginal women as ‘pick-ups’ or prostitutes, easily bought with money or alcohol. These notions were influenced by the space Native women were believed to occupy as one Prince Rupert citizen attested, “well, they used to come in and hang around the waterfront, and then the military would come and pick them up... go out and pick up a girl!”⁴⁷

As Aboriginal women were relegated to ‘pick up’ status, other segments of society assumed that they initiated most of the sexual liaisons with servicemen, thus, the spread of venereal disease was attributed to them. In his history of venereal disease, Allan Brandt claims that since the nineteenth century “venereal disease came to be seen as an affliction of those who willfully violated the moral code, a punishment for sexual irresponsibility.”⁴⁸ This perception of wanton sexuality certainly applied to Aboriginal women in the twentieth century, and the Prince Rupert public health unit attempted to curb Aboriginal women from spreading venereal diseases. The *Prince Rupert Daily News* discussed these issues, reporting that “native women were responsible for eighty

⁴⁵ Marilyn Lake, “The Desire for a Yank: Sexual Relations between Australian Women and American Servicemen during World War II” in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2 (1992), 623. See also, Marilyn Lake, “Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II” in *Australian Historical Studies* 24 (1990).

⁴⁶ Carolyn Strange & Tina Loo, *Making Good: Law and Moral Regulations in Canada, 1867 – 1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 147.

⁴⁷ Eve Brampton, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 30 April 1998.

⁴⁸ Allan Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 5.

percent of the spread of the malady”⁴⁹ while “there were few cases of venereal disease in military circles.”⁵⁰ Native women received all the blame for venereal disease, and Dr. Knipe, the director of the public health unit in Prince Rupert, asserted that “there should be a permanent set-up for the sending of these girls away. There were too many cases of venereal disease and it would be to the advantage of the city to have them cleared up.”⁵¹ The City Council of Prince Rupert subsequently recommended to the Department of Indian Affairs that a hostel be set up for Native women to receive treatment for venereal diseases while under supervision.⁵² Thus, the city implemented these racist policies in an attempt to curb venereal disease from spreading to the military community.

The military community, itself, had implemented many policies regarding venereal disease. In regards to Native women, soldiers who accompanied them were warned by the military police: one Provost had “advised many of the soldiers that it is not good policy to associate with the Indians for various reasons, advising them of the fact that Indian women have on many occasions been the cause of men getting into difficulties.”⁵³ These difficulties no doubt included venereal disease, as this was a major concern for the military. Men sick with syphilis and gonorrhea made ineffective soldiers therefore, VD was to be avoided at all costs. However, military officials blamed the soldier’s partners, not the soldiers themselves. A National Conference on Venereal Disease Control suggested that women who infected servicemen be considered as enemies of the state, “might not this be considered a form of actual sabotage or fifth

⁴⁹ Prince Rupert Daily News, August 25, 1943, 2.

⁵⁰ Prince Rupert Daily News, August 17, 1943, 2.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² CPR City Council Minutes, October 4, 1943. It should be noted that there was no hostel planned for non-Native women with venereal diseases.

⁵³ DND. Correspondences, investigation, reports, etc. re Subversive Activities and Lawlessness by Soldiers in Prince Rupert Area – Aug 42 to Oct 44. DND 341. PR009 (D8).

column activity?"⁵⁴ Perhaps the individual soldiers in Prince George and Prince Rupert did not consider infected women as enemies, but there were other 'enemies' in their midst which also contributed to the broad range of military-civilian interactions, representing a compartment of society that ceased to exist, as they threatened local and national security.

The Second World War changed society in the Northwest as it brought thousands of soldiers into these isolated communities, but it also signaled the removal of another element of the community, Japanese Canadians, which further altered the composition of wartime society. Japanese Canadians on British Columbia's North coast were evacuated into the interior like their counterparts on the South coast. According to the 1941 census, Prince George had no Japanese inhabitants, while the Japanese Canadian population in the Prince Rupert area was 727.⁵⁵ Prior to the war, the Japanese population in Prince Rupert was partially integrated into the community. The adults shared fishing as their main occupation with the dominant white population, and the children went to school with Caucasian children, resulting in generally good relations. However due to the burgeoning militarism of Japan and the rising tides of anti-Orientalism in British Columbia in the 1930s, Prince Rupert's Japanese Canadian population came to be seen as enemies. There was a wave of hysteria in Prince Rupert, fueled by rumours that the Japanese army was on the coast. "Everyone talked about it as if they were right beside us and that the local Japanese people were feeding them information"⁵⁶, recalls Helen Colette. Before Pearl Harbor, the Cabinet War Committee was afraid not of Japanese

⁵⁴ NAC RG 24, Volume 6617. Policy – Venereal Disease Control, November 3, 1943.

⁵⁵ Census of Canada, 1941 Volume II: Population by local Subdivisions (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1944) 506 – 507.

⁵⁶ Helen Colette, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 19 January 1998.

subversion, but that the Euro-Canadian backlash against Japanese Canadians would create chaos in British Columbia's coastal communities; thus, until the evacuation and subsequent internment, servicemen and women had little to do with the Japanese Canadian residents in Prince Rupert.⁵⁷ The commanding officers warned the military community to distance themselves from Japanese Canadians, and they were ordered that "particular care must be taken that no trouble occurs with members of our Oriental population."⁵⁸ As well, they were prohibited from frequenting Japanese Canadian businesses from early January 1941.⁵⁹ Then in February of 1942, the evacuation directives from Ottawa resulted in a complete lack of relations. Where Japanese Canadians were once a vital part of Prince Rupert society, national wartime concerns coded them as enemies, and interned them. One former Prince Rupert resident recalls the evacuation process, "I still remember my brother and I standing beside the tracks on the day they did leave, I remember thinking 'what's wrong with us – why can't we go on this great adventure?' It seemed to us at the time that it was a wonderful thing to go off by train, and we didn't know the ramifications. And then one day, they were all gone, simply gone."⁶⁰

As one segment of the population departed, another one came to alter radically military-civilian relations in Prince Rupert and Prince George: Americans. The Americans stationed on Acropolis Hill in Prince Rupert, were Caucasians. There was a contingent of Black American troops in the area⁶¹, however, like other allied home fronts,

⁵⁷ W. Peter Ward, White Canada Forever (Montreal-Kingston: McGill – Queen's University Press, 1990) 147.

⁵⁸ NAC RG 24, Volume 14371, Serial 391..Daily Orders for the 102nd North British Columbia Heavy Battery, 31 October 1940.

⁵⁹ NAC RG 24, Volume 14628, Serial 394Daily Orders for the 2nd Searchlight Battery, January 6, 1941.

⁶⁰ Helen Colette, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 19 January 1998.

⁶¹ Anna Porter, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

they were stationed far from civilian centres, in this case, Port Edward. One resident recalls "There was a lot of discrimination, and they kept them out there to keep them away from the town."⁶² This was due to long held notions about the sexual prowess of Black Americans; into the twentieth century it was believed that "black men embodied whatever was most unmanly and uncivilized, including a complete lack of sexual self-control."⁶³ American military officials feared that African Americans would rape civilian women and sour military-civilian relations in friendly foreign countries, thus, it was not unusual for the US military to station black troops away from civilians. Most people in Prince Rupert did not even know of their existence, as they were hardly seen in town.

On the other hand Caucasian Americans⁶⁴ were stationed within the towns and created quite a presence. There were a few hundred American airmen stationed at the Prince George airport, and they were highly visible when in town, as their uniforms set them apart. Most people (civilians and Canadian troops) in both towns seemed to have a dichotomous view of the Americans. There is ample evidence that they were not particularly liked because of their attitude toward townspeople, conversely they also impressed the townspeople with their wealth and sophistication.

Americans were generally disliked due to what was called their 'superior' attitudes. Besides the attitudes of individual GIs, the prevalent anti-Americanism in Canada tended to stereotype and compartmentalize American personnel. Jack Granatstein states, "anti-Americanism has been found, at differing periods and in differing intensities, across the entire spectrum of Canadian politics and in all segments

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 49.

⁶⁴ Henceforth, for ease of discussion, the term 'Americans', only refers to Caucasian Americans, as they were the most prevalent within the towns of Prince George and Prince Rupert.

of Canadian life.”⁶⁵ Although, they were Canada’s allies in World War II, Canadians feared that their influence in Canada would become permanent at war’s end, and their clout in national affairs was resented. In Prince Rupert particularly, anti-Americanism was prevalent as their base was built in the middle of town on top of recreation fields, which was previously the centre of community activity. This stood as a reminder of American influence and importance. Citizens tended to believe individual soldiers had the same characteristics as the American nation: boastful patriotism and exuberant self-confidence. Hence, Anna Porter stated that she “wasn’t enthused by the Americans, they used to think they were pretty good.”⁶⁶ Another resident quipped: “Americans were second class citizens as far as we were concerned. They did it to themselves, because they were so superior. And they said that they came to win the war for you, like they did in the last war.”⁶⁷

Civilians and Canadian troops resented that American servicemen were relatively safe in Northwestern British Columbia, while many Canadian servicemen were overseas. Furthermore, the American troops were paid for overseas service while in Prince Rupert, creating quite a wage disparity compared to Canadian troops who received no extra pay. In her memoir of the war years, Sue Ward writes,

This situation [in Prince Rupert] was exacerbated by the American troops who received overseas pay, giving them much more spending money than the Canadian troops. With plenty of free time and that extra money, the Americans found the CWACs were more than fair game. I found the whole thing degrading to Canadian soldiers who, rightly, drew no war zone pay, yet spent months at wireless outposts in the miserable weather and who were expected to protect the Americans who frolicked with higher pay and better rations.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ JL Granastein, Yankee Go Home?: Canadians and Anti-Americanism (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1996) 6.

⁶⁶ Anna Porter, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

⁶⁷ Debra Newman, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 22 October 1997.

The American civilians who came to work at the base in Prince Rupert were also receiving much higher pay than their Canadian counterparts. This concerned Canadian military circles, which discussed these matters concluding that, "it is becoming apparent that the disparity in wage rates obtained in Canada and the United States is likely to create local dissatisfaction and a diversion of Canadian labour from Canadian to United States needs."⁶⁹ The mass migration of civilians to work at the US base failed to materialize, but the wage disparity was a "sore point" and contributed to the tensions that led up to physical altercations which will be discussed shortly.⁷⁰ To the residents of Prince Rupert who had just emerged from the Depression, the American military presence seemed one of wealth and opulence, as Arthur McKay said, "but when they came, my God, money never seemed to make any difference!"⁷¹

This wealth also attracted young female residents of both towns to American GIs. The Americans were purported to have the best dances and entertainment, with the best food; these events were the height of glamour. Adding to this sense of glamour, were the sharp uniforms and intriguing accents of the American troops, reminiscent of the movie stars citizens watched in the theatres of Northwestern British Columbia. This aspect will be discussed in full in the following chapter; here, it is sufficient to point out that Americans were resented for their wealth, but also coveted for it. American servicemen were strictly demarcated in wartime society due to rampant national anti-Americanism that influenced the perceptions of the citizens of Prince Rupert and Prince George. Further, the superior attitudes and lavish wealth of most of the American servicemen

⁶⁸ Sue Ward, *One Gal's Army* (Prince George: Caitlin Press, 1996) 149.

⁶⁹ DND. CSC Misc. Memo, April/May 1942. 193.009 (D7).

⁷⁰ Charlie Davis, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

⁷¹ Arthur McKay, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 28 April 1998.

tended to lead to stereotyping and compartmentalization of this segment of wartime society. Strangely, this coding of Americans elicited two different responses from civilian society.

Wartime society in Prince George and Prince Rupert was composed of disparate groups of people often at odds in their beliefs and goals. This situation was exacerbated by the stereotypes competing groups of society placed on one another. These stereotypes and perceptions filtered down into daily relations; they were always present and often dictated conduct when meeting someone for the first time. Of course, after initial contact and occasional dispersion of these stereotypes, there were many congenial relations, romances, and friendships between different sections of the military and with civilians. However, these stereotypes and perceptions generally influenced social relations and resulted in a disjointed society where turmoil surfaced occasionally.

The transition to base towns was difficult, as discussed in Chapter One. The citizens were caught between appreciation and relief that the military was there to protect them, and distress at their changing, overcrowded communities. The servicemen and women also expected to be treated well as compensation for defending the country. Thus, civilians had to balance being welcoming to incoming service personnel, but not so much as to associate with those segments of military society with which they disagreed, or to create upheaval of their everyday activities. There was no way to strike this balance to appease every segment of wartime society hence conflicts often arose. This discord disheartened citizens who felt that they were doing all they could for the entertainment of the soldiers, as this article in the *Prince George Citizen* relates:

Residents of Prince George with limited resources and facilities have come all in their power to entertain the soldiers from district camp. Therefore it is

more than a little discouraging and disappointing for them to read the letter in the Vancouver Sun of February 20 from a local soldier. He says there is little entertainment to be had here, and leaves readers with the opinion [sic] we are neglecting socially the boys in uniform. Of course the main purpose of the letter was to induce some woman to write to the soldier, but unfortunately, the thousands of Vancouver Sun readers will be left with the impression that we are not doing all we can for the soldiers in our midst.⁷²

The residents of both towns were defensive about the many complaints about the 'backwardness' of both towns and particularly Prince Rupert's weather. In Prince George, an interviewee remembered that "they thought we were real back country."⁷³ Her recollection is accurate in that the war diaries of units stationed in Prince George reflect an aversion to the surroundings. For example, in describing an early morning trip, a diarist for the 15 Canadian Field Company R.C.E. writes, "[it is] an ungodly hour for any fella to have to get going in a civilized country, but who said anything about this part being civilized."⁷⁴ Prince Rupert had many more amenities than Prince George, seeming more civilized, yet the wet weather drew constant complaints. Figure 2.2, a poem entitled "Impressions of Kaien Island" illustrates well the military loathing of the rocky, wet environs. However, citizens of Prince Rupert were, and still are, notoriously defensive of their climate, calling the near constant rain 'liquid sunshine'. Sue Ward recall how one Rupertite resented her disdain of the weather, "as I had grown so tired of the rain, clouds and wind, with my trenchcoat never dry, I chirped, 'why would anyone in his right mind want to live in Prince Rupert?' My companion gave me a killing glance, dropped my hand and stated firmly, 'I was born here. I think it's great!'"⁷⁵

⁷² Prince George Citizen, March 4 1943, 2.

⁷³ Irene Thomas, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 31 March 1998.

⁷⁴ NAC RG 24, Volume 14741, Serial 817. War Diary for the 15 Canadian Field Company R.C.E.

⁷⁵ Sue Ward, One Gal's Army (Prince George: Caitlin Press, 1996) 148.

Figure 2.2: Poem from 'Rupert Reunion' Scrapbook, Prince Rupert City and Regional Archives.

IMPRESSION OF KAIEN ISLAND

There's a spot up near Alaska,
Just an Island by the sea,
It's dubbed the "Wet Hole of the North"
And to this we all agree

In this land of isolation
Which they call the "Muskeg Isle"
Where your face gets weather-beaten
And your clothes all lose their style.

Where your hands and feet grow
calloused
From climbing o'er the rocks
And the sweet aroma of dead fish,
Comes floating from the docks.

Where men drink vanilla extract
And their voice is low and gruff,
Where they have a special technique
And their cave man stuff is rough.

Where the rain falls horizontal
And beats you in the face,
They call it "Liquid Sunshin" here,
Tho' of the sun there is no trace.

Where cats and dogs and men have all
Webbed toes upon their feet,
Where the water stands six inches deep
In the holes along the street.

Where the tide comes in with silent force
But the sailor rants and raves,
Where the corpses send an S.O.S.
As they float within their graves.

Where the fairer sex is rugged,
Tho' they have a pleasant smile,
They can swear a sailor's fashion
And a battle is their style.

Where the muskeg pools are bottomless,
Where the animal life is strange,
Where a horse or cow is never seen,
Where the Indians roam the range.

Where the totem poles have histories
And a gruesome story tell,
Where the gale sweeps o'er the
townsight
Like a storm unleashed by hell.

Where the army guards the waterfront
As they silent vigils keep,
Where the men have beards like Santa
Clause
And women never weep.

Where many ships drop anchor,
Where the going here is grim,
Where you get your mail a few days late
'Cause the train couldn't get in.

Where the race is rough but happy,
They're a hale and hearty lot,
For no self-respecting germ would live
In this rain-sodden spot.

Where death means a soul is heaven-
bound
For good or Ner-do-well,
He's earned that home eternal
For he's served his "hitch in hell".

Where "Camouflage" or "Out of
Bounds"
Is a by-word not a crack,
They took this land from the Indians
I wish to hell they'd give it back.

Conversely, soldiers were also upset when civilians offended them. In Prince George, soldiers feared that civilians might suspend part of their recreation, as indicated in the Oxford Rifles' orders:

A rumour has been circulated recently to the effect that 'men in uniform would be barred from purchasing meals in cafes and restaurants in Prince George, British Columbia after April 1, 1943.' This has been received from a number of sources which would indicate that it is widespread. It is without foundation, and in the interests of the good relationship existing between civilians and soldiers should be denied.⁷⁶

In Prince Rupert, there was also tension between civilians and servicemen, in that each sometimes felt mistreated by the other sector, but there was also friction between the different sections of the military, mainly due to competition for eligible women. First soldiers felt that local residents preferred one regiment or division to another. These preferences were oftentimes due to the perceptions discussed earlier in this chapter, but also many people, for whatever reason, felt an affinity for one division over another. As the army was the largest service represented in Prince Rupert, the navy and airforce were sometimes overlooked – a point made bitterly clear by this letter to the editor of the *Prince Rupert Daily News*. This author, who was in the navy, vents his frustration at the disparity of treatment, "all we read about in your paper is 'Army' – the Fusiliers, and the Scotties did this, the Service Corp did that – Where do we come in?" He also expressed his dissatisfaction with the singularity of voluntary efforts made toward servicemen, "how about telling your local Service Club's and Women's Service Corps to buck up their ideas. Instead of treating the Army like kings all the time, how about getting them to send us a few papers, hampers, socks, etc. – 'The Forgotten Division' – That's what

⁷⁶ NAC RG 24, Volume 15131, Serial 1068. Daily Orders for the Oxford Rifles, 6 April 1943.

we are.”⁷⁷ Although this excerpt reveals the inter-rival jealousies that occurred, perhaps the most tumultuous conflicts between servicemen were over competition for women.

The competition between servicemen as well as war industry workers for the attention of local, eligible, women was not unique to Northwestern British Columbia. This phenomenon was widespread, particularly where Americans were based. In Australia, conflicts between Australian soldiers and American GIs were plentiful, “while the presence of American servicemen in Australia meant enhanced sexual, economic, and social opportunities for women (as well as increased risks), Australian men came to feel acutely dispossessed” resulting in skirmishes and brawls.⁷⁸ In Northwestern British Columbia the situation was even more acute: not only were Americans and Canadians in competition, but within the wider distinction of General Service men, which were seen as the most acceptable to date, further segmentation occurred. In addition, there was little hope in attracting women with a preference for a regiment or division to another. In a retrospective of the war years in the *Prince Rupert Daily News*, Phylis Bowman explains,

When a girl latched on to a fellow – be it in the Canadian Army, Navy, or Air Force, or an American GI or sailor – she stayed with members of that unit. If her steady left for overseas or posting elsewhere, she usually transferred her company and affection to another in the same khaki – or Navy blue, or Air Force dark blue, or the drab olive brown of the Americans. Rarely did she date two of different units or countries.⁷⁹

Other women concur with her assessment, in recalling their preferences they were quite specific: “I dated mostly Navy fellows”⁸⁰ or “I felt more at home up at the Signal

⁷⁷ *Prince Rupert Daily News*, August 27 1940, 2.

⁷⁸ Marilyn Lake, “The Desire for a Yank: Sexual Relations Between Australian Women and American Servicemen during World War II” In *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2 (1992) 625. See also Cecilia Benoit, “Urbanizing Women Military Fashion: The Case of Stephenville Women” In *Their Lives and Times: Women in Newfoundland and Labrador, A Collage* (St. Johns: Killick Press, 1995) 120.

⁷⁹ *Prince Rupert Daily News*, August 21 1991, 7.

⁸⁰ Margaret Pearson, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 2 May 1998.

Corps.”⁸¹ In towns that were flooded with military personnel it may seem surprising that women tended to date within one regiment or division, when there was the presence of so many others. However, the stringent segmentation of wartime society in Prince Rupert and Prince George accounts for this phenomenon. Soldier’s individual personalities tended to be subsumed within the group they represented, thus, women remained faithful to the division in which they thought had the characteristics they would look for in an individual. There was little movement in women’s dating preferences, which made rivalries fiercer, each division vying to retain the affections of the women who dated them, or to attract new ones from other divisions.

Organizers of social events put safeguards into place at dances for servicemen to avoid competition from others. In Prince George, the Oxford Rifles recorded that: “Prince George’s young, but limited, populace of girls entertained a fortunate few of the regiment at a dance in town tonight. Our regimental R.P.s were present at the gate *to stave off any attempt of foreign units to crash the party.*”⁸² To totally bar other units was one strategy in avoiding competition. Another was to request that soldiers bring dates to dances, so there would not be an overwhelming number of men vying for a few women. This strategy was utilized by the Americans in Prince Rupert, when inviting Canadian troops to a dance in a new gymnasium, “all soldiers are welcome but it is requested by the sponsor that as many as possible will be accompanied by wives or lady friends.”⁸³ When such precautions were overlooked, brawls often resulted between servicemen.

⁸¹ Anna Porter, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

⁸² NAC RG 24, Volume 15132, Serial 1068. War Diary of the Oxford Rifles, 24 March 1944. Italics added for emphasis.

⁸³ NAC RG 24, Volume 15118, Serial 1034. Daily Orders for the 1st Battalion of the Midland Regiment, 15 April 1944.

Brawls between servicemen and Canadians and Americans were well known and fairly common, at least in Prince Rupert. While these fights were often about the rivalry between Canadians and Americans in terms of the disparity in wages, status and conditions, competition over women usually sparked such brawls. Charlie Davis, a former shipyard worker recalls one brawl that reflected the distrust of civilians toward servicemen, especially Americans, as far as socializing with women was concerned. He says, "the shipyard workers, or one section of them, had a party or dance there [the Sons of Norway Hall] one night and I think some American soldiers tried to get in and were barred at the door, and a brawl broke out there at that time."⁸⁴ American and Canadian servicemen generally stayed away from each other; anti-Americanism and national rivalries tended to erupt into physical altercations, where masses of servicemen 'mixed it up' on the streets of Prince Rupert.⁸⁵ Thus, there were tense daily relations between Canadians and Americans, contributing to the charged atmosphere of World War II Northwestern British Columbia.

Wartime society in Prince George and Prince Rupert was segmented, and social relations strained. Unlike traditional notions of the 'home front', wartime society in Northwestern British Columbia did not function as a cohesive unit. National issues such as the conscription crisis, Anti-Americanism, women's new position in the military, and the prevalent and condoned racism against First Nations peoples strongly influenced relations in these small and isolated towns, where people struggled to come to terms with the convergence of so many perceptibly different people. These struggles resulted in a

⁸⁴ Charlie Davis, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

⁸⁵ Prince Rupert Daily News, August 21 1991, 7; Charlie Davis interview, 29 April 1998 and Debra Newman interview, 22 October 1997; NAC RG 24, Volume 15117, Serial 1034. War Diary of the 1st Battalion of the Midland Regiment, 3 July 1942.

rigid compartmentalization of society in these communities. The compartments or segments people were placed in proved to be immutable, affecting social relations and the overall social milieu of wartime Prince Rupert and Prince George. Generally, day to day dealings between these disparate groups were tense, occasionally erupting into physical altercations. This compartmentalization did not mean however, that no positive relations resulted; the following chapter will examine the fun and excitement of wartime society. On the other end of the continuum chapter four will examine the negative and more appalling aspects.

Chapter Three

Glamour: The Romance and Hedonism of Wartime

The element of glamour and romance figured largely in the social relations of Prince Rupert and Prince George.¹ Hedonism or pleasure seeking heightened this sense of glamour as Marilyn Lake describes for Australia, “faced with an uncertain future, people lived for the day seizing pleasure when and where they might find it.”² Similar sentiments were echoed by a resident from Prince Rupert, “Lets live it up while we can, eh? Well, I guess there was a certain amount of that. And it also got to be a little more sexy, grab the moment you know.”³ This end of the continuum of social relations was a reflection of the uncertainty of the times and the hedonistic desires of those who were battle-bound. In *Virtue under Fire: How World War II Changed our Social and Sexual Attitudes*, John Costello describes these desires: “the passion of affairs in wartime was heightened by the need to make the most of every hour and the sadness of frequent partings was intensified by the uncertainty of whether either partner would survive to meet again. Relationships were broken as fast as others began, for wartime excitement and boredom encouraged companionship.”⁴ Although romantic relationships in war zones were undoubtedly more intense due to the proximity of danger, home front romances between civilians and soldiers reached an intensity unparalleled in prewar days.

¹ A sense of glamour pervaded most Allied countries. Glamour placed great stress on an alluring physical appearance, through cosmetic advertisements, pin-ups, and Hollywood war movies. In this thesis, glamour refers not only to an appealing visage, but the appealing, charming atmosphere of social events in Northwestern British Columbia. These events tended to place a spell over the inhabitants which were just emerging from the worrisome days of the Depression.

² Marilyn Lake, “Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II” in *Australian Historical Studies* (1992), 275.

³ Debra Newman, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 22 October 1997.

Figure 3.1

Excerpt from the Orders of the Edmonton Fusiliers, NAC RG 24, Volume 15056, Serial # 1054, indicating social events for that week.

<u>EDMONTON FUSILIERS C.A. PART 1 ORDER NO. 103 SHEET NO. 2 DATED 4-5-42</u>		
<u>NOTICES</u>		
<u>Y.M.C.A. – Y.W.C.A. HALL – 3rd Ave.</u>		
Monday	2000 hours	Bingo
Tuesday	1930 hours	Concert
Wednesday	2100 hours	Dance
Thursday		Open House
Friday	2000 hours	Crib Tournament
Saturday	1930 hours	Movie “Lady in the Morgue”
Sunday		Open House
<u>KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS HALL – Fulton Street & 5th Ave.</u>		
Monday		At Home
Tuesday		Dance
Wednesday		Singsong
Thursday		Bridge, Cribbage, Monopoly, Etc.
Friday		Badminton [sic] Tournament
Saturday		At Home Party
Sunday		Grand Social Evening with Refreshments

The romances with the soldiers citizens deemed as acceptable, varied in seriousness from flirting, to going steady, to marriage. All were made easier with the sense of glamour that pervaded the communities.

To relieve the military community of its boredom, civilian associations and the military organized many dances and recreational events for both elements of wartime society. To the townspeople, who knew or cared little about military training and

⁴ John Costello, Virtue under Fire: How World War II Changed our Social and Sexual Attitudes (Toronto:

maneuvers, the base towns seemed wholly geared toward recreation and socializing. The war experience for many young women was pure fun, as one woman reflected, "but as far as I was concerned, the war was only a good time for me."⁵ Different events and dances occurred every night of the week, and sometimes several social events were held on the same night. Figure 3.1, from the orders of the Edmonton Fusiliers in Prince Rupert indicates the breadth of social activity put on to occupy soldiers' time during the war years. These events were well attended by soldiers and citizens alike. Military personnel attended out of sheer boredom and the chance to meet local women; civilian women attended to meet soldiers as well, but also because they felt it was a patriotic duty to socialize with soldiers soon departing for overseas. Although all segments of military and civilian society were invited to most of these events, the compartmentalization of society tended to create an exclusivity to social events. In effect, those segments of society that were objectionable to townspeople's and male volunteer's sensibilities, such as NRMA personnel and CWACs, were often dissuaded from participating in social events. As a result of being ostracized, these groups tended to socialize within themselves, prompting comments from the townspeople such as, "[the CWACs] didn't mix with the girls or people in town."⁶ Thus, most civilians and General Service soldiers, airmen and sailors made up a select group that engaged in most of the socialization, seeming exclusive and glamorous. Dances were the most popular form of socializing, and with the big band music, food, and formal dress they were quite glamorous.

Dress, both military and civilian, played a large part in creating the aura of glamour at the dances in Prince George and Prince Rupert. Most women certainly

Little, Brown & Company, 1985) 9.

⁵ Teresa Nicholson, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 30 April 1998.

subscribed to the 'man in uniform' image, as long as they had a General Service badge on their arm. An interviewee from Prince Rupert ruminated, "and I will tell you, that when a fellow is all smartened up in a uniform, and maybe with a couple of hooks or something, he is far more attractive than afterwards when you saw him in civvies...boy, I'm telling you there is a certain romanticism."⁷ As this reminiscence illustrates, appearance was a great factor in attracting the opposite sex, in turn, bolstering self-esteem. The importance of dress to the military is reflected in this excerpt from the war diary of the Edmonton Fusiliers: "the dance held in the drill hall, was nicely attended and was highlighted with the appearance of a new uniform. The unit morale climbed to an unprecedented high, when the new attire was much to their approval – and their girlfriends!"⁸ Although the Canadian uniform was admired in this instance, the American uniform had an international reputation for sophistication and smartness. Marilyn Lake explains that in Australia, American servicemen had two stylish tailored uniforms in olives, beige-pinks and khakis, which "were striking and the subject of endless comment" and also a source of conflict between troops because Australian servicemen only had one ill-fitting uniform.⁹ Similarly in Prince Rupert, one civilian bystander to American-Canadian rivalries in dating recalled that "the Americans, it was always claimed by the Canadians, had an advantage because I guess the Americans had the nattier uniforms."¹⁰ Dress, whether for servicemen or civilians, was important in attracting the opposite sex.

Civilian women gazed at men in uniform, but hoped to receive also their fair share of looks. The boost to the economy that the war and the military brought to

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Debra Newman, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 22 October 1997.

⁸ NAC RG 24, Volume 15056, Serial 1054. War Diary of the Edmonton Fusiliers, 4 July 1942.

Northwestern British Columbia meant more disposable income to spend on appearance. Women had a large variety of clothing to select from when going to a social event. Interviewees recalled with incredulity the number of garments women they knew had, “Mary had I think about 5 or 6 evening gowns”¹¹ and “a friend had ...17 evening gowns in her closet.”¹² The possession of an evening gown was essential for young women wishing to take part in the social scene, whether these were bought or borrowed. However, other essentials, like stockings, were in short supply due to wartime rationing. Like the wartime cliché, women in Prince George and Prince Rupert also ‘faked’ stockings: “you painted your legs if you wanted to look like you had nylons” one woman from Prince Rupert explained.¹³

Although dress was an important part, it alone did not equate glamour. The surroundings of the dances contributed to the ambiance. The organizers spared nothing in the effort to entertain the soldiers, “they had flowers, they had champagne and the best of everything.”¹⁴ As mentioned before, most accolades were reserved for the functions the American military hosted. In Prince Rupert they had the newest recreational hall overlooking the city, and with their natty uniforms and American character, it created an ethereal aura akin to Hollywood. Even though citizens resented the ‘superior’ attitude of the Americans, they flocked to the glamorous atmosphere of the American events. One citizen, and former CWAC, whose sister married an American band member, recalls, “the

⁹ Marilyn Lake, “The Desire for a Yank: Sexual Relations between Australian Women and American Servicemen during World War II” In *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2 (1992) 628.

¹⁰ Charlie Davis, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

¹¹ Anna Porter, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

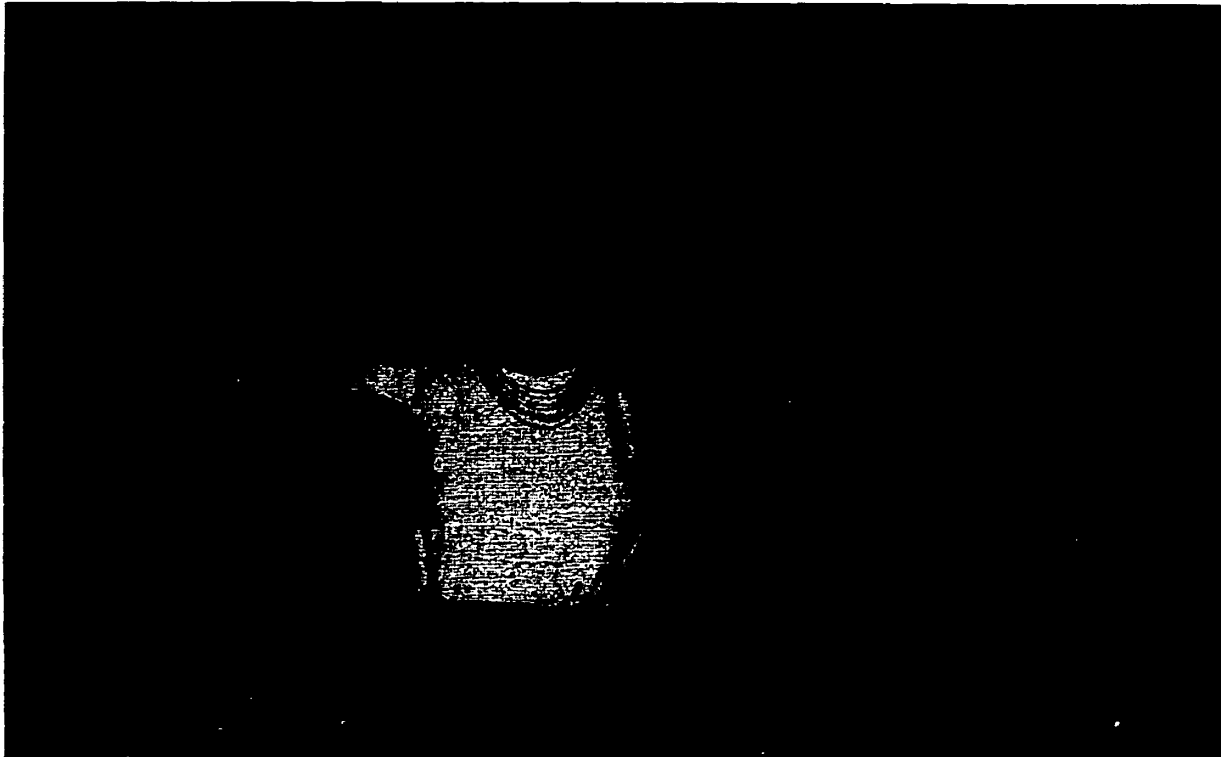
¹² Helen Colette, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 19 January 1998.

¹³ Joan Rebman, interview by author, tape recording Prince Rupert BC, 30 April 1998.

¹⁴ Helen Colette interview, 19 January 1998.

Figure 3.2.

Ingrid Bergman (far left) and other entertainers in Prince Rupert with the United Services Organization (USO) Tour. Prince Rupert City and Regional Archives, P988.9.3860.



Americans would have the best food and the best liquor and the best Orchestra.”¹⁵ It is not surprising that most citizens felt like movie stars with surroundings such as these, not to mention the fact that real movie stars came to Prince Rupert with the United Service Organization tours. One of the more well known stars to grace the stage in Prince Rupert was Ingrid Bergman, as photographed in Figure 3.2, who created such an impact on one interviewee that she remembered that Bergman was suffering from a head cold at the time.¹⁶ In Prince George, actress Marjorie Reynolds, who starred in *Holiday Inn*, came to entertain the US troops, and also “created a mild sensation by attending the hockey

¹⁵ Debra Newman interview, 22 October 1997.

¹⁶ Ibid.

game.”¹⁷ The appearance of Hollywood stars in Prince George and Prince Rupert was unprecedented and heightened the already glamorous atmosphere.



Figure 3.3. Sergeant's Party at Barrett Point. Prince Rupert City and Regional Archives, WP 997.67.13,329.

Another integral part of social activity and the glamorous aura was consumption of alcoholic beverages, by Canadians and Americans, soldiers and civilians. This is true for celebrations in peace times as well, but the uncertainties in wartime tended to intensify hedonistic excesses including alcohol consumption. In Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War, Paul Fussell describes the toleration towards alcohol consumption: “in wartime there’s an understanding that, considering the violence and the risk to life and limb and in the absence of a great deal of publicity and tut-tutting about ‘alcoholism’ – that would come after the war – drink is largely natural and

¹⁷ Prince George Citizen, February 18, 1943, 1.

harmless, very like cigarettes in the 1940s.”¹⁸ In Canada, alcohol was rationed, which made it even more sought after. Most interviewees recalled drinking occurred outside of ‘dry’ dances¹⁹, the alcohol often procured on the black market. The desire for drink, especially for the Americans, whose canteens were dry, could be taken advantage of by enterprising people. One interviewee recalls a time when a Canadian sailor ‘pulled one over’ on an unsuspecting American. He related, “they knew the Americans would like to get a hold of some [liquor]. So he got a bottle of some kind and filled it full of *Coca Cola* and he sold it, untested, to an American soldier for about 30 bucks, at the time. They said he took off fast before...[the soldier found out].”²⁰ Members of the CWAC occasionally took advantage where drink was concerned, perhaps playing on their ‘loose’ reputation. One former member recalls her peers frequented the beer parlours, “they would say ‘oh, well you just have to buy your first drink and the guys would come over to talk to you and would buy the beer for the rest of the night’.”²¹ Generally, alcoholic beverages livened up social events with little harm. It served to loosen inhibitions towards the opposite sex and was a form of bonding with peers. In the American base newspaper in Prince Rupert, ribbing fellow soldiers meant constant reference to inebriation, for example, “Cpl. ‘Lover’ Szyerszynski certainly tied up the weekend in a lovely bow. He gets a trifle happy on some spirits of joy juice and proceeds to knock himself out over some engaging female.”²² As well as fostering camaraderie in the military, drinking sometimes broke barriers between different segments of society, as

¹⁸ Paul Fussell, Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 97.

¹⁹ Donna & Richard Clarke, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 26 February 1998 and Debra Newman interview, 22 October 1997.

²⁰ Charlie Davis interview, 29 April 1998.

²¹ Debra Newman interview, 22 October 1997.

²² Acropolis News, 1 April 1944.

figure 3.3 illustrates. Here, there were no inhibitions between glassy-eyed civilians and Canadian soldiers. As well as crossing unwritten rules about personal space and public behavior, figure 3.3 demonstrates that drink could breach the perceptions that compartmentalization created, easing social relations. However, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, excessive drinking also often erupted into brawls between different segments of society. As well, alcohol was a contributing factor in some of the more odious relations between civilians and the military, as will be examined in the following chapter.

All these elements of glamour, the festive atmosphere, sophisticated dress, and consumption of alcoholic beverages encouraged romance. As well, the unusual circumstances of wartime created a heady atmosphere for relationships to occur. The proximity of the Japanese, once as close as the Aleutian Islands, gave the realities of the war immediacy to the soldiers. The soldiers' training in Prince George and Prince Rupert, and the good times to be had there, seemed only a brief respite for those destined to go overseas to fight, or for those to defend the country in case of enemy attack. John Costello describes the psyche of those soldiers on the home front: "the sheer size and technical sophistication of the World War II armies was such that two-thirds of all troops were in support roles and were consequently never exposed to enemy fire at the front. But license to kill implicit in military service transgresses humanities most sacred social taboo. It forces those at the 'sharp' end to come to terms...with the possibility of their own extinction."²³ This realization sparked hedonistic desires, especially where women were concerned. Soldiers did not want to go off to fight and perhaps die, without having

²³ John Costello, 135.

affectionate or sexual experiences, or knowing there was someone who cared for them 'back home'.

Therefore finding a romantic partner was a major preoccupation for soldiers. Due to the skewed sex ratios and women's preferences for particular units, the soldiers had to be especially diligent in their search, resulting in a preoccupation with 'skirt chasing'. The subject of women, romance, and who was seen with whom, figured largely in the gossip of the troops. For example, in the newsletter of the 102nd NBC Heavy Battery, they reported: "before we forget who was the stuff Gnr. Gillis was wrapped up with at the Toc H dance at Seal Cove. That Seal Cove sure must be the place for romance. First, it was Morte and now it is Joe."²⁴

While it was newsworthy that soldiers found romance, it was not exceptional when civilian women found it. Soldiers were not the only ones who were preoccupied with the opposite sex, and initiated contact. Like Australian women, women in Prince George and Prince Rupert 'chased' the soldiers they desired. One former sailor explained how persistent his civilian wife was when they met, "I was out there [Knights of Columbus Hut] one night and we met, she kept chasing me, and finally caught me."²⁵ Women who were active in the social scene usually dated numerous soldiers throughout the war years, but their affections were limited to only a handful. Margaret Pearson from Prince Rupert recalled wistfully, "there was only a couple that I really got attached to."²⁶ Another interviewee from Prince George shared a more intense and fleeting affection, "I was very much in love with one guy I remember...but he left and was on his way

²⁴ NAC RG 24, Volume 14371, Serial 391. The Missfire, Appendix to the War Diary of the 102nd NBC Heavy Battery, February 17, 1940.

²⁵ Steven Nicholson, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 30 April 1998.

²⁶ Margaret Pearson, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 1 May 1998.

overseas, and was electrocuted accidentally.”²⁷ These women, and others in both towns, corresponded with their beloved soldiers once they departed from Prince George and Prince Rupert. Many made their attachments more permanent with marriage.

Marriage became popularized and glamorized everywhere during the Second World War, and Prince George and Prince Rupert were no exception. Although there was a range of romantic involvement, marriage was the most permanent and patriotic commitment between soldiers and civilians. Furthermore, exchanging vows became fashionable, as Costello argues, “a formal ceremony with as many trimmings as ration books permitted, was still regarded as *de rigueur* for solemnizing matrimony.”²⁸

Although many marriages in Northwestern British Columbia were rushed, owing to the fact that the soldier husbands were being sent overseas, they incorporated many of the elements of prewar weddings, albeit on a more modest scale. A Prince Rupert resident and former CWAC recalls the circumstances around her marriage:

Jeff came in on a Monday night and said ‘we are going overseas, to the Philippines tomorrow’. And this woman was sitting there and she said ‘why don’t you get married’. OK. I phoned up the next morning, I phoned the government agent and the minister. My Aunt had a fruitcake left over from Christmas, this was March, and she turned it over. And I bought a little bride and groom and iced it, we went to the church [and] got married.²⁹

Her memory indicates the expectation that young lovers should be married in the trying times of war. Note that her husband’s position as a general service soldier being sent overseas accorded respect, thus, family members quickly accepted the marriage. It is doubtful whether her family would support such a rushed marriage in peacetime. She also recalled the ease and popularity of marriage in Prince Rupert in general: “it was

²⁷ Donna Clarke, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 25 February 1998.

²⁸ John Costello, 9.

²⁹ Debra Newman interview, 22 October 1997.

really nothing for the minister to have three weddings in a day...it was nothing to get married.”³⁰ There were some regulations that soldiers had to follow when getting married, however. These regulations seemed aimed toward preventing naïve soldiers from marrying unsuitable women: as one stated “the moral character and disposition of the intended wife are such that it would in no way be undesirable for her to occupy public quarters.”³¹ To give the soldier enough time to contemplate his decision to marry, a two month period was supposed to elapse between his registration to marry and the actual ceremony, but “in urgent cases, however, a Commanding Officer may waive this requirement.”³² From the women’s recollection of marriages above, it appears that this condition was waived quite often and was enforced only when the commanding officer had doubts about the future bride.

As the war carried on, more young people in Prince George and Prince Rupert paired off and married. The proliferation of marriage is evident from newspaper accounts. In 1937 the *Prince George Citizen* only briefly mentioned two marriages in the first six months in the area.³³ In the first half of 1943, it related detailed accounts of 21 marriages, including bridal showers, and began a column named ‘Wedding Bells’ devoted to these accounts.³⁴ Although half of these marriages reported were between civilians, the ones that included active soldiers tended to have more description and bigger headlines. Take for instance the marriage of Jessie Bond Sugden, the author of In the Shadow of the Cutbanks: A Story of Growing Up in Prince George. Her nuptials to an RCAF sergeant were announced with the headline ‘Sergt. F.A. Kenning and Miss

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ NAC RG 24, Volume 15056, Serial 1054. War Diary of the Edmonton Fusiliers, 25 August 1942.

³² Ibid.

³³ Prince George Citizen, 20 May 1937, 3.

Jessie Bond United” in the *Prince George Citizen*, which described, among other things, the beauty of her wedding dress: “the bride wore a full skirted ivory satin gown, fashioned with a tight fitted bodice, lilly pointe sleeves, and sweetheart neckline. A veil of illusion net, extended to the hem line and was held in place by a sweetheart halo, tipped with a sprig of orange blossom that once graced her mother’s wedding veil.”³⁵

This description evokes images of purity; that the bride is marrying with the purest intentions. Even though her soldier husband will eventually be sent overseas, she is noble in marrying him anyway. With newspaper descriptions such as this, it is no wonder marriage to soldiers was popularized and glamorized. In the war records of units stationed in these towns, it is evident that soldiers also felt the pressure to marry and to conform. The Edmonton Fusiliers in Prince Rupert kept a tally of soldier who had married, reporting, “Lieut. Hutton returned from furlough and is now a married man. This leaves only four single officers in the Battalion”³⁶ and in Prince George, the Oxford Rifles noted that “among the last group to return from furlough are many new benedicts a number of the boys having forsaken single blessedness for marital bliss.”³⁷ Although these particular men found wives outside of Northwestern British Columbia, many married local women as interviews and newspaper accounts attest. One of these weddings is captured in figure 3.4, a photograph of a double wedding between Canadian servicemen and local women at Barrett Point.

³⁴ *Prince George Citizen*, January to June 1943.

³⁵ *Prince George Citizen*, 15 June 1944, 3.

³⁶ NAC RG 24, Volume 15056, Serial 1054. War Diary of the Edmonton Fusiliers, 22 July 1942.

³⁷ NAC RG 24, Volume 15131, Serial 1068. War Diary of the Oxford Rifles, 4 January 1943.



Figure 3.4.
A Double Wedding at Barrett Point. Prince Rupert City and Regional Archives.
WP 996.116.11, 774.

It is impossible to ascertain the motives for marriage in the war years. Many young people met and sincerely fell in love, conversely, other couples married due to peer pressure, popularity of marriage, or a myriad of other reasons. Perhaps speaking from personal experience of her short-lived marriage, Jessie Bond Sugden (who is mentioned above) describes wartime matrimony in Prince George: “many marriages survived, and many didn’t, like so many things in wartime, nothing seemed permanent or

for real. It was very easy to become caught up in the emotions and uncertainties of the times that we were living in.”³⁸

The tendency to get caught up in emotions was often risky in terms of wartime relations. The desire for a relationship, and the stiff competition for women, caused some of the more sly soldiers to mislead civilian women with information that was impossible to authenticate. In Prince Rupert, many of the US servicemen must have exaggerated their wealth to attract girls, as it was claimed that “there wasn’t an American soldier here that wasn’t a millionaire, that they had a very well off family back in the states.”³⁹ Another form of misrepresentation was the marital status of soldiers. In both towns interviewees recall adulterous soldiers and civilians. In Prince George, one woman explained why she did not date servicemen, “if they’re married, and they all lied that they’re not really – but to me I didn’t know if they were married or what, so I didn’t bother to interfere with them.”⁴⁰ In her 1991 retrospective of the war years in Prince Rupert, Phylis Bowman recounts one well-known incident of adultery:

American officers were not encouraged to bring their wives up into Canada. Some of them, who were having such a good time with other ‘*femme fatales*’ here, told the folks back home that this area was too close to the fields of battle, was considered in the ‘Danger Zone’ and was therefore too risky for them to come. However, one brave wife decided to come here to ‘surprise’ her husband. When she got here guess who got the surprise?? There was a resulting divorce over that fiasco!⁴¹

Perhaps the knowledge that the adulterous partner came from another country and there was little chance of seeing them again, could provide a justification for an affair. In

³⁸ Jessie Bond Sugden, In the Shadows of the Cutbanks: A Story of Growing Up in Prince George, (Prince George: Spee Dee Printers, 1986) 29.

³⁹ Charlie Davis interview, 29 April 1998.

⁴⁰ Jeanette Carlson, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 22 April 1998.

⁴¹ Prince Rupert Daily News, 21 August 1991, 7.

Prince George, several interviewees believed that some married women, whose husbands were overseas, had affairs with American airmen, and it is rumored some children resulted from these unions.⁴²

Being carried away in the emotions of wartime and engaging in sexual activity was also risky, not only because contraceptive devices were scarce and unreliable, but because there was always a risk of venereal disease. It is difficult to assess how widespread premarital sex was, as there are no official records on consensual sex and interviewees are reluctant to discuss such intimate matters. However, it is safe to assume that it occurred more than in peacetime, as it has been noted that "sex and sexuality in all its guises and complexities played an extensive role in the war experience."⁴³ This is true of Prince George and Prince Rupert as well; this thesis has demonstrated that soldiers had a preoccupation with females and female sexuality and sought out pleasure at every turn. For the civilian's part, the atmosphere of Northwestern British Columbia, with its emphasis on glamour and romance (not to mention the near constant blackouts) lent well to sexual activity.

The realm of glamour and romance played a great part in the continuum of social relations in the wartime society of Prince George and Prince Rupert, as well as highlighting the fragmentation of society. The active soldiers, that civilian society valorized, formed part of a select group that engaged in the glamorous dating and social atmosphere in Northwestern British Columbia along with white civilian women. For them, shutting out the other elements of wartime society enhanced the glamour of the times, as they were set apart. The atmosphere was ripe for romance in wartime Prince

⁴² Jeanette Carlson interview, 22 April 1998, and Eve Brampton, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 30 April 1998.

George and Prince Rupert. As well, the fear of going overseas and the reality of being posted there created urgency for couples to solidify their relationships to one another. As long as the soldier was of high moral character (i.e. a volunteer), parents were eager to consent to their daughters' marriages. Due to the rushed nature of these marriages, it was inevitable that some would not last. However, for some, their long-lasting marriages stood as a reminder of the glamorous and exciting circumstances in which they met, in the base towns of Northwestern British Columbia.

⁴³ John Costello, 1.

Chapter Four

Horror: The Darker Aspects of Wartime Relations

In stark opposition to glamour, intimidation and horror resided at the other end of the continuum of social relations in Northwestern British Columbia. This aspect did not permeate society like glamour did; it was largely confined and hidden. Consequently, few interviewees recalled any unseemly incidents that occurred during the war years. One interviewee in Prince George said “I can’t remember any great evil, you know, descending on the town.”¹ Crime did occur, but due to the role of censorship few residents would have known the full extent. Furthermore, the military “usually attempt[ed] to assume jurisdiction over the servicemen who comit[ted] a civilian crime, rather than allow the civilian authorities to hold sway and provide the unfavorable publicity of a civilian trial” as Clifton Bryant explains in his study about khaki-collar crime, so entitled.² This chapter traces the darker aspects of wartime relations: ranging from rambunctiousness and intimidation, to theft, and finally to the horrors of physical and sexual assault. Like the glamorous aspect of wartime, these darker occurrences were also influenced by the strict segmentation of wartime society. Criminal actions were often the result of differences between groups of society. Segmentation also influenced who would be the perpetrators and victims of crime.

The same motives that drove servicemen to seek out glamour and romance were also responsible for their illegal behavior in Northwestern British Columbia. The proximity, whether real or imagined, to the warfront heightened the military community’s anxiety. Their anxiousness led to the loosening of some moral codes; as a result more

¹ Adeline Sanford, interview by author, taped recording, 28 January 1998.

crime occurred. Like their counterparts on the battlefield, home front soldiers engaged in intimidation, looting, and assault. In addition, the segmentation of society in Prince George and Prince Rupert made 'targets' of those groups that differed from the values of the military. This is not to say that these actions were condoned, as Bryant explains, "because of its concern with the civilian image of itself and its members, the military prescribe[d] especially circumspect comportment of servicemen in their public behavior."³ The Canadian army in World War II was also worried about their image in civilian eyes, as numerous orders about behavior were present in war diaries. Nevertheless, some individuals ignored these orders, either as a conscious decision, or they were forgotten in the face of opportunity.

Although not actually crimes, the boisterousness of soldiers created friction between the civilian and military communities, as well as consternation among civilian individuals. As mentioned above, the military tried to keep check on the servicemen, but the desire to let off some 'steam' often overruled these directives. The 102nd NBC Battery in Prince Rupert were harangued about undesirable conduct, "soldiers must refrain from acting in a rowdy manner on the streets and in public places. Loud talking and swearing, boistrous [sic] conduct and loitering on street corners create an undesirable impression and demean the soldier in the eyes of the public."⁴ It appears that these efforts largely failed, as complaints constantly appeared in newspapers. Two editorials in the *Prince Rupert Daily News*, entitled "Keeping Streets Respectable" and "A Dangerous Situation" appeared in 1942, lamenting the abominable conditions arising in Prince Rupert. In one, the editor states, "once again we feel constrained to protest at the

² Clifton Bryant. *Khaki-Collar Crime*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1979) 198.

³Ibid, 240.

condition of rowdiness that develops here night after night, no doubt due to excessive drinking... After vigorous protests and representations some three or four months ago, there appeared to be an improvement for a time. Now, however we appear to be slipping back into the old way.”⁵ Although the author does not specifically name soldiers as causing the rowdiness, it is implicit, as there was a higher authority to protest to - namely military headquarters. The second editorial is more specific in naming the military as the cause of Prince Rupert’s woes: “even if there were no women or children here, no quiet living normal citizens, only soldiers, sailors, airmen and essential workers, we cannot see where the war effort could justify *Sodom and Gomorrah conditions*.”⁶ Citizens appeared to have agreed with the editor’s summation of the situation in Prince Rupert. One wrote a letter to commend the editor on his article, asking of Prince Rupert, “are we going to sit idly, blindly and stupidly by letting ourselves be swallowed in a whirlpool of degradation?”⁷ From the editorials in Prince George it is apparent that civilians held a much fonder view of their soldiers and felt superior to cities like Prince Rupert, where there were fissures in military-civilian relations. In 1942, the editor of the *Prince George Citizen* wrote, “in some cities, conduct of soldiers, airmen and sailors has been the subject of criticism and bitterness...in Prince George, the conduct of men and officers of the armed forces has been splendid.”⁸ Perhaps, in general, Prince George’s service population was well behaved, but they were not immune to rowdiness and criminal behavior in their ranks, as evidence in this chapter will attest.

⁴ NAC RG 24, Volume 14371, Serial 391. Daily Orders for the 102nd NBC Heavy Battery, 7 August 1941.

⁵ *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 14 July 1942, 2.

⁶ *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 8 October 1942, 2. Italics added for emphasis.

⁷ *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 13 October 1942, 2.

⁸ *Prince George Citizen*, 17 September 1942, 2.

As the editorials in the *Prince Rupert Daily News* illustrate, citizens were worried about the effects of the amoral behavior of the military on their children. The town was full of servicemen, and it was impossible not to come constantly in contact with them, as Chapter One explains. Children were also exposed to the presence of the military and often sought out the soldiers, out of natural curiosity. Helen Colette was a young teenager at the beginning of the war. She recalled: “we wanted to see what was going on behind these big barb wire fences and go over and look, and I have a scar right here, from a barbed wire fence I got hung up on.”⁹ It was one thing for children to seek out the military, but quite another for the military to occupy the space of children at schools and parks. In Prince George, the commanding officer reprimanded the Oxford Rifles for using school grounds at the South Fort George elementary school as a place of socializing. In their orders it states, “this has caused considerable disruption during school hours, and furthermore, school buildings have been marked by soldiers placing their names, addresses and unseemly expressions on the walls and doors.”¹⁰ There were also attempts to regulate the use of offensive language and swearing in public places where children might hear. Complaints were obviously lodged with headquarters; orders for different units reflect this with numerous statements such as, “the practice of using foul and obscene language and swearing on the streets of Prince Rupert must stop forthwith.”¹¹ Parents feared that soldiers might have an even worse influence upon their children, besides swearing. In September of 1943, a concerned mother wrote in to the

⁹ Helen Colette, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 19 January 1998.

¹⁰ NAC RG 24, Volume 15132, Serial 1068. Daily orders for the Oxford Rifles, 28 March 1944.

¹¹ NAC RG 24, Volume 14356, Serial 560. Daily orders for the 17th NBC Coast Regiment, 21 September 1944. As well, NAC RG 24, Volume 14503, Serial 1346 Daily orders for the 44th Anti Aircraft Battery, 26 January 1945; NAC RG 24, Volume 15131, Serial 1068 Daily orders for the Oxford Rifles, 17 August 1942.

Prince Rupert Daily News, relating what happened to her son in a nearby park, which she thought was safe. She wrote:

But when my son (aged seven) came home Saturday afternoon, having been plied with liquor by two of the men in Army uniform, I began to wonder where safety could be found. When the very men being trained to go shoot and fight the battle of 'right against wrong' find it uproariously amusing to give strong drink to a child, and then give necessary tests determining his state of equilibrium, it is time a battle is started on the home front.¹²

As Bryant states above, the military were emphatic in maintaining good relations with civilians thus, the use of parks by soldiers was prohibited the following spring.¹³ In addition, the city's parks committee hired a man to supervise park activity, presumably so incidents such as this would not occur again.¹⁴ Sadly, there were other more harmful incidents involving children, which will be discussed later in this chapter in the section dealing with sexual assault.

Crime towards civilian property was common at this end of the continuum of military-civilian relations. Destruction and theft of military property were minimal as these materials were closely observed and regulated, however, civilian property was less regulated, and the military was more likely to be involved in its destruction.¹⁵ There is ample evidence that soldiers in Prince Rupert and Prince George caused great damage to civilian property. Much of the vandalism occurred as a result of brawls and rowdiness. For example, in the *Prince Rupert Daily News*, a story is related as to how a window on Third Avenue was shattered. They reported that it was "incidental to the efforts of the management of a hotel to eject a number of sailors from the beer parlor at 10 o'clock.

¹² *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 8 September 1943, 2.

¹³ NAC RG 24, Volume 14356, Serial 560. Daily Orders for the 17th NBC Coast Regiment, 15 May 1944.

¹⁴ CPR, City Council Meeting Minutes, 15 May 1944.

¹⁵ Bryant, 199.

Due to its inability to bend, a large window broke during the disturbance.”¹⁶ Other vandalism, of business, public and private property, was more deliberate. Hotels and restaurants suffered the loss of dinnerware that was destroyed by inebriated soldiers. For example, the orders of the 102nd NBC Battery in Prince Rupert stated, “glasses have been deliberately smashed on the floors and thrown through windows without lifting the sash.”¹⁷ Public property, like the South Fort George school above, was defaced by servicemen in an effort to leave some record of their existence behind, before heading off to battle. In Prince Rupert, trees in the Totem Pole Hill Park were damaged by troops carving initials and other expressions into them.¹⁸ Of course the vandalism which caused the most notice among civilians was toward their own property. Within the towns there was little opportunity or reason to destroy citizen’s belongings, but far outside the towns and watchful eyes, some vandalism took place.

In Prince George, citizens had recreational property at many lakes outside of the town. These properties proved irresistible for some soldiers out on maneuvers. The Oxford Rifles’ daily orders reflects this stating, “a number of complaints have been received from civilians that soldiers are causing damages to their property by breaking into summer cottages, boathouses, and using lumber or firewood brought to summer camps at great expense.”¹⁹ Although these types of crimes were non-violent, they still constituted an offense, caused loss for civilians and ultimately soured the feelings of the victims toward servicemen. As well as individuals causing damage, the whole military installation, at least in Prince Rupert, was detrimental to public property. It is estimated

¹⁶ Prince Rupert Daily News, 18 January 1944, 1.

¹⁷ NAC RG 24, Volume 14371, Serial 391. Daily Orders of the 102nd NBC Battery, 21 November 1940.

¹⁸ NAC RG 24, Volume 14628, Serial 394. Daily Orders of the 2nd Searchlight Battery, 24 May 1941.

¹⁹ NAC RG 24, Volume 15132, Serial 1068. Daily Orders of the Oxford Rifles, 5 June 1944.

that the military caused \$344,000 worth of damage to city streets and waterworks because of the heavy military traffic.²⁰

Another form of crime towards civilian property was looting and theft. Soldiers often vandalized or defaced property in Northwestern British Columbia to leave a record of their stay when they departed, but they also took mementos from the area to remember being there. Looting was a part of the war experience for most soldiers, be it overseas or in an allied occupied country. Bryant states that, "members of the military in all wars (and in peacetime) and of all countries, not just the United States, have committed property crimes against friendly civilian populations, even if the theft was only that of a chicken or some foodstuffs."²¹ In Northwestern British Columbia, troops were better fed than civilians on rations so theft of food was not necessary. The soldiers who looted appeared to covet memorabilia of British Columbia, especially if there was an indication, like an emblem, of where it was from. The superintendent of the Canadian National Railways wrote to the headquarters at Prince Rupert regarding theft of CNR property in Northwestern British Columbia, including Prince George. He notes that items of linen and towels were taken by soldiers on disembarking the train, undoubtedly for their "personal use", and suggests that there should be a search of all the camps as "all the linen belonging to this company is duly stamped or marked on each article" and should be easily retrieved.²² Like stealing linen from the train, soldiers took mementos at opportune locations. Service clubs, which entertained soldiers, proved to be an easy location to pilfer items reminiscent of the safety of Northern British Columbia. The

²⁰ K.E. Luckhardt, "Prince Rupert: a 'Tale of Two Cities'" in Sa Ts'e: Historical Perspectives on Northern British Columbia (Prince George: College of New Caledonia Press, 1989) 320.

²¹ Bryant, 206.

Knights of Columbus Hut in Prince George reported the theft of “small articles, ash trays, checker games etc” by soldiers to the authorities.²³ Local hotels also complained to military authorities regarding theft of such things as pillowcases, towels, glasses, ashtrays and lamps.²⁴ Although these thefts caused obvious consternation to the CNR, service organizations, and hotels, they were of relatively little monetary loss. Therefore, the theft of such small articles can be considered as looting, because the purpose was not to sell the items for money, but to keep these articles as mementos.

Theft on a somewhat larger scale from private individuals also occurred. Unlike looting, where soldiers stole for memorabilia, these crimes had more specific purposes. Affluent individuals and business owners were targeted for theft. In both towns the theft of money, jewelry and other easily disposable goods occurred. For instance, in Prince Rupert, a soldier broke into Bulger’s Jewelry Store seeking money but finding none; he stole a watch instead and was caught by the owner of the store.²⁵ In Prince George, on three separate occasions, soldiers were caught stealing specific items: clothing, a rifle, and a horse.²⁶ The stolen items give a clear indication of their purpose: escape. Many soldiers were unhappy with either the Prince George area, or their status as conscripts as chapter two attests; enough so to plan escape from military life.²⁷ The theft of the horse

²² NAC RG 24, Volume 14502, Serial 1346. Excerpt of letter in the Daily Orders of the 29th AA Regiment, 25 May 1944.

²³ NAC RG 24, Volume 15509, Serial 1664. Daily Orders for the 29th General Transport Company, 30 November 1943.

²⁴ NAC RG 24, Volume 14371, Serial 391. Daily Orders for the 102nd NBC Heavy Battery, 21 November 1940.

²⁵ Prince Rupert Daily News, 26 November 1942, 1. There is no indication to the nationality, status, or division of this soldier.

²⁶ BCARS, GR 2788 Box 4, British Columbia County Court Criminal Case Files, Prince George BC, 1942 – 1945. This figure is only for the soldiers *caught* in burglary and prosecuted by civilian courts.

²⁷ Another drastic form of escape was suicide. In “Prince George at War”, Tom Makowsky states “the newspapers would record few such incidents, as direct reporting of on-base activities was censored. Yet, there is evidence to suggest that such occurrences were not uncommon.” Tom Makowsky, “Prince George

especially points to this purpose, as the soldier was found on the horse nineteen miles outside of neighboring Quesnel heading in a southerly direction. Furthermore, his unit reported him missing on the 13th of April 1944, but he was not found until the 25th of April.²⁸

The military authorities tried to provide justification for criminal activities within their ranks. Since civilians already had a biased view of the conscripts, it was made to seem that NRMA personnel were responsible for much of the theft. In one case, the *Prince George Citizen*, with information from military authorities, carefully pointed out that one thieving soldier “during 18 months as ‘non-active’ had 10 minor offences to his credit.”²⁹ The fact that he was a conscript seemed to point to his criminal activity. This soldier’s accomplice was a General Service soldier; since GS soldiers were generally valorized by Prince George society, the *Citizen* attempted to set him apart from his peers by explaining that during his service “he had spent most of his time in detention”, thus, he was more in character with the zombies than other General Service men.³⁰

Military crime was often more serious than theft, taking the form of violence against civilians and military personnel as well as sexual assault. These sorts of crimes appear much less frequently in the historical record than crimes against property, although they were as numerous. The Canadian and American military authorities’ attempts to gain jurisdiction over crime and their proclivity for censoring such incidents can account for this imbalance. Indeed, it is remarkable that any indication of these events exists today, in historical records or memory. Although I pieced together some

at War” in *Sa ts’e: Historical Perspectives on Northern British Columbia* (Prince George: College of New Caledonia Press, 1989) 445.

²⁸ BCARS, GR 2788 Box 4, British Columbia County Court Criminal Case Files, The County of Cariboo Versus Pte. Harold Robert C. Tanton, Prince George BC, 1944.

violent aspects of wartime society through oral histories, newspaper accounts and war diaries, I could not have gained an appreciation of how horrible wartime crime, at its most extreme, could be without the efforts of a Prince Rupert Provost who had compiled a file regarding soldierly lawlessness for Prince Rupert intelligence during the war.³¹ This file contained cases of violence and sexual assault for a two-year period, from 1942 to 1944. Thus, these cases represent only a few of the sexual assaults that happened throughout the war years in both Prince George and Prince Rupert, as most of the incidents went unreported. Unfortunately, because of time, unreported cases, and military censorship the extent of violence and sexual assault during the war years in Northwestern British Columbia will never be known.

The brawls that resulted from the segmentation of society sometimes escalated to near fatal violence, as the war diary of one unit in Prince Rupert indicates. It records that on November 16, 1943, "a stabbing affray took place in the Knox Hotel in Prince Rupert. It is thought so far that a soldier, either Canadian or American to be involved."³² It is not clear whether civilians were involved in this altercation as no other entries about this incident appear in the war records; however other incidents involving civilians did occur as a manifestation of military-civilian tensions present in both towns. In Prince Rupert, a few soldiers attempted to beat a civilian man with whom they had a feud. Unfortunately for one unlucky civilian, he was mistaken for this man and "struck by two or three soldiers who were, evidently, under influence of liquor to some extent. He was

²⁹ The Prince George Citizen, 3 February 1944, 1. Note that the word 'non-active' is highlighted.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ This file is at the Directorate of History at the Department of National Defense. Correspondences, investigations, reports etc. re Subversive Activities and Lawlessness by Soldiers in Prince Rupert Area – Aug 42 to Oct 44. DND 341. PR009 (D8).

³² NAC RG 24, Volume 13872, Serial 2917. War Diary of the Prince Rupert Defenses, 16 November 1943.

struck over the eye with what was believed to be a rock in the hand of one.”³³ In another case of mistaken identity a few months later, two members of the City Council, as well as a third civilian, were struck down and suffered injuries at the hands of a few American soldiers.³⁴ One alderman suffered from a broken nose; the other, face lacerations.³⁵ In line with military policy, the US authorities assumed jurisdiction over the case, held military court and found the assailants guilty, sentencing them to a 10 month jail term, sending them back to the United States.³⁶ The expediency of this case reflects both the displeasure of the civilians at the attack of two leading citizens and also the embarrassment of the US military. Furthermore, this assault seemed like a culmination of all the social ills Prince Rupert was facing and signaled a change in civilian attitudes towards the military authorities. Until this incident, the city did not question how American soldiers were tried and prosecuted. However, after the attack and subsequent trial, city council minutes stated, it was “moved by Ald[erman] Elliot, sec[onded] by Ald. Sinclair that the US Authorities be requested to submit a full report on the assault involving two alderman and another citizen as soon as the trial is concluded, together with details of the sentence, and that if this is not forthcoming in due course the matter be prosecuted to its full extent.”³⁷ Due to the nature of this case, involving prominent members of Prince Rupert society, it was well known and widely discussed as one of the worst incidents of military-civilian violence.³⁸ However, there were rumours and

³³ The Prince Rupert Daily News, 10 November 1943, 1. Upon being struck, one of the soldiers said “G--- this is not the man.”

³⁴ The Prince Rupert Daily News, 9 February 1944, 1, and Edith Oliver, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 1 May 1998.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ The Prince Rupert Daily News, 21 August 1991, 7.

³⁷ CPR, City Council Meeting Minutes, 1 February 1944.

³⁸ Charlie Davis, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998 and Debra Newman, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 22 October 1997.

suspicious of even worse violence. One interviewee recalls a friend who worked in the coroner's office, telling her that she would be shocked if she knew of the happenings in the army camps - which sometimes escalated to murder.³⁹ Undoubtedly, there were more violent acts that occurred in Northwestern British Columbia than is recorded in the historical record, but to the extent these were censored will never be known.

Such violent incidents were more widespread in Prince Rupert than in Prince George, due to Prince Rupert's larger and more heterogeneous population, which proved more volatile. However, despite Prince George's pretensions that military-civilian relations were cordial, soldierly violence against civilians also happened. The *Prince George Citizen* reported one incident in which a soldier slapped a young woman "because she would not accompany him to a dance."⁴⁰ The civilian authorities dealt with the soldier in this case, where it was reinforced that "the court would not tolerate such treatment of young women by civilians or soldiers."⁴¹ It is unclear whether this was a volunteer or conscripted soldier; in any case his status would have certainly had some bearing on the situation. The liberties some military personnel felt they could take with women was another aspect of the darker end of military-civilian relations in Prince George and Prince Rupert.

Throughout the war years, citizens in Northwestern British Columbia had an underlying fear of soldiers' aggressive sexuality. Citizens feared for women's safety in these years, a departure from pre-war days when "in practically every section of the city...girls and women could walk anywhere unmolested."⁴² This change in women's

³⁹ Edith Oliver interview, 1 May 1998.

⁴⁰ The Prince George Citizen, 14 October 1943, 1.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² The Prince Rupert Daily News, 13 October 1942, 2.

safety during the war stemmed from the presence of the military, as women interviewees recalled. One woman from Prince Rupert explained “it was not that safe to go wandering around by yourself at nighttime. It wasn’t because they [soldiers] were out to get you or anything. But there was wolf whistles. You know in those days people were a bit more shy than they are today, so you didn’t feel comfortable.”⁴³ Besides the dismay wolf whistles created for civilian women, there was also the fear of violation. Another female interviewee explained that it was not safe for women to go out at night, or else they might get “molested” by soldiers.⁴⁴ In Prince George, a woman recalled that as a teenager, she and several friends were intimidated and backed into a corner of a downtown building by several soldiers. Fortunately the military police intervened otherwise she was unsure (and fearful) of what might have happened.⁴⁵

These interviewees’ fears were not unfounded. Military personnel often constituted a threat to women’s physical safety, and Northwestern British Columbia was no exception.⁴⁶ When a large population of anxious young men, trained and influenced by a masculine and aggressive military subculture converged, this aggression was sometimes directed towards female civilians. These behaviors ranged from catcalls and intimidation, to rape. These behaviors were apparently not widespread throughout the military in Prince George and Prince Rupert. However, those soldiers predisposed towards sexual aggressiveness found ample and justifiable opportunities in Northern British Columbia, with a female population that they perceived to be racially and morally inferior: First Nations women.

⁴³ Joan Rebman, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 30 April 1998.

⁴⁴ Eve Brampton, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 30 April 1998.

⁴⁵ Lois Black, telephone interview by author, Prince George BC, 22 October 1998.

Figure 4.1. From Prince Rupert City and Regional Archives, 987.22.



Although there were instances of assault against white women⁴⁶, Native women were by and large the victims of sexual assault by soldier and civilians alike. As ascertained in Chapter Two, service personnel constructed Native women as sexually rapacious and available. Because of these stereotypes, men having consensual or non-consensual sexual relations with them felt free of any responsibility, as was the case

⁴⁶ See the chapter entitled "War" in Susan Brownmiller's, Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape. Toronto: Bantam Books, 1976.

⁴⁷ Prince Rupert Daily News, 3 October 1944, 1 and 2 November 1944, 3. The former involves the assault of a local woman by an American Soldier, the latter involved the assault of a married women, whose husband was serving overseas, by a shipyard worker. Of course, there was likely to be many more cases that went unreported.

along the Alaska Highway where “by thinking of their partners as immoral creatures to whom sex meant nothing, they absolved themselves of all responsibility for their actions.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, soldiers constructed Native women as terrain to be conquered. Figure 4.1 implies that it is not only the ‘muskeg campaign’ that American soldiers must surmount to be equal to their peers, but the seduction of Native women as well. The American base newspaper perpetuated the stereotype that Native women were promiscuous with the depiction of scantily clad Native women that appeared in every issue, such as figures 2.1 and 4.1. About these depictions, the cartoonist wrote, “to get back to this Siwash cover girl stuff. The only reason we do not have a white gal on the cover is because they are too hard on the eyes. Sure they’re beautiful but ya wear your eyes out lookin’ at all the cloths [sic] they wear...so we combine the Siwash cloths [sic] with the white gal figur’ [sic].”⁴⁹ Thus, Native women were not more desirable to soldiers, but more sexually available, hence, the derogatory and explicit nickname “Bang Bang the Kootch” for this cartoon character.⁵⁰

The general stereotypes that white society had about Native women, compounded with the image of Native women the military perpetuated, encouraged sexual assault on Native women. American and Canadian soldiers sought out Native women for sexual relations, which often meant sexual exploitation. One former cannery worker from Port Edward recalled “American soldiers coming into the cannery, and standing behind the women doing the – filling up the cans – Aboriginal women – and waiting for them. And there were some horrible incidences of rape, and there were sexual crimes and there were

⁴⁸Kenneth Coates & William Morrison, The Alaska Highway in World War II: The US Army of Occupation in Canada’s Northwest (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992) 142.

⁴⁹ Acropolis News, 20 November 1943, 15.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

slapped together sort of sheds, put up in the bushes here and there along the tracks which were places of drinking and partying and carrying on.”⁵¹

Alcohol, as in other wartime experience, also played a role in the sexual assault of Native women. In the Peace River region during World War II, it has been noted that, “‘drinking parties’ provided an opportunity for sexual exploitation” of Native women.⁵² From the recollection of the cannery worker above, this aspect of alcohol seemed wide spread over British Columbia. As it was a statutory offence to provide Native peoples with liquor in Canada at this time, soldiers were warned “to exercise the greatest care in this relationship with Indians, particularly those who appear to be under the influence of liquor.”⁵³ This order suggests that the military authorities may have been particularly concerned with possible sexual relations between soldiers and Aboriginal women as it further states, “the company of Indian women or girls is to be avoided at all times.”⁵⁴ Certainly, these orders did not come from a sense of concern for Native peoples; but to protect soldiers from the ‘immoral influences’ that white society thought the First Nations had. However, there is ample evidence that military personnel in Northwestern British Columbia did not heed these orders.

In 1943, the military police in Prince Rupert reported that “there appears to be an increase in the number of service personnel [sic] (all branches) associating and drinking with Indian women” further “soldiers on late passes drift into their company, they being the only women on streets at late hours.”⁵⁵ In their study of the Alaska Highway, Coates and Morrison explain that a feature of interracial relationships was their connection to

⁵¹ Helen Colette, interview by author, tape recording, Prince George BC, 19 January 1998.

⁵² Coates & Morrison, 150.

⁵³ Daily orders for the 29th A.A Regiment, 23 August 1944, NAC RG 24, Volume 14502, Serial 1346.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

alcohol. They found that the restrictions to alcohol, often had the reverse affect where “some Native women, like Native and Non-Native men, drank heavily and were willing to do almost anything to get liquor.”⁵⁶ Likewise, in Prince Rupert many Native women, through whatever means, obtained alcohol from military personnel. On being charged with intoxication these women often revealed the sources of their liquor; one women “said that an American soldier had given her the liquor at a dance”, another “said that she got her liquor from a Canadian soldier.”⁵⁷ Although these women give no indication of the expectations the soldiers had in return for the liquor, there were incidences where the shared inebriation between soldiers and Native women escalated to rape.

Of the reported rapes in Northwestern British Columbia, one Canadian soldier was found “struggling” with a Native woman on a deserted street.⁵⁸ Another report concerning rape from the military police is more detailed. Alcohol played a large factor in this case, as it was reported “both the soldiers had been drinking, a strong smell of alcohol being present and both were more or less incoherent...the Indian girl was decidedly drunk, smelt of alcohol, was mumbling and swearing.”⁵⁹ Evidently, this was a drinking party in an alleyway behind a hotel, which got out of hand and resulted in the rape of this woman; her screams attracted the police. In the alleyway, the police found the woman naked, and two soldiers, an American and a Canadian, making an escape. Interestingly enough, even though the soldiers were inebriated and violated this woman,

⁵⁵ DND. Correspondences, investigations, reports etc. re Subversive Activities and Lawlessness by Soldiers in Prince Rupert Area – Aug 42 to Oct 44. 341. PR009 (D8).

⁵⁶ Coates & Morrison, 150.

⁵⁷ Prince Rupert Daily News, 5 April 1944, 1.

⁵⁸ DND. Correspondences, investigations, reports etc. re Subversive Activities and Lawlessness by Soldiers in Prince Rupert Area – Aug 42 to Oct 44. 341. PR009 (D8).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

they used “contraceptives” in the act.⁶⁰ This suggests that perhaps the woman had agreed to sexual relations in return for alcohol, and then changed her mind, resulting in the rape. Or else, like the rest of society, the soldiers believed that Native women were largely responsible for venereal disease. Although they had broken the law in raping this woman they would not go so far as to contract a venereal disease (a military crime) and render themselves ineffectual to their units. Obviously, they gave no consideration to the horror this woman faced in being assaulted, as she was seen as sexually available, personifying the cartoon character of ‘bang bang the kootch’.

As Aboriginal women were an ‘easy target’ for sexual exploitation because of their perceived racial characteristics, children were easy to target because of their vulnerability. A pedophile soldier sexually exploited at least one child in Northwestern British Columbia. In 1943, a small child was taken to an isolated spot in Prince Rupert where the child states the soldier “wee wee’d in him or on him.”⁶¹ A military doctor who examined the child concluded that there was no evidence to substantiate the child’s story, but a woman witnessed a soldier accompanying the boy. In any case, military police were ordered to patrol park areas and isolated spots, which seems to imply there was a fear that this was not, or would not be, an isolated incident.⁶²

The incidents of boisterousness, vandalism, theft, intimidation, violence and sexual assault stood in stark contrast to the glamorous atmosphere of wartime in British Columbia’s Northwest. Although time has faded the memories of these darker incidents, and they have been almost lost in the historical record, it is important to remember that

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ DND. Correspondences, investigations, reports etc. re Subversive Activities and Lawlessness by Soldiers in Prince Rupert Area – Aug 42 to Oct 44. 341.PR009 (D8).

⁶² Ibid.

these shaped wartime experiences like the realm of glamour and romance did. Social events, fun and romance pervaded the wartime atmosphere in Prince Rupert and Prince George and created a façade of glamour. Intimidation, crime, and the horrors of assault, although not widespread, created an incongruity to this vision of base-town relations. Thus, there was a dichotomy of experience. These events make up the darker end of the continuum of wartime relations; constituting another form of experience on Canada's home front. However, these incidents went largely unpublicized. This chapter has demonstrated ways in which the military authorities tried to either obscure soldierly crime, or placate the civilians' anger with unruly and criminal soldiers. Perhaps this explains why many interviewees could not recall any unseemly incidents that occurred during the war years. Another more likely explanation as to why these incidents escaped the minds of the people I interviewed lies in the stringent segmentation of wartime society. Most white civilians did not associate with the element of society, First Nations women, which suffered the most from military crime. Hence, they did not know of it. As for the perpetrators, it is possible that civilians would not believe that volunteer soldiers would be involved in crime, as this was an element of wartime society that they celebrated. On the other hand, as was discussed previously, the authorities laid blame on conscripts, which civilians tended to avoid anyway. Like all aspects of relations in Northwestern British Columbia, segmentation also played into these darker occurrences.

Conclusion

On the 15th of August 1945, civilians and service personnel in Northwestern British Columbia celebrated Victory over Japan day, signaling the end of the Second World War. Residents and servicemen poured out onto the streets of Prince George and Prince Rupert, waving British flags, parading around town, and reveling in the knowledge that peace had come at last.¹

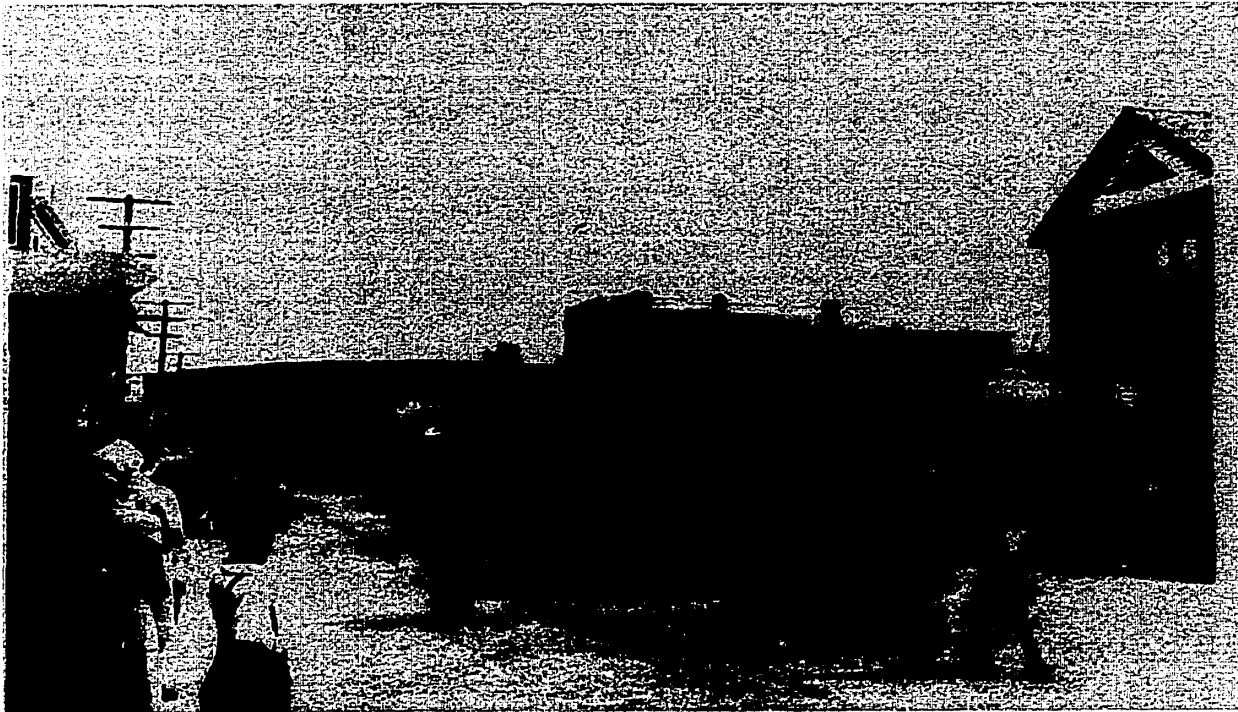


Figure 5.1.
'Victory over Japan' Parade down Third Avenue, Prince George. 15 August 1945.
Sowpal Collection, Prince George Public Library, Sow 2 c2.

For both the military and the civilians these festivities also signaled an end of the exciting, tense, and sometimes tragic relations that resulted from base-town society. Early in the fall of 1945, the American and Canadian militaries began dismantling their installations in Prince George and Prince Rupert, and by 1946 all of the military had departed. Phylis Bowman describes this process, "the great exodus began – the great

wind-down of moving families out to new, or old homes; of transferring troops and personnel back to their enlistment bases for discharge; of cleaning out barracks and forts and stripping down big guns and searchlights; and of straightening out a myriad of things which had been vastly changed during the tenure of the war.”² Like so many things in war, the social atmosphere in Northwestern British Columbia proved to be ephemeral. One Prince Rupert woman, who took full advantage of the socializing which occurred during the war years remarked, “I always felt sorry for all the young people after the war, I wondered what they did because we had so much to do. There was only six thousand in Prince Rupert, before the war, so there weren’t that many girls here, and lots of men so you were never bored.”³

Boredom was certainly not a characteristic of the social atmosphere in World War II Northwestern British Columbia. The large numbers of military personnel, and the fanfare at their arrivals and departures, led to a social atmosphere conducive to excitement. As well, organized and spontaneous social events such as sporting contests, ice skating, swimming, and dances contributed to the fun to be had on the home front. For soldiers destined to go overseas, the home front in Northwestern British Columbia was the last stop to revel in the safety of home and to experience romance and hedonism. These desires, and the civilian’s willingness to accommodate them, resulted in a glamorized social atmosphere. On the other hand, the same anxiety wartime created resulted in an atmosphere ripe for crime and assault; thus, social relations in wartime Northwestern British Columbia can be characterized by a dichotomy of experience on a continuum of military-civilian social relations. These diverse experiences were greatly

¹ See figure 5.1, Servicemen and Civilians parading down Third Avenue in Prince George.

² Phylis Bowman, We Skirted the War! (Prince Rupert: Independent, 1975) 60.

influenced by the compartmentalization of wartime society into distinct groups with distinct characteristics.

Wartime society in Northwestern British Columbia was not cohesive. Rather, society in Prince George and Prince Rupert was segmented as a result of national issues permeating these communities. Issues such as the conscription crisis and the American influence in Canada tended to set volunteers, conscripts and American GIs apart from each other, in effect parceling wartime society into immutable categories. People in wartime Prince Rupert and Prince George had differing experiences depending on to which group one was relegated. For example, some groups such as the men conscripted under the NRMA were shunned and largely left out of the glamorous aura of these towns because of their reputation for cowardice, while volunteer soldiers were essential to the glamour. In the same way, civilian Native women, who soldiers constructed as sexually available, experienced the horrors of sexual assault much more than their Caucasian counterparts. Hence, the war experience for individuals on the home front in Northwestern British Columbia depended on where they fell in a divided society: white women and volunteer soldiers had a fun and memorable war experience, while conscripts, civilian men, and Native women's experiences were stressful, unhappy or horrifying.

However, these experiences – manifestations of the relations borne out of segmentation of society - did not endure. Once base town installations were dismantled, so was the divided, tension-filled, wartime society. The women's divisions in Canada were terminated in 1946 and thousands of servicewomen had to readjust to civilian life. Most servicemen were also discharged after the war: volunteers and conscripts returned

³ Mia Reimers, Personal Interview with Teresa Nicholson (April 30, 1998)

to civilian status, which erased any divisions between them. Within a matter of years, life in Prince George and Prince Rupert resembled that of pre-war days. The transformation hypothesis, discussed in the introduction, did not apply to Northwestern British Columbia; society in Prince Rupert and Prince George was not significantly transformed by the military installations, nor was it a desire of the citizens. Jessie Bond Sugden recalled, "with the war over, it was now back to the business of resuming life and trying to get back to where we left off, at least that seemed uppermost in the minds of the men that came back home to Prince George...Little did we know at that time, but Prince George was on the verge of becoming a boom town. The influx of people and industries was to change it completely."⁴ It was not the war or wartime relations that radically altered society in British Columbia's Northwest, but the phenomenal growth of the 1950s and 1960s, and the need for lumber, pulp and paper.

Nevertheless, there are still vestiges of, and a legacy from, this period of time. Although the soldiers departed after the war, the Japanese Canadian families that were evacuated from Prince Rupert, and had been a vital part of society and economy, never fully returned. Steven Nicholson stated that "not that many [returned]. A few returned to Port Edward...Of course they were back there [the interior] for years."⁵ There was also a noteworthy demographic shift for Northwestern British Columbia arising out of the popularity of marriage following the war. Most of the people I interviewed had siblings or very close relatives living either in the United States, or Eastern Canada who had moved there with their husbands directly after the cessation of war. Many of the soldiers who had married local girls opted to stay in Prince Rupert or Prince George, returning

⁴ Jessie Bond Sugden, In the Shadow of the Cutbanks: A Story of Growing up in Prince George (Prince George: Spee Dee Printers, 1986), 31.

home “long enough to get civilian clothes and were right back here.”⁶ One woman who had married remarked that her husband, who initially did not like Prince Rupert, “was more of a Rupert booster than I ever was.”⁷ Dozens of local men who had served in the United Kingdom and Italy brought home ‘war brides’. Once in Northwestern British Columbia, these women had to adjust to their new lives, husbands and families. Although they constituted a new element in the communities, their low numbers and primarily British heritage did little to significantly transform postwar society.

Although this thesis focuses on Northwestern British Columbia the conclusions that are drawn here could certainly be applied to wartime base towns throughout Canada, as well as having relevance to Allied base towns throughout the world. The core issues that led to the segmentation of society in Prince George and Prince Rupert, were not initially local ones. These were national and international issues, which often sparked heated debate within the federal government, wider Canadian society, then became localized in the claustrophobic conditions of wartime in base towns. One of these issues which locals were aware of, was Mackenzie King’s decision to conscript men for national defense. To Northern British Columbia residents, or any patriotic community in Canada, these men seemed contrary to the loyal fervor of the home front, and were often ostracized from the extensive socializing that took place during wartime. Similarly, base towns on both coasts had to deal with an influx of American servicemen, which proved to be difficult owing to the prevalent anti-Americanism which seems to be an enduring trait of Canadians. However, unlike the NRMA personnel, American soldiers were soon welcomed, and sought after due to their wealth and generosity. These views about

⁵ Steven Nicholson, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 30 April 1998.

⁶ Ted Williams, interview by Tom Makowsky, tape recording, Prince George BC, 1989.

American personnel are not limited to my area of study; they could particularly be applied to the East Coast, where thousands of Americans arrived in 1942, and bases were maintained throughout the Cold War.⁸

Another controversial national and international issue was the introduction of female divisions within the Allied militaries. The abundant literature about these divisions tend to focus on national debate and policy of their inception; rarely do these studies examine the day-to-day social relations of the CWACs in civilian society, for instance.⁹ The experience of these women's divisions, or any other segment of wartime society, cannot be studied in a vacuum. Socializing was a key component to wartime experiences, and only by examining the interactions and interrelations in base towns, can historians understand the demarcations in, and the ethos of, Canadian wartime society.

This thesis also has put forth an alternate view of the home front. Much of the writing about the home front in Canada approaches it as a 'male-less' society, focussing on the changes in women's roles, as they had to compensate for the absence of men. However, this was not the case in Prince George, Prince Rupert, or any other base town in Canada, where the local men who had enlisted in the military were replaced at least four times over with other soldiers. This thesis also refutes the notion that those on the home front were united in a spirit of sacrifice, putting aside their differences for the 'war effort'. It was the war, and wartime conditions, which heightened tensions and fissures in society throughout its duration.

⁷ Anna Porter, interview by author, tape recording, Prince Rupert BC, 29 April 1998.

⁸ The impact American bases had on Maritime society has already generated some inquiry along these lines, see for instance Anita McGee, dir, *Seven Brides for Uncle Sam*. National Film Board of Canada, 1997.

⁹ See for example, Ruth Roach Pierson's 'They're Still Women After All': The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986.

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Abbreviations

BCARS	British Columbia Archives and Record Services
CPG	City of Prince George
CPR	City of Prince Rupert
DND	Directorate of History, Department of National Defense
FFGRMA	Fraser Fort George Regional Museum Archives
NAC	National Archives of Canada
PRCRA	Prince Rupert City and Regional Archives

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