

War on the minds of students

by Cindy Davidson

WALKERTON--The Persian Gulf War is giving students a real lesson in history, a history they will recall again and again for the rest of their lives.

But right now, more real than the lesson, is the fear in many of these students.

Mary Lee Duggan's Grade 4-5 class at Brant Central School has been discussing the war for a few minutes at the beginning of each day, as have other senior classes at the school.

The students have expressed fear about what is happening in the Middle East, but they have also shown great knowledge and interest in the world event. They know the names of the cities and countries involved, they know who Saddam Hussein and George Bush are, and they know the implications of missiles and the casualties that can result.

"These students are the beginning of people in the school that have an understanding of what is happening and maybe why it's happening."

The Herald-Times sat in on one of the class discussions last Friday morning. The students were very much aware of the latest crisis, and were eager to talk about what effect Iraq's bombing of Israel would have on the war. They were particularly interested in what would happen if it turned into a Holy War.

They wondered if the United States would keep fighting if it became a Holy War and if other countries would then join Iraq.

Duggan did her best to answer the students' questions and address their concerns, but stressed that it was a complicated issue and that she didn't have all the answers. Being a teacher also puts her in a delicate situation when discussing an ongoing war.

She encouraged the students to ask their parents questions and to keep watching the events as they were happening on television. She said she thinks a great deal of the interest shown by the students is because of T.V.

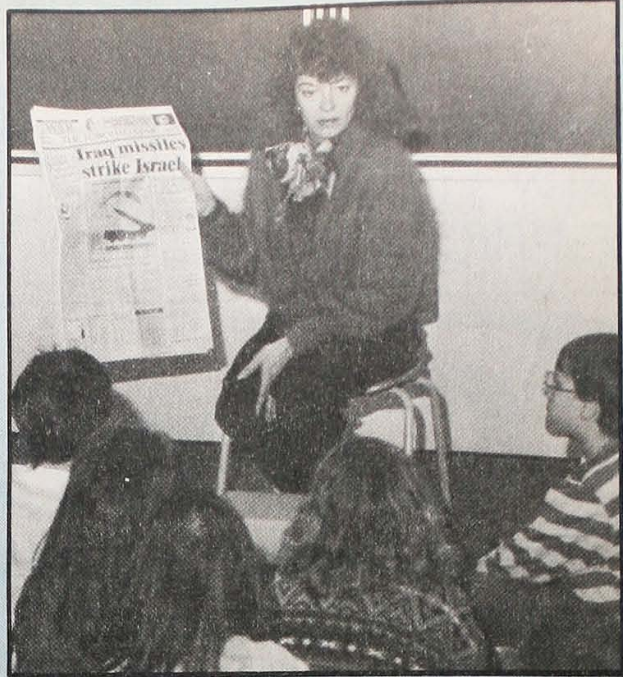
"Never before have we been

able to see live coverage and pictures of a war as it is happening. The students really have a different perspective on it now that they have seen reports. They all comment that it's not like a movie and that Rambo isn't going to come in and save the day."

She said she tries to alleviate their fears, but also realizes she can't guarantee anything. Last Tuesday, Jan. 15, when the deadline for Iraq to leave Kuwait peacefully arrived, she said the students were particularly afraid. A subsequent bomb threat at Walkerton District Secondary School didn't help matters she said.

"Whoever did that didn't realize the fear it put into these young students. They were terrified."

The Persian Gulf War will no doubt be the subject of many history lessons when these students reach high school, but their greatest source likely won't be their books, it will be their memories.



HISTORY LESSON--Mary Lee Duggan's Grade 4-5 class at Brant Central School have been discussing the Persian Gulf War and bringing in newspaper clippings about it. (Davidson photo)

by the Cordwainer (Lloyd Cartwright)



REFLECTIONS

Survival at sea

At 8:10 p.m. on April 13, 1945, Elden (Baldy) Miller, along with the rest of the R.C.A.F. crew, headed out in their Lancaster bomber on a mission to bomb a German submarine base. All went well until after the bombs had been dropped and then all hell let loose when they were suddenly hit with anti-aircraft fire that wounded the Skipper and pierced the gas tanks. The crew thought they might make it home, but within half an hour the motors coughed and cut out one after the other. With one engine still operating they were still hoping to make base, but it was not to be. Just after midnight they were forced to ditch when the last engine cut out. It was pitch black with a medium sea running, but by the expertise of the pilot and the grace of God the plane bellied in and didn't break up. They estimated their position to be about 25 miles off the coast of Denmark.

Baldy, who was Wireless Air Gunner, sent out the S.O.S. calls and then screwed the key down so the call would continue until the plane sank. In the ditching the plane was thrown through the inch thick screen, still strapped in his seat. He was badly battered, but he was conscious. The crew meanwhile, proceeded to crawl to the escape hatch, and in the darkness they made their way to the wing where the plane was stored. Baldy found himself in the cold water and had to swim all around the huge plane to the side where the raft was stored. The first prior-

ity was to get the injured men into the dinghy. The Engineer was barely conscious when he was helped on board the Susio Q. Then the Pilot, seat and all, was pulled in. All this was happening in the darkness of midnight.

The next morning the men assessed their situation. Of the crew of seven, six were on board. One of the crew, Upper Gunner F/S Vardy from Bancroft, had not been able to escape, and was drowned. Three of the men aboard were injured and the first priority was to do all they could for them. The Skipper had flak in his leg, the Air bomber's face was badly bashed and the rear gunner had a broken leg and a broken shoulder. The crew knew they would have to be rescued soon, as there was a skimpy supply of water and minimum rations on board.

Now the ordeal started. For the first couple of days the weather wasn't too bad. The men were crowded and uncomfortable, but they had some rations and help would come soon. They sometimes could hear planes, but they never saw one. On the third day the weather turned cold and nasty. Some shelter was provided by the dinghy cover, but it gave little protection when the high seas washed aboard. Baldy had the only watch and it finally stopped from the salt water, but they finally got it going again. He still has the watch, and it still goes.

This story will continue next week.

by the Cordwainer (Lloyd Cartwright)



REFLECTIONS

Survival at sea: Part two

This is part two of the ordeal of six men who were forced to ditch their Lancaster Bomber in the ocean after they were hit on a bombing mission near the end of the Second World War. Baldy Miller of Walkerton was one of the crew.

For almost twelve days the men were adrift in the small dinghy, on the cold waters of the North Atlantic in mid April. They were all soaked through and never got dried out because of the continual slopping aboard of sea water. After a few days the men noticed the raft was losing pressure. It was only with the greatest of difficulty that the weakened men were able to open the pressure valve so air could be pumped in with a hand bellows. This had to be done almost daily after the first few days.

The limited rations were soon gone, as was the water. The men could still hear planes from time to time, but because of the foggy conditions they never did see one. By the eighth day the men were desperate for water. Then some rain came and they were able to catch some in the dinghy cover that was acting as their only shelter. Night and day they grew steadily weaker as they waited and waited for help. By day eleven some of them were getting delirious, as they were again out of water. Then they started to see shore birds. The next morning they found that they were in very shallow water and they could see lands. It turned out that they had drifted into the estuary of the Elbe River at low tide. They decided to try and walk to the land, but found none of them could walk when they got out of the

dinghy.

About then a small German fishing sail boat came by. He couldn't tow the heavy raft, so he signalled that he would send help. Meanwhile the tide came up and they were swept back out to sea. A few hours later a German Red Cross boat came to their aid. After eleven days and fifteen hours the men were taken ashore as prisoners, to a German hospital. Now comes the unbelievable!

The war was ending and the men were transferred to a huge hangar at an airfield that was being used as a holding hospital. It housed about five thousand stretcher cases. The M.O. in charge was a Dr. Brian. During his rounds one morning he stopped beside Baldy Miller's stretcher and asked who he was and where he was from. Baldy said, "You will never have heard of the place." "It's a small town called Walkerton in Ontario". To Baldy's amazement Dr. Brian asked him if he knew Mildred Appel. "Well", the Dr. said, "She's my wife." Then he said, "I suppose you would like to get out of here". At this time Baldy and the Engineer were the only members of the crew at this location. In twenty minutes the men were on their way.

One more thing! One of the men had a New Testament with him on the dinghy and part of the effort to stay alive consisted of a vesper service that the men took turns conducting each evening. The men all felt this helped with their survival.

P.S. Mildred Appel was a Walkerton girl whose father owned a shop here.

Next week: Jake Schurter's accident.