



Probis Club of Central Edmonton Newsletter

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Editor: Ken Hoffman

Website: www.probus-central-edmonton.com

Email: probustcent.ed@gmail.com

Tuesday, June 16 Keith Gerein

Keith Gerein, a reporter from the Edmonton Journal, spoke about media and his almost 20 years of experience as a journalist. His time has been spent entirely with the Journal. During his tenure, he has reported on city hall, health sector, provincial affairs, amongst other areas. His memorable assignments include being the onsite reporter for the Fort MacMurray fire and one year as an embedded reporter in Afghanistan.

He shared observations on the state of media and the Journal. His view is that a free press is vital to democracy. Its role is the objective reporting of the facts. For example, this enables citizens to better evaluate the performance of governments. Right now, we are inundated with news from a great many sources of these sources many have a significant bias.

He explained why the print media, like the Journal is struggling financially. This is due to loss of a great deal of its advertising revenue. Competition from the internet has been a major issue. While readership is up revenue is not. The challenge they face is a way to monetize online activity. They have yet to find a way to return to former level of revenue. This has led to a loss of staff. The loss of staff resulted in:

- Loss in quality
- Difficulty covering stories
- Loss of corporate knowledge
- Loss of beat reporters.

Covering Fort MacMurray fire was challenging in part because of the lack of knowledge on how to deal with the many logistical issues, such as where to stay.

With respect to Afghanistan he stated that one challenge was the constant heightened emotional state. He was always at risk, because of attacks on the location he stayed at. He did not fully realize this physical impact until he returned home and found how exhausted he was. He stated that another challenge was the military rules that make it difficult to fully cover stories.

He characterized the year 2020 as the worst year ever. It started with the airplane crash in Iran, then Oil price collapse and finally the Covid 19 pandemic – all in the first half. Each of these were significant stories in Edmonton. Each presented unique challenges to cover, in part, because of the constrained resources

Keith elaborated on all these items and several others. You can find his column in the Edmonton Journal in the first section often on page 2.

Wednesday, June 23 Dr. Rod Macleod

Dr. Rod Macleod spoke on Sam Steele. Rod Macleod, Professor Emeritus, was professor of History and Classics at the University of Alberta. During his tenure he served as Chair of the Department of History and later as Associate Dean of Arts. He has written extensively on the history of Western Canada as well as Canadian legal and military history.

Sam Steele, Major General Sir Samuel Benfield Steele KCMG CB MVO, was a distinguished Canadian soldier and police official. Sam was born in 1873 in P.E.I. His family moved to Ontario in 1848 to a small farm. He was largely home schooled. He was an officer of the North-West Mounted Police, most famously as head of the Yukon detachment during the Klondike Gold Rush. Also, he was commanding officer of Strathcona's Horse during the Boer War.

Much of the information we have on Sam came from his personal papers. The U of A was able to obtain Sam's papers some 40 years ago. Sam retained "everything" and was a prolific letter writer. As a result, these papers contain a wealth of information. The only challenge was reading his written.

Sam's major role in the history of Canada and western Canada started in 1873 when he took part in the Red River Expedition. When he joined, he could have been an Officer, however he joined as a private. He felt he would learn more as a private. This desire to learn was a hallmark of his life. There were 300 North West Mounted Police to cover all western Canada. He took on several challenges as he progressed through the ranks of the police, such as:

- One year in Edmonton to help build a fort
- Fort Macleod where he was dealt with Sitting Bull, ultimate convincing him to take the Sioux back to USA
- While stationed in BC, he worked with a tribe in to settle a treaty
- He was involved in the signing of Treaty 6 and 7.

Sam gained a reputation as the best trouble shooter in the NWMP, thus when the Canada needed to establish order during the Alaskan Gold rush, he was tasked with the job. He was successful at this task bring order and safety to the Gold Rush and Dawson City. However, in doing so he offended powerful people and was reassigned.

In 1900, he took command of the Strathcona House cavalry and was stationed in South Africa to fight in the Boer war. While there, he met Lord Baden Powel. His relationship with Baden Powel led to him taking command of a unit of the South African Constabulary in 1901. After 5 years he returned to Canada.

He joined the Canadian Military to fight in WWI. By this point, he was getting older and was assigned a role training soldiers, rather than being at the front.

He died in January 1919. He had married while in Fort MacLeod. He had 3 children, 2 girls and 1 boy. He was ambitious, avid reader, and sought knowledge. Like most people of his era he held prejudicial views. While he never achieved his lifelong design of becoming the Commissioner of the NWMP, he had an indelible impact on Canada during its formative years.

If you wish to learn more, you can acquire one of Rod's books on western Canadian history.

**Enjoy the Summer
Stay Healthy**