

## Interview with Hugh Segal, FHG #4

Conducted by David Rankine, FHG #1781, in May 2007



**Rankine:** *What are your fondest memories of Fort Henry?*

**Senator Segal:** Well you need to know first of all that one of my very first dates was at Fort Henry for a Guard performance in 1974 or 1975...

The Marines came up for the Sunset Ceremony, and my wife Donna Armstrong (a Kingston girl, born and raised), had two brothers who were in the Guard. Roy Armstrong, her little brother and Fraser the youngest.

1975 was an election year and Mr. (Bill) Davis was Premier and he came to the Fort for that ceremony. Because I was a junior member of Mr. Davis' staff, and I was desperate to get Donna to agree to marry me, I thought, well here's a smart guy, I would invite her for a date at the Fort, and be supporting her brother who was in the Guard, and in the meantime I could show her that I was an important person.

Had she gone as the sister of a member in the Guard, she would have had a really good seat, rink side, with a wonderful view of everything, but because she was my date, we sat behind the pillar. That's when I acquired a healthy respect for how the Fort was run, because actually a sister of a member of the Guard should have had a better seat than some local guy that was trying to convince a stunning Kingston girl that she should lower her standards and maybe marry me.

So that was my first contact with the Fort, and then of course I would follow both her brothers' career in the Fort and used to remark at how much weight they would lose everyday, they would literally, now I don't want to be unkind to Roy, he's still in the military, but I'm sure he

would drop 15 pounds, just from water loss you know. Needless to say there were ways to put all that liquid back.”

**Rankine:** *The Founder of the Guard, Ronald L. Way, through all his years of research and devotion to preserving and showcasing Canadian heritage, said that it is only our history that makes us different from the United States.*

**Segal:** One of my predecessors, Hal Jackman had a really interesting view which he advanced all the time. Before Hal became Lieutenant Governor, he was one of the one profound business people in the world. His insurance empire was much larger than just Canada and he always said that one of the things that really makes us different from the United States, and in a way that never offended the United States, is the whole issue of the Crown. The Fort Henry Guard as a historical Guard is really about that. If you think about the history of the Fort, why it was established, in terms of the early 1800s, the notion of protecting the river route to the capital, making sure the Americans never came across, one could argue in the same way you could say: *if you put cheezies in your ashtray to keep elephants away and an elephant never shows up, I guess the cheezies worked.*

So we built the Fort to propel the Americans and they never attacked. So clearly the Fort is one of those things, like NATO, which was a huge success without a shot ever being fired. But if you think about the whole progress of the British Empire and the Crown, and even how Canada itself was not born through civil war or through violence, but through a kind of evolutionary process which is very different from the American War of Independence and very different from the Civil War, one that took the greatest amount of American lives of any war America has ever been in, you understand the difference in the two Guards in the sense that Guard and the Marines represent that difference.

I was so honoured to be asked to be Honorary Commander, and was I am committed to making sure the Fort gets everything it needs going forward, from both levels of Government, both. We made a little progress this year but we have a lot more progress to make. Because the combination for having money for programming, and for a larger Guard, we'd do better with a larger Guard if we could manage it, plus also finding the capital cost to keep the Fort from falling is a real challenge. I'm kind of hopeful that after the next provincial election, we hopefully will get more investments, and I'm hopeful the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rideau Canal may give us some further leverage to get some more investment in the Guard.

As the local Senator and as Honorary Commanding Officer, I intend to do everything I can and when someone says “aren't you the Commanding Officer, don't you have a conflict of interest if you're managing provincially from the Fort then....yep!, guilty as charged. I want to get as much money for the Fort as I possibly can because it is a huge tourist draw, it is why the rubber-tire crowd comes through, why we have so many conventions and other events, and the Guard is the glue that holds it all together.