

A day in the life of..... **MICHAEL S BAXENDALE**, part of **KEGS 1949 – 1953**, sharing some of his memories and experiences:

Wednesday July 8<sup>th</sup> 1953 was my last day at KEGS. I remember it well because that night the swimming team, of which I was part, swam against Colchester. The next day I sailed from Southampton for Canada with my father.

It was in September 1949 that I entered the first form at King Edward VI School. The headmaster was Nigel Fanshawe. He came to us from Eaton where he had been senior math master. Assigned to Holland House under housemaster Mr. Johnson I recall in the four years that followed Holland was something of a sports dynasty winning swimming, track, soccer, cricket and cross country titles. But perhaps that is the way I chose to remember it--we were very proud and loyal.

1951 was a great year for KEGS. It was our 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A Fete was organized to celebrate the event. The school band, dressed in their scarlet uniforms, held the "fort." We, the first and second formers, in bathing costumes, body paint wielding home-made spears made assault after assault on the fort until we were all "killed" by volley after volley of blank .303 ammunition. The spectacle symbolized the victory at Rorke's Drift in the 1879 Anglo/Zulu War. Eleven Victoria crosses were awarded in the action. The Brits were lead in this war by Lord Chelmsford.

In years to come, both as a paratrooper and a war correspondent, I was to witness war first hand and close up. My time in the cadet corps at KEGS may have helped.

Following active military service with the parachute battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment, part of NATO'S Mobile Strike Force, I joined the Montreal Star, one of Canada's leading daily newspapers. At the Star I held a variety of editorial and management positions founding, along the way, Optimum Publishing International Inc. in 1975. Since then we have published hundreds of quality non-fiction books. You can always see what we are up to at [www.optimumbooks.com](http://www.optimumbooks.com).

One interesting armed conflict I covered was the Mohawk revolt at Oka. With a news photographer I lived behind the Mohawk barricades during the long hot summer of 1990. The conflict started over an attempted grab of Indian land by villagers who wanted a larger golf course. The land in dispute included an ancient Indian burial ground. The conflict ended two and a half months later with the Mohawk holdouts surrendering to the army in late September. They were arrested but found not guilty in the trials that followed. The full story is to be found in my book "This Land Is Our Land: The Mohawk Revolt at Oka." It became an international best seller

Only days after we finished the media tour for "This Land is Our Land" I was off to the Middle East to cover Desert Storm. Again with Galbraith, the talented war photographer. The last day of the ground war found us with the First British armored division (Desert Rats) at the Highway to Hell north of Kuwait city. The photography we managed to get out graphically depicted the death and destruction that modern warfare inflicts. Earlier the Rats had cut off the retreating T 72 tanks of the Iraqi Republican Guard, only to be ordered to let them regroup and continue to Baghdad. I often wonder how much future carnage in Iraq could have been avoided if the Rats

had been allowed to finish the job. "Short of Babylon" is the title of my book about that war.

As this week ends, news comes of two more of my old regiment's soldiers being killed in southern Afghanistan. The total this year is more than forty. I think of those days we played our war games at the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary Fete at KEGS. We loved it, but truly, there is nothing heroic in war.

Today I live in a century old house in Maxville, Ontario in Glengarry County--a county founded in the late 1700's by Highland Scots and United Empire Loyalists. I have no plans to retire and hope to write and publish, hunt and fish, as long as my innings lasts. Among my most treasured possessions are the five first-place, enameled and bronze medals bearing the school crest that I won for swimming and track at KEGS more than fifty years ago.