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☐ Note and file
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To day's VAN Suen,
For your info

about the First World? They better ago. The Kelowna Foodbank opened bank in the first half of January, kids over 1990.

I don't let anything on the job get to me personally. Once you take it personally, you get emotional and then you lose control.

CONST. BALTEJ SINGH DHILLON

”



ON PATROL: RCMP Const. Baltej Singh Dhillon softly battles small town offenders and attitudes

KEVIN GRIFFIN
Sun Multiculturalism Reporter

QUESNEL

Holding a beer in one hand, a dejected 17-year-old sat in the back seat of the police cruiser, resigned to his fate. "The fact is, I caught you with the beer. That's what it boils down to," the RCMP

Keeping the peace at work & at home

119-year-old police force.

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Please see ON DUTY, B3

12. Raincoast Senior Sec. Tina Lange says the class is holding a 20-year reunion May 15-17. Contact Tina at 372-0823.

While we're into nostalgia, Vernon High School is hosting a homecoming July 31, Aug. 1 and 2 for classes from 1920 to 1959, in celebration of the city's centennial. Write to P.O. Box 1482, Vernon, B.C. V1T 6N7, or phone 388-1593.

NO CONTEST

B.C. editor Barbara Yaffe couldn't say enough about the benefits of shopping U.S. catalogue houses in last Tuesday's Voices column.

Reaction of Sun readers was divided. Of the people who called Benedict, I mean Barbara, "half want to bite my face off for behaving like a traitor and the other half want the toll-free numbers. If we in Canada don't get on the bandwagon and start up good catalogue companies of our own, the Yanks will skin us."

"SHE'S" A HE

Among those on the Law Society of B.C. Jan. 13 list who ceased to be members is "Madam" Justice J. E. (John) Hall (appointed to the B.C. Supreme Court), which prompted one colleague to remark: "Some guys will do anything to get on the bench!"

On the same list as retiring from practice as of Jan. 1, 1992, is one Kenneth Rafe Mair of North Vancouver. Rafe has been an open-line host at radio station CKNW for about 10 years and is on vacation in New Zealand.

Producer Shirley Stocker said: "Interesting. I wasn't aware that he wasn't paying his bar fees because he maintained that he would all along. (He must have decided) to stay with radio."

Compiled by Archibald Rollo



IAN SMITH

ON PATROL: RCMP Const. Baltej Singh Dhillon softly battles small town offenders and attitudes

KEVIN GRIFFIN

Sun Multiculturalism Reporter

Holding a beer in one hand, a dejected 17-year-old sat in the back seat of the police cruiser, resigned to his fate. "The fact is, I caught you with the beer. That's what it boils down to," the RCMP constable said.

"I know. You're just doing your job," Daryl replied forlornly.

It was a fairly typical small-town-B.C. Friday night. About 60 beer-drinking teenagers and young adults had crowded into a house and cranked the music up. A neighbor complained, the RCMP arrived and a minor was caught in possession of alcohol.

But tonight, there's a twist. Daryl was nabbed by Baltej Singh Dhillon, the only RCMP constable in Canada who wears a turban.

In the front seat, Dhillon did the paperwork for Daryl's \$50 fine. With the windows rolled up to keep out the cold, the cruiser stank of beer.

Outside, groups of teenagers spilled from the house into their cars as the party broke up. They suddenly noticed their friend in the cruiser.

QUESNEL

Someone yelled out "One, two, three, let's run," and "Don't sign it — you'll go to jail for life," followed by cackles of laughter.

Then the harmless joking took a nasty turn. "Piggy, piggy, I smell a Hindu piggy," someone shouted.

Dhillon sighed. He grabbed his hefty flashlight and walked to the passenger side of the car.

It was unclear who shouted the insult. But as soon as Dhillon stood among the kids, they quietened, as if embarrassed.

A few minutes later, as the youths pulled away in their vehicles, Dhillon stopped a pickup truck and asked the driver if he'd been drinking. The driver said no. Doubting him, Dhillon placed his nose a few inches from the youth's face.

"Except for bad breath, you're okay," Dhillon said. The driver and his two passengers

roared with laughter.

As Dhillon headed to his next call, he explained how youths in the mill town have tried to get under his skin with racist name-calling during his first six months on the job.

"I don't even think twice about it. I don't let anything on the job get to me personally. Once you take it personally, you get emotional and then you lose control," Dhillon said.

"What I do is try to be professional. If you lose control, they will jump all over you."

More so than any other figure in recent RCMP history, Dhillon has had to stay professional despite intense national media attention and a barrage of criticism and abuse from anti-turban activists.

After the federal government approved an RCMP request in 1990 allowing Sikhs to wear turbans and beards, 200,000 Canadians signed petitions against changing the uniform of the

Keeping the peace at work & at home

119-year-old police force.

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There was no truth to the rumors, but their existence illustrates the unease generated in some quarters by Dhillon's acceptance in the RCMP.

Turban opponents perceived the RCMP's uniform — especially the stetson — as an immutable Canadian symbol. In the working-class town of Quesnel, 675 km northeast of Vancouver, some people remain staunchly opposed to an RCMP officer wearing a turban; others have reluctantly accepted it.

At the Quesnel hockey arena one recent Saturday night, the last-place Quesnel Millionaires played the league-leading Prince George Spruce Kings. (Prince George won 7-6).

With TSN broadcasting the game, more than 1,100 supporters crowded into the stands. One was Eleonora Pellizzari, 43. An immigrant from Italy 21 years ago, she is the ticket-taker at Quesnel home games. Her oldest son played for the Millionaires two years ago.

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Please see ON DUTY, B3

ON DUTY:

Continued from B1

seen as prejudiced. If it is okay for an East Indian to wear a turban, then an Indian can wear a feather and a Scottish man can wear a kilt," she said.

"If everyone has their right to wear what they want to wear, then the turban is no longer a symbol. We are a bunch of clowns. What we want to achieve is equality — we don't want to see different nationalities wearing different clothing."

Pat Gillis, whose son played in a pee-wee exhibition game during the periods of the Junior A hockey season, initially opposed changing to the RCMP uniform.

"At the time, I thought it was a problem with the traditional uniform. Now I don't have any problem with (the turban). I have not heard any negative comments about it. On the whole, most



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COFFEE TALK: RCMP Const. Baltej Singh Dhillon and partner, Const. Dick Langille

Officer faces turban turbulence

KEVIN GRIFFIN
Sun Multiculturalism Reporter

Fighting crime a heady task for new recruit

QUESNEL — For the first week at the RCMP basic training facility in Regina, Baltej Singh Dhillon was more nervous than most.

Like all recruits, he adapted to the constant snoring of his dormitory mates, the early morning wake-up calls and the repetitive drills.

He had one added worry. He was waiting for the arrival of his kit, which would contain his uniform and the first official turban issued by the RCMP.

"My troop mates knew about this so the minute we got back to the dorm, they all said: 'Try it on.' So I put it on," Dhillon said.

"Then everyone else wanted to try it on. Just about the entire troop ended up putting the turban on too. That day was like a release of all the tensions and fears about the turban — all that came tumbling down. It was a sign of acceptance and understanding."

Dhillon's official RCMP turban is dark blue worn over a gold-colored cloth wrapped around his head. On the front is the RCMP crest: a bison surrounded by maple leaves and the motto *Maintiens Le Droit/Maintain the Right*.

Although Dhillon hopes even-

tually to work in the RCMP's immigration section (he speaks five languages), the 25-year-old didn't always have a burning desire to be a police officer.

He was born and raised in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. When his father died in 1983, his oldest brother, who was studying in Vancouver, sponsored Dhillon, his mother and two younger sisters to come to Canada. He was 15 years old.

The family arrived with little money and Dhillon spent his first three summers in Canada working 15-hour days, seven-day weeks picking fruit on Fraser Valley farms.

After high school, he took criminology at Kwantlen College and got involved with the Blockwatch program with the Surrey RCMP.

"There was this sense you were helping the community. I think that was very important to me — helping the community any way I can," Dhillon said.

He applied to the RCMP who were honest and up-front about the situa-

tion facing him. "At the time, they said they would still offer me the job. But they told me that until the uniform regulations were changed, I would have to choose between wearing the turban and being an RCMP constable," he said.

As Dhillon waited for new uniform regulations, a national controversy erupted about the turban.

"I was working with the Blockwatch program in the Surrey detachment. 'I was wearing my turban all the time so it wasn't even an issue for me,' he said during an interview in his Quesnel home.

"Most of the arguments (against the turban) are just preposterous. You know, I think some individuals are using the turban issue for their own personal biases not only against East Indians, but other groups as well."

Six months into his first RCMP posting, he feels the community has grown to accept him and his turban much more quickly than he expected.

"In my dealings with people, I think my skin color and what I wear on my head are no longer issues any more for a lot of people. My performance as a police officer is definitely an issue for a lot of people: they want me to perform as an RCMP officer. I feel I have been able to do that."

BCIT STRIKE

Students take a stand to end walkout

AWN HANNA
Vancouver Sun

With a strike by support workers leading into its second week, B.C. Institute of Technology students are

cent in favor of a strike in December, workers began selective strike action at such services as the campus bookstore before escalating to a full strike on Jan. 20, shutting out 14,000 full and part-time stu-

dents into the summer, putting them at a disadvantage in the competitive job market.

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ON DUTY: Officer remains objective on the job

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"At the time, I thought it should be the traditional uniform. Now, I don't have any problem with (the turban). I have not heard any negative things about it. On the whole, most people

have settled down with it," said Gillis.

Across town at the Cariboo Gur Sikh gurdwara (temple) Sarabjit Sanghera was talking about a recent misadventure.

"You cannot look inside someone's head and see how they feel, but I think the degree of racism has been going down and down," said Sanghera, the gurdwara's secretary.

"In the early 1970s, we did not have as many married people here and very few at school. The community has grown and now has proved itself in sports, in business and (by) getting involved in politics."

Sanghera, a sawmill truck driver, was trying to explain that an incident involving the gurdwara and local youths was not typical.

At about 1 a.m. the previous Friday, Dhillon and other RCMP officers responded to a call that fist-sized stones and beer cans were being thrown at the gurdwara by drunken youths at a party next door.

The potentially explosive situation was quickly defused with the arrival of the RCMP.

Sanghera calls Dhillon a "precious gem" because of his community involvement, but also an RCMP officer like any other.

"If I have a complaint, I go to Dhillon or any other RCMP constable. Both are doing their duty, it doesn't matter," he said. "Dhillon is no different than any other officer."

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