Extract From

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APPENDIX IV

Saturday, November 26, 1949, is a date that will long be remembered by all residents the North Shore, particularly those in West Vancouver.

At 1:40 pm on that date the west approach to the Capilano bridge was washed out. At 2 pm the gap in the road was 12 feet; and by 5 am the raging torrent, which the normally quiet river had become, had widened the gap to 100 feet and sti1l the water was rising. West Vancouver was completely cut off from the rest of the Lower Mainland except by the sea, which was extremely rough.

Harry Anderson the chief engineer of the Department of Public Works was on hand but, until the river subsided sufficiently to ensure that the gap in the roadway would not widen further, it was impossible to make any decision regarding how the roadway should be reinstated. A representative of the 6th Field Squadron, RCE from North Vancouver was on hand in the event that any military equipment might possibly be requested.

On Sunday morning, the river was subsiding and it was possible to take an accurate measurement of the actual gap. Cam McKenzie of the department of public works, morally supported by a crowd of onlookers, managed to get a line and a measuring tape across the gap. The gap was 137 feet wide.

About this time, a reconnaissance party from the Royal Canadian School of Military Engineering at Chilliwack arrived on the scene with the information that sufficient equipment was available at Chilliwack to complete a bailey bridge and re-establish communication with West Vancouver. The decision was made to have it put in place that night.

The wires stetted to hum, the necessary 70 tons of equipment was loaded into large trucks at Chilliwack; the men were called out from both the 23rd Field Squadron RCE which is stationed at Chilliwack, and from the RCSME itself. At the same, time, the telephone wires in North Vancouver started to hum, The 6th Field Squadron, RCE, from the Drill Hall, was also on the move to the rescue of the neighbor city of West Vancouver. In a remarkably short time 36 volunteers had been rounded up and were moving down toward the Capilano River.

Premier Byron Johnson was on the scene to inspect the damage personally and our own member, Hon. John H. Cates, Minister of Labour, was present throughout almost the entire operation.
At 4 pm the 6th Field Squadron arrived on the scene to meet the expected bridging. However, there was a slight hitch in the loading. At 6 pm the detachment from Chilliwack, 50 strong, arrived and finally, at 9 pm, the first convoy of bridging material arrived under police escort.

The police had co-operated extremely well; the Provincial Police had escorted the convoy from Chilliwack to Vancouver City Limits where the city police took over and rolled the convoy on to the bridge site. In the meantime, the RCSME had sent down a searchlight and mounted it in an auspicious place to provide "artificial moonlight" for the construction. The B.C. Electric had mounted some lights immediately over the bridging site. The department of public works was also on the job with a lighting unit, electric saws, and material for decking and packing under the bridge.

As soon as the equipment arrived, off-loading started and everyone pitched in. With a bridge of this type, the laying out of the stores is most important because one lost part can mean that the bridge cannot be completed. The very vital task was allotted to the 6th Field Squadron while the Chilliwack party took on the more spectacular part of bridge construction.

The off-loading proceeded apace. As soon as the material was off the truck, it went straight into the bridge and no time was lost. Just as the material from the first six lorries was used up another three lorries arrived on the site and they were dispatched in quick time. After they were off-loaded, there was a brief respite before the third convoy arrived and all the boys broke off to the Red Cross Canteen which had been on the job serving coffee, sandwiches and hot soup since 4 pm.

A great deal of credit is due to these wonderful women who worked throughout the night in cramped quarters of a mobile canteen serving hot coffee, cutting sandwiches and preparing soup for 100 hungry men.

APPENDIX IV SHEET II

Bailey bridging is extremely versatile equipment and can be constructed one, two, or three storeys high and with one, two or three girders on each side. With this versatility, it is possible to construct bridges of different lengths and load classes with a minimum of equipment and a maximum of speed. This Capilano bridge is known as a triple-single type, having three girders, one storey high. It has a 150-foot span and will carry a 12-ton load.

Bailey bridges are made up of bays. Each bay consists of the required number of panels which make up the sides of the bridge, and transoms which run crossways on the bridge and support the roadway. Each bay is 10 feet long.

In constructing a bridge of this type, the Sappers work in parties, each party being responsible for one particular item of construction. First the panel parties bring up the panels each weighing 600 pounds, and pin them into place. Each panel is made so that it dovetails into the previous panel. It is held in place by two large steel pins which fit through holes in the ends of the panels.

After the panels, the transoms are positioned by the transom parties and clamped into place by another party with special transom clamps. Other parties following place sway bracing, rakers, bracing frames and other parts.

By 1 am, the third and last convoy of 11 vehicles arrived at the bridge site and work recommenced. At about 4 am Monday, construction work was completed and the bridge was ready to be launched. This was done with the aid of a RCEME tow truck which pushed the bridge into a cantilever position across the gap. The launching weight of the bridge was greater than 50 tons and, in spite of the fact that it rested on rollers, It took a good strong push to move it. As the launching nose of the bridge approached the far shore a party of Sappers scrambled across and contact was established with West Vancouver again. This was about 4.30 am. This first party placed rollers under the nose of the bridge and it was pushed up to its final position. Work then proceeded in placing the stringers and decking on the bridge and, at about 7 am, it was finally jacked down into position. During the final stages of construction of the bridge, foot traffic was allowed to cross at intervals.

At approximately 9.45 am, Lt. McDermitt, the officer in charge, and a group of NCOs drove a jeep across the bridge and it was officially opened for traffic.

Shortly thereafter, a very tired group of Sappers headed for bed, their job well done and their rest well earned.