

BOOK REVIEWS

The Bravest Canadian: Fritz Peters, VC: The Making of a Hero of Two World Wars.

by **Sam McBride**

Granville Island Publishing

Vancouver, 2012

210 pages, \$24.95

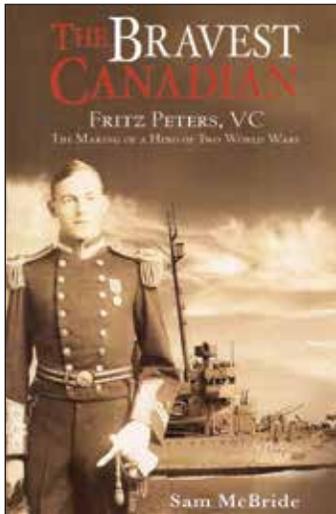
ISBN: 978-1-926991-10-8

Reviewed by **Jurgen Duewel**

I must admit my first reaction on seeing this book on my desk was to question myself, Fritz who? After all, anyone named Fritz Peters sounds more like someone who served on the German side. However, as it turns out, nothing could be further from the truth. Fritz was

born in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island in 1889. His ancestors were United Empire Loyalists who moved to Canada after the American Revolution. Unfortunately, even after reading the book, the reader will know more about Fritz's family than about Fritz himself. The author attempts to compensate for this lack of historical data with respect to Fritz and his exploits by relying quite heavily upon letters that were written by Fritz to and from his family. As a consequence, the book is quite short, and it tends to make for uneven reading.

The primary reason that not much is known about Fritz is that he spent most of his adult life outside Canada. He joined the Royal Navy (RN) in 1905, and his combat exploits are impressive. During the First World War, he was decorated for bravery in the Battle of Dogger Bank. In 1915, he was given command of a destroyer, and was mentioned in dispatches for bravery in rescuing survivors at sea. (Peters was also awarded a total of two Distinguished Service Crosses and the Distinguished Service Order for gallantry during the First World War – Ed.). The author does a commendable job in painting a picture of this man who would be unrecognizable to most Canadians today. Undoubtedly brave, he was, however, 'more British than the British.' One cannot help but note the



following passage in his letter to his mother after the death of his brother in the trenches: "It is the price of Empire, I pray God I fall in the same manner with my face to the enemy." In another example, as written to his sister: "There is only one thing—the King and Empire." It was not surprising to learn that Fritz developed a 'mid-Atlantic' dialect, something that would have garnered him only scorn if he had served in the Royal Canadian Navy. Alas, the feeling would have been mutual, as Fritz was openly hostile to western Canadians, believing them to be more like Americans than Canadians, at least in accordance with his definition of a true Canadian (i.e., British-Canadian).

As stated earlier, Fritz's bravery was never in question. During the Second World War, by which time he should have been retired, he led the naval assault on Oran Harbour in Algeria. He was badly wounded in this action and was awarded the Victoria

Cross and the American Distinguished Service Cross or his gallantry in action. Unfortunately he would never receive this medal in person, as he was killed when the aircraft in which he was being transported crashed in the approaches to Plymouth harbour on his return to England after the battle.

McBride's telling of the story of Fritz Peters, to whom he is distantly related, suffers from a lack of research material. It is not surprising that so little is known about Peters in Canada, in that his exploits were carried out in British uniform, as opposed to other Canadian VC recipients, such as Lieutenant (N) Hampton Grey. Finally, the book's publisher has not done 'the best job' of editing. There are a number of editorial errors contained within, including the carrying over of words from a previous chapter into the following chapter.

Fritz Peters is someone of whom Canadians should probably know more. My guess is that if Fritz had been a little more 'Canadian,' we probably *would* know more about him.

Lieutenant-Commander (ret'd) Jurgen Duewel, CD, MA, PhD, was a *Maritime Surface Officer on staff at the Canadian Defence Academy in Kingston until the summer of 2013. He recently completed a doctorate in Educational Leadership.*

Behavioural Conflict – Why Understanding People and their Motivations will Prove Decisive to Future Conflict

by **Major General Andrew Mackay (ret'd), and Commander Steve Tatham**

UK: Military Studies Press, 2011

220 pages, \$29.95

ISBN 13-978-1-73039-468-8

Reviewed by **Rita LePage**

Behavioural Conflict is written by two, seasoned British military officers – Army Major General Andrew Mackay, who commanded 52 Brigade in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, and Navy Commander Steve Tatham, PhD, CO of 15 PSYOPS Group, and it is based on their work in preparing 52 Brigade to deploy – specifically in the area of influence operations. While the authors discuss previous conflicts, from the Balkans in the 1990s, Sierra Leone, Lebanon, and Gaza, to the Iraq war, 52 Brigade's ISAF deployment is the case study upon which the book revolves.