Keynote Speech by Senator Vivienne Poy

Hong Kong 1941

D.A. Wilson secondary School

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Students, teachers, parents and friends:

First of all, I want to thank David Robinson and the D.A. Wilson Secondary School for inviting me to speak this evening. I know you are all very excited about your up-coming trip to China and Hong Kong, and you have all been preparing for it, mentally and physically as well as financially. Believe me, this trip will change your lives, and give you a much wider perspective of the world we live in. Most important of all, you will be learning about a part of Canadian history that is little known in Canada.

The reason why you are making the trip is primarily because of the close connection between Canada and Hong Kong at a crucial turn of events in history that has linked Canada forever to Hong Kong.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge the tremendous help I received from Dr. Y.C. Wan and Mr. T.W. Chu, both from the University of Hong Kong Libraries; Mr. Tim Ko Keung, who does independent research with the Centre of Asian Studies, also at the University of Hong Kong, and Mr. Alfred Lai, who is writing a book on the Hong Kong veterans of the Second World War. Without all of them, we wouldn't have these amazing pictures I will be showing you tonight.

Today, I am going to tell you a story that will add to your knowledge of the history of a part of the world that has been defended by Canadians. Since I am from Hong Kong, I will concentrate on the life of the colony around the time of the Battle of Hong Kong.

After the outbreak of the 2nd world War in Europe, and the invasion of China, there was a threat that the Japanese would attack British colonies in the Far East. When Britain requested re-enforcement for the colony of Hong Kong, Canada responded by sending troops for its defense. Unfortunately, there was no independent assessment by the Canadian government of the

indefensible position of Hong Kong, and there was little knowledge of the ambition of the Japanese military. The fact that inadequately trained Canadian contingents were sent, unprepared for battle against a vicious enemy, has raised many questions in the minds of Canadians.

China is invaded

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One cannot speak about Hong Kong without speaking about China at the same time. Even though Hong Kong was a British Colony, the two were inextricably linked by the majority Chinese population, and there was no border restriction on their movement. For example, when my father was a young man, he worked, at one time, for the Guangzhou (Canton) government, and he and my mother used to commute every week by train, spending the weekends in Hong Kong.

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In order for you to understand what happened to Hong Kong in 1941, we need to know what happened in China. On July 7, 1937, Japanese and Chinese troops fought at the Marco Polo Bridge in the Lugouqiao region near Beijing. This was the beginning of the undeclared war between the two countries.

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In 1938, Japan invaded south China, and refugees started streaming into Hong Kong, believing it to be a safe refuge because it was a British colony. From 1937 to 1941, the population of Hong Kong increased from 700,000 to 1,600,000.

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As a city, Hong Kong was secondary to Shanghai, which was prosperous and glamorous. The latest fashions worn by wealthy people in Hong Kong came from Shanghai which was the fashion capital of East Asia. This changed almost overnight.

No one wanted to believe that Hong Kong would be attacked. With the arrival of the refugee artists, scholars and writers from China, Hong Kong suddenly became the cultural capital of the Chinese world.

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Like many of the women in Hong Kong, my mother volunteered by helping the refugees. No one was considering leaving Hong Kong for Free China (the part that was not under Japanese control) because conditions there were so bad, The exception were men like my father, who went into China to help with the resistance against the Japanese. China was in great need of dedicated and well educated men like him.

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With the sudden increase in population, the economy in the colony boomed, and there was a thriving smuggling trade with China, across Japanese-controlled territories, making some people very rich. Manufacturing in the colony also flourished.

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On October 12, 1938, the Japanese landed in Daya Bay (Bias Bay) and defeated the Chinese Nationalist army. Guangzhou (Canton) was occupied.

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From then on, the Japanese established outposts along the border with Hong Kong, and amassed troops along the border. The Japanese Commander-in-Chief in south China, Lieutenant-General Takaishi Sakai, designated the 38th Division under Major-General Sano to carry out the attack on Hong Kong.

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This Division was training daily at Baiyunshan which had the same topography as the area at Gin Drinker's Line. Nightly, the troops were preparing for border attacks on Hong Kong. Certainly, contrary to popular belief among the British that the Japanese couldn't see well at night, and that

their soldiers were scruffy and untrained, these soldiers were battle-hardened, experienced troops, well-versed in night fighting, and tough and tenacious in attack.

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The fall of Guangzhou became a day of national shame for many Chinese, who decided that it was up to them to save the country. An emergency meeting was held in south China to establish anti-Japanese tactics.

The East River Detachment organizes

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A band of 120 guerrillas formed a detachment near the East River area, and this came to be known as the East River Detachment. I would like to pay particular attention to these guerrilla forces because I will be spending quite a bit of time on them later.

There were many guerrilla groups all over China; some were loyal to the Nationalist government, and some were communist sympathizers but at that time they all worked together to defeat the Japanese. I will concentrate on The East River Detachment because its branches operated in the New Territories and in Hong Kong, and it had the closest ties with the Allies in South China during the entire Pacific War.

The East River Detachment was supported by many overseas Chinese, including my father. When I was little, I used to overhear adults talking about these guerrillas, about the things my father did during the war, and the lifelong friends that he made at that time.

After the Japanese occupied Guangzhou (October, 1938), the East River Detachment guerillas infiltrated the New Territories to establish a base, without the knowledge of the colonial government. They needed the cooperation of the villagers, some of whom were drafted into the Detachment.

The East River Detachment was subdivided into Brigades, such as the Inner-City Brigade, the Marine Brigade or the Transportation Brigade. The

Brigades were then divided into Units. The establishment of the guerrilla base happened to be timely since no one could have known how fast Hong Kong would fall into Japanese hands. The guerrillas were determined to be prepared, having learnt from their experience with the Japanese in China.

With the refugees from China came the tales of massacre, rapes and starvation. Somehow, the people in Hong Kong didn't really want to believe the same could happen to them, and life went on as usual.

The British perspective

What was the view of the British government? London was well aware of Hong Kong's military deficiencies, but the colony was regarded by many as expendable. It was generally understood that Hong Kong could not be held but must be defended. In the event of an attack, Hong Kong was supposed to hold out for at least five months.

The Governor of Hong Kong, wrote to the British government in October 1940, urging the withdrawal of the British garrison "in order to avoid the slaughter of civilians and the destruction of property that would follow a Japanese attack", but no one listened. Soon after, he retired due to ill health, and was replaced by Sir Mark Young, the new Governor.

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The British Government and many Hong Kong residents wanted to believe the head of the British troops in China that the Japanese would not declare war on the British or the Americans. However, a request that the Hong Kong garrison be reinforced was made but the request was denied by the War Office in London.

In 1941, the British Commander-in-Chief of the Far East also requested an increase in the garrison in Hong Kong, but it was again denied because Churchill believed that there was not the slightest chance of holding Hong Kong, and therefore, did not want to increase the loss of more British troops.

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Despite Churchill's decision, the campaign for reinforcements continued. When he retired from his China command in July, 1941, he stopped off in Ottawa en route to England, where he met with Canada's Chief of General Staff, H.D.G. (Harry) Crerar. It was believed that Hong Kong could withstand an extended siege if it had the addition of one or two battalions. He did not suggest to Crerar that Canada should supply the manpower, but a proposal was made to the British Chiefs of Staff that Canada should supply the manpower.

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The British Government had misjudged the importance of Hong Kong to Japan as a centre for the movement of troops and materials, and as a base for its navy. The colonial government in Hong Kong tried to placate the Japanese government by censoring the more virulent anti-Japanese literature in the colony in the hope of avoiding war.

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In July 1941, Major-General C.M. Maltby, MC, was appointed General Officer Commanding (GOC) in Hong Kong. In the same month, all Japanese assets in Hong Kong were frozen, following similar action in Britain and the U.S., but bartering in the colony continued.

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The defense of Hong Kong was entirely dependent on a garrison of 11,000 regular British and Indian troops, and a citizen force of 1,387 Hong Kong volunteers. Some of them joined as dispatchers because they owned motorcycles, such as my future father-in-law.

Canadians join the defense of Hong Kong

At the last moment, on November 19, 1941, there was a further reinforcement of two Canadian battalions – the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers.

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Both battalions were militia, but had been graded by the Canadian military authorities as insufficiently trained and not fit for combat. None of the soldiers had trained on the mortar or anti-tank rifle. Many of the men who hastily joined had not even finished their recruitment training. They were given lectures on the way to Hong Kong - such as the size of the flannel to clean their rifles with! They were meant to be there for garrison duty and not to fight.

Another example of the lack of training comes from veteran Walter Jenkins, who was sent to defend Hong Kong without knowing how to load a rifle. In an interview, he said “The only thing I’d ever fired was a .22, as a kid shooting rabbits.” What he did in training camp was drive trucks and put in telephone lines. He didn’t know anything about being a soldier.

To add to the above problem for Brigadier Lawson, the Canadian Commanding Officer, was that the ship on which these troops were to sail had only room for 20 of the 212 vehicles, which were then consigned to the freighter *Don Jose.* It never reached Hong Kong. When the *Don Jose* reached Manila, the war with Japan had begun, and the U.S. forces were given approval to use the Canadian equipment in the defense of the Philippines instead.

Later in the War, a Royal Commission investigating the provision of these apparently unsuitable troops was told by the Canadian CGS that all the first-line battalions were earmarked for Europe, and that it was thought that there would be an opportunity in Hong Kong to put right the deficiencies in equipment and training.

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Despite their deficiencies, the Canadian troops were fit and enthusiastic, and excited much favourable comment when they marched past General Maltby, the Commanding Officer in Hong Kong, on their arrival in the Colony on November 16, 1941.

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Brigadier Lawson was given command of the Island Brigade, which included his own two Canadian battalions, and the machine gunners of the

Middlesex. He was ordered to cover the entire coastline of Hong Kong Island to prevent an enemy landing.

Hong Kong had no significant air or naval defense. The Kai Tak Royal Air Force base in the Colony had only five planes, serviced by seven officers and 108 airmen. An earlier request for a fighter squadron had been rejected, and the nearest fully-operational RAF base was in Kota Bharu, Malaya, over 2,000 km away.

Hong Kong also lacked adequate naval defense. All major naval vessels had been withdrawn, and only one destroyer, HMS *Thracian,* several gunboats and a flotilla of motor torpedo boats remained. It was presumed that the HMS *Prince of Wales* and the HMS *Repulse* would come from the South Seas to relieve Hong Kong when necessary. It was also assumed that the U.S. Pacific Fleet in Peal Harbour would be able to contain the Japanese in the event of a major conflict.

Plans were made with a Commando Group, consisting mainly of Danes, to operate in China in close co-operation with certain groups in Hong Kong. However, these plans were put in jeopardy because of the early surrender of Hong Kong.

Despite all the deficiencies, General Maltby still felt confident in his ability to defend Hong Kong. He even envisaged the colony as a springboard for future operations into China. As late as December 3rd. 1941, he visited the border posts, and observing the Japanese soldiers on duty across the frontiers in China, he saw nothing to change the officially held view that the Japanese soldiers were scruffy, ill-trained, and incapable of operating at night! He also agreed with the intelligence reports which stated that the Japanese had no intention of attacking Hong Kong in the foreseeable future. What he didn't know was that, while he was observing the Japanese border guards with his binoculars, their commanding officers were finalizing the plans to seize Hong Kong five days later.

The Japanese prepare for invasion

Now, let's see what the Japanese plans were for Hong Kong?

For some reason, the Japanese government also believed that the British defense would be able to hold Hong Kong for half a year so they

planned their invasion in advance by infiltrating the colony with spies, under the command of Major-General Ito Takeo. These spies worked as masseurs, hairdressers, barmen and waiters.

The Japanese drinking halls in Wanzai were considered by the British troops to offer more in entertainment value than anything the Chinese could produce. The Japanese smilingly offered them cold beer, exotic food, accommodating women, and generous credit facilities, and listened to their conversations.

The British did not believe that Japan would invade Hong Kong. This view was partly due to the relatively cautious treatment the British nationals received from the Japanese in the International Settlement in Shanghai, after the Japanese occupation of that city. So, Japanese nationals in Hong Kong were never under close surveillance.

Colonel Suzuki, an intelligence officer, was exposed by a British agent, but the Foreign Office didn't expel him from Hong Kong because Britain and Japan were not at war. It's not surprising that when he departed of his own accord at the end of November, barely two weeks before the invasion, he had with him the complete details of the British defense plan.

As well, a Japanese officer who was later killed in the fighting was found to have a map on him of Hong Kong, printed in November 1941 in Guangzhou (Canton), showing all the pillboxes and gun positions ringed with red ink.

Some Japanese residents were even able to lay concrete plinths in merchants' warehouses on the Kowloon waterfront from which artillery guns were later to fire with devastating effects onto British positions on Hong Kong Island.

Security was so lax, no one should be surprised that after Hong Kong surrendered, the barber at the Peninsula Hotel turned up in the uniform of a Lieutenant Commander of the Japanese Navy, as he took over the position of Commandant of the Stanley Internment Camp.

The invasion

In the expatriate settlement in Hong Kong, it was business as usual while the Orientals fought each other in China. Some in the commercial British colonial community actually approved of the weakening of China.

Life went on as usual in Hong Kong. On the evening of **December 6th, 1941**, the sound of revelry filled the Peninsula Hotel where the new Governor Mark Young attended a charity ball. Reports of Japanese troops massing to the north of the Chinese border continued to be reported, but since there had been many false alarms, an air of optimism prevailed.

The next day, on **December 7th, 1941**, a report of Japanese concentrations in the area was described as "certainly exaggerated" and "deliberately fostered by the Japanese." But by midday, a mobilization call went out and a state of emergency was announced over the radio. Even then, some who heard it thought it was just another preparedness test.

However, that same morning, the entire garrison was ordered to war stations. The Canadian force was ferried across from Kowloon to the island. By 5 p.m. the battalions were in position. And Brigadier Lawson's headquarters was set up at Wong Nei Chong Gap in the middle of the island.

That morning, my father-in-law who had joined the Hong Kong Volunteers, went to report for duty with some of his friends. He mentioned that others who had joined suddenly realized that there was real danger of war, and didn't turn up for duty at all.

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Schools were closed on Monday, **December 8, 1941**. My future husband, who was 6 years old, went up to the roof of their apartment building early that morning with the servant to collect their laundry from the clothes lines. They heard planes flying overhead and thought it was another preparedness exercise. Then the air raid sounded ominously. Practice alerts had never taken place at that hour before, and suddenly, they heard the loud rattle of anti-aircraft machine gunfire mingled with the explosions of bombs. Within minutes, the Royal Air Force at Kai Tak Airport was wiped out.

That morning, my mother's youngest sister, Jenny, and her new husband, had just gone to Kowloon to the City Hall in Hong Kong to register their marriage, and the bombing started. They never made it back

across the harbour for the wedding ceremony. Till the day her husband died, my aunt wondered whether her marriage was legal since they didn't have a wedding ceremony and had no witnesses!

I was a six month old baby at the time. With three young children, my poor mother really had a handful. Fortunately, the extended family is an integral part of the Chinese culture, so my mother was not alone. Our extended family immediately moved into the back stage of the Lee Theatre, a famous theatre built by my grandfather in the 1920s. It was felt that it was safer there and I am not sure why, but we were safe. There were many changing rooms, a kitchen and washrooms. The adults realized that we had to move out of our homes because of the danger of looting while the fighting was going on. My maternal grandparents also moved in with us throughout the duration of the battle.

Within a couple of hours of the bombing, the population in Hong Kong heard about the destruction of the U.S. fleet by the Japanese in Pearl Harbour, and the sinking of the HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse.*

The morning of December 8th was the evening of December 7th in Britain. HM government learnt that the Japanese forces, without any previous warning, either in the form of a declaration of war or an ultimatum, had struck Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong. The following day, the British Foreign Office instructed the British Ambassador in Tokyo, in true diplomatic language, to inform the Imperial Japanese Government that a state of war existed between the two countries. How very British! As Winston Churchill commented after the war, "some people did not like this ceremonial style. But after all when you have to kill a man it costs nothing to be polite."

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That same morning, December 8th, the Japanese ground forces moved across the frontier of the New Territories and met resistance from the British and Indian troops (Gurhas). But because of strong enemy pressure, these troops fell back to the "Gin Drinkers' Line", with the hope of defending the line for a week or more.

But the next day, **December 9, 1941**, the Japanese captured Shing Mun Redoubt, the most important high ground and strategic position on the left flank of the Gin Drinkers' Line.

The attack was launched under cover of darkness. Their victory revealed how General Maltby had completely underestimated his enemy.

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At 3 a.m. on the morning of **December 10th**, there was a loud bang on the door of villager Chung Poon's house in the New Territories. Thinking that it might be bandits, he answered the door with a knife in his hand. He opened the door to find five guns pointing at him. For Chung and the rest of the population of Saikung, the Japanese occupation had begun. The Japanese were knocking at every door to force the villagers to act as their porters. Little did they know that the Chinese guerrillas had already established their base there.

The same day, "D" Company of the Winnipeg grenadiers was dispatched to strengthen the remaining defenders on the mainland (Kowloon & the New Territories).

On **December 11th**, the Japanese cavalry passed the Saikung Market. There was no disturbance or fighting, since the police had been withdrawn before the Japanese arrived, and the villagers just stayed indoors. On the same day, the Canadian unit had their first combat with the Japanese army. By midday, General Maltby ordered the withdrawal of all troops from the mainland to the island.

On **December 12th**, enemy guns were lined up along the Kowloon wharves.

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At 9 a.m. the next day (**December 13th**) a Japanese staff officer crossed to Victoria Pier in a launch bearing a flag of truce, and presented to Governor Mark Young a demand for the surrender of the colony, under the threat of heavy artillery from Kowloon, and bombardment from the air.

By then, another younger sister of my mother, Josephine, had her home in Kowloon taken over by the Japanese military because it was along the water front. It was used to place artillery facing Hong Kong.

The offer to Governor Mark Young to surrender was rejected outright and the blitz began.

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During the nights of **December 18th and 19th**, the Japanese effected landings at three different points on the island, (North Point, Braemar Point and Sau Kei Wan) eventually cutting it into eastern and western halves. My father-in-law, Bill Poy, who was a dispatch rider, said he saw a Canadian soldier being killed in a bunker in Wong Nai Chung Gap while he was delivering messages between Headquarters and the troops.

The Japanese who landed in North Point took over the electrical generating station which was guarded by civilian volunteers, a group of older men, all of whom were killed. The Japanese troops crossed to the south of the island, and there was a great deal of fighting towards Repulse Bay and Stanley.

On **December 21st**, Governor Mark Young was given further instructions from Churchill that "there must be no thought of surrender."

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But, on **Christmas Day, 1941**, at 2.30 p.m., all fighting had ceased, and at 6.30 p.m., Hong Kong capitulated. Of the 14,000 defenders, 1,500 lay dead. Twice as many would die in the three years and eight months of captivity and deprivation that followed.

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As for the Canadians, the casualty rate was more than 50%. (out of 1,975, more than 1,050 were either killed or wounded).

Governor Mark Young was removed to the Peninsular Hotel, which became the headquarters of the Japanese; afterwards to Formosa (now Taiwan, it was under Japanese rule), and then later to Mukden.

Hong Kong under occupation - The East River Detachment Activities

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The survivors of the garrison and of the Hong Kong Volunteers were sent to POW camps, with the exception of the Chinese Volunteers who were told to take off their uniforms and return home. There was one exception, and that was Francis Lee Yiu Piu, who chose to become a POW to be with Col. Lindsay Ride, and I'll tell you more about this later. He is the person standing in the back.

By the beginning of 1942, the Japanese made a public announcement of their intention of reducing the population of Hong Kong from 1,600,000 to what they deemed a manageable figure of 500,000, and they very nearly succeeded. The unfortunate ones were picked up in the streets and taken by truckloads to junks in the harbour. These were towed out to sea and sunk, or set on fire.

In 1942 alone, 83 ½ thousand (83,435) burials were recorded. Many were victims of war, terrorism or reprisals. Truckloads of dead bodies were dumped daily into a long rectangular pit on the side of the Upper-level Police Station.

The rest of the population was reduced by starvation to the extent of cannibalism. The rice ration of 8.46 oz. per person per day was provided for those who were fortunate enough to get it, and this was often mixed with sand. People lying in the streets were cut up for meat before they were dead. Further reduction of the population was by forced evacuation, as well as repatriation of Chinese nationals back to China.

My mother was stranded with 3 very young children by herself because my father was with the resistance in China. And if he had crossed the border back to Hong Kong, he would have been immediately executed.

My family became refugees, constantly running from the advancing Japanese forces on Chinese soil. Some members of my extended family went back to their ancestral villages in China because they had rice fields, so at least, food was plentiful. Fortunately, these areas were not under Japanese occupation.

After Hong Kong surrendered, the guerrillas of the East River Detachment became very active. English books don't mention these resistance fighters, and for that reason little is known about them in the Western world. I did my research on them for my MA thesis, based on memoirs and texts in Chinese, as well as more recent newspaper articles with interviews of those who were still living. Because all the names are in Chinese, I will attempt to simplify them so as not to confuse you.

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The East River Detachment guerrillas held a very important position in Hong Kong and the surrounding areas during the Japanese occupation. They carried out espionage, sabotage and rescue. They passed important information to the Allies, and helped escaped prisoners from POW camps get to Free China.

Right after Hong Kong surrendered, the most urgent task of the guerrillas was to smuggle important Chinese nationals back to Free China, some of whom had gone to Hong Kong as refugees. Between January and June 1942, about 850 people were smuggled out. Almost all were Chinese intellectuals, government officials and anti-Japanese diehards whose names were on their most-wanted lists.

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It was also around this time that my mother received a letter from my father delivered to her by a man who was probably a guerrilla or a guerrilla sympathizer. The letter instructed her to follow the messenger, with the three of us, into China. She said she refused because she didn't know the man and it could have been a trick. Then, another letter came, and this time, she knew it had to be from my father. I don't think she had much of a choice anyway with three small children. Most of our extended family was planning to leave for Free China. It would certainly be better than to continue to live under the Japanese occupation in Hong Kong.

The network of guerrillas was so extensive that on the day after Governor Mark Young surrendered, Agent Li, through his connections, was able to join the occupation police force as an investigator, and by 1943, after passing all his exams and tests with high marks, and, because he spoke both

Japanese and English, he was able to get transferred to the headquarters of the Intelligence Department of the Kempeitai (Japanese Secret police).

Since the Allied bombing of the Kowloon No.4 railroad, security was tightened, but Agent Li was still able to pass an enemy map of Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories to the Americans via the East River Detachment.

In the last year of the War in 1945, he was able to give warning to the guerrillas about roads and shipping being sealed off by the Kempeitai, and so he was able to save many of his compatriots' lives. He remained undercover for the entire duration of the occupation, working for the Japanese secret police. And, this is only the story of one guerrilla.

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You have seen this picture before. You see Francis Lee standing in the background. He was the one Chinese volunteer who chose to be a POW to be with Col. Ride in order to help him escape. Col. Lindsay Tasman Ride was an Australian who was a professor of Physiology at the University of Hong Kong. Francis was a clerk in his department, who had earned Ride's trust and respect. They were both volunteers during the War, and Col. Ride was a Commanding Officer of the Hong Kong Field Ambulance.

The men in this picture were the first group to escape from a POW camp on January 9, 1942. Aside from Francis Lee, the rest were also professors at the University of Hong Kong. So, they were only in the camp for 2 weeks. It was through the ingenuity and connections of Francis Lee that the escape was successful. You see, the POW camps were infiltrated by the guerrillas and their sympathizers, and Francis was able to make arrangements, not only to get the four of them out of the camp, but all the way to Free China. The guerrillas disguised them - it wasn't so easy to disguise Europeans as Chinese villagers - hid them from the Japanese search parties, fed them, and took them by boat and by road out of Japanese occupied territories.

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In the documents written by Col. Lindsay Ride, many to the British War Office, as well as to MI5 (espionage), these events were mentioned, and

the guerrillas were called affectionately as “our guerrillas,” or “red” guerrillas, because of their sympathies with the communists. Col. Ride was full of praise for these men, women and children who risked their lives to help escapees.

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When these four men arrived in Free China, Col. Ride formed the British Army Aid Group (BAAG) in 1942, with its headquarters in Huizhou, which also happened to be the base of the East River Detachment.

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After its formation, BAAG agents collaborated with the guerrillas to plan further escapes from the POW camps. All the escapes were planned with the assistance of the guerrillas and their village associates in the New Territories.

Once the POWs got out, they were directed to find their way to Saikung (New Territories). Once there, they came under the protection of the “Chamber of Commerce.” They were then handed over to the guerrillas, who would escort them to Huizhou. My father’s involvement with the East River guerrillas and with BAAG resulted in lifelong friendship between him and Colonel Ride, who was later knighted by the king.

When the Japanese military realized they could not stop the escapes from the POW camps, they severely punished all those left behind, so the attempts had to stop. However, medical supplies, food and messages continued to reach the POWs.

The East River guerrillas took great pride in their relationship with the Allies, and because of the importance of this work, there was an international division in Hong Kong with some English-speaking members. Their main mission was the rescue of Allied nationals, as well as providing intelligence to the Allies.

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In June, 1944, Lt. Donald W. Kerr of the 14th Squadron of the U.S. Air Force was shot down while bombing Kai Tak Airport. He parachuted down thinking that he would fall into the brutal hands of the Japanese.

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A teenage boy, who was watching his descent, rushed over and led him to a small cave where he hid him until nightfall. Kerr's descent was also seen by the Japanese, but when the boy was questioned and said he saw nothing, the troops left to look elsewhere. That night, the boy led his village elders to the cave, who spirited Kerr to another hideout, and from there he was able to escape. Boys like him were guerrilla sympathizers, and they were called "little devils". This boy's name was Li Shek.

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Maps of Japanese shipping and important military posts of Hong Kong were passed on to the Allies, and the U.S. Air Force depended on intelligence from these guerrillas before their bombing raids in Hong Kong.

The guerrillas in Hong Kong were considered very important to the Allies in the Pacific War, and especially by the U.S. government. In Oct. 1944, the 14th Squadron of the U.S. Air Force sent a representative and a radio operator to meet with the East River guerrillas to obtain cooperation in gathering enemy intelligence, and to establish radio transmission in Hong Kong.

The following March (1945), the U.S. Navy sent personnel to consult with the East River guerrillas in preparation for an Allied landing in south China.

There are many more heroic stories of resistance to the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, but I hope from what I have said this evening, you have gained further insight into the situation in Hong Kong during the Pacific War.

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These men and women were a raw, untrained fighting force of farmers, villagers and fishermen, some as young as 13, using homemade weapons and guns stolen from the Japanese soldiers.

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Armed with guile and cunning, they opened an escape pipeline from occupied Hong Kong into Free China, and they managed to turn villages and paddy fields into bloody quagmires of guerrilla warfare. They were the Japanese' greatest headache, whose patrols never ceased to hunt for them. Such was the undefeatable spirit of the people of Hong Kong.

In November 1941, almost two thousand young Canadian men, most of them teenagers or in their early twenties, were sent to defend a British colony that was already deemed indefensible by the British government. Out of this tragedy grew the close bond between the Canadians and the people of Hong Kong; both having defended freedom with their lives.