

Poppy means freedom for local veterans

By ALAN MACKIE
the Herald

"One can see the dead lying there on the front field. And in places where the enemy threw in an attack, they lie very thick on the slopes of the German trenches," Lt.-Col. John McCrae wrote.

Lt.-Col. McCrae, a First World War 43-year-old member of the Canadian medical corps wrote those words during a 17-day battle in Ypres in April 1915.

Lt.-Col. McCrae also wrote the poem In Flanders Fields at Ypres and according to the Royal Canadian Legion, was chiefly responsible for the association between poppies and Remembrance Day.

Jim Hayes, from the Georgetown branch of the Legion, said Remembrance Day means a great deal to him. Mr. Hayes became a corporal in the Royal Air Force and served in the mid-east from 1956 to 1959. "It's a time that I reflect on the old comrades."

Poppies are the most common visible reminder of the 114,000 men and women who died serving in Canada's armed forces.

Jean Narey, poppy chairman for the Georgetown Legion, said the poppy sales were going very well. The Legion had 40,400 poppies to hand out to stores and the 24 canvassers who are still finishing their own 11-day tour of duty which started on Nov. 1. The Legion has only 1,000 poppies left. The figure should go up after this Saturday's Remembrance Day ceremonies because the stores will be sending the left-over poppies back, Ms. Narey added.

Ms. Narey is a Second World War veteran. She served with the Auxiliary Territorial Service in Britain for just under four years as a driver. She remembers rattling down the roads in two-ton trucks and officers jeeps. Ms. Narey also had to drive ambulances to relieve the regular drivers.

She appears to enjoy her position as Poppy Chairman and said, "Every time I see one, I'm free... because of the guys that died during the wars."

Doug Norton, a steward at the Georgetown branch and a member in a Brampton branch, said poppies signify "the blood that everybody shed to gain us our freedom." Mr. Norton, 58, served

in the armed forces during the Korean conflict but never got overseas. He said Remembrance Day means "everything... my freedom... everything."

John Allen, from the Acton branch, joined the army shortly after the Second World War and has been selling poppies for 34 years. Mr. Allen was a dispatch

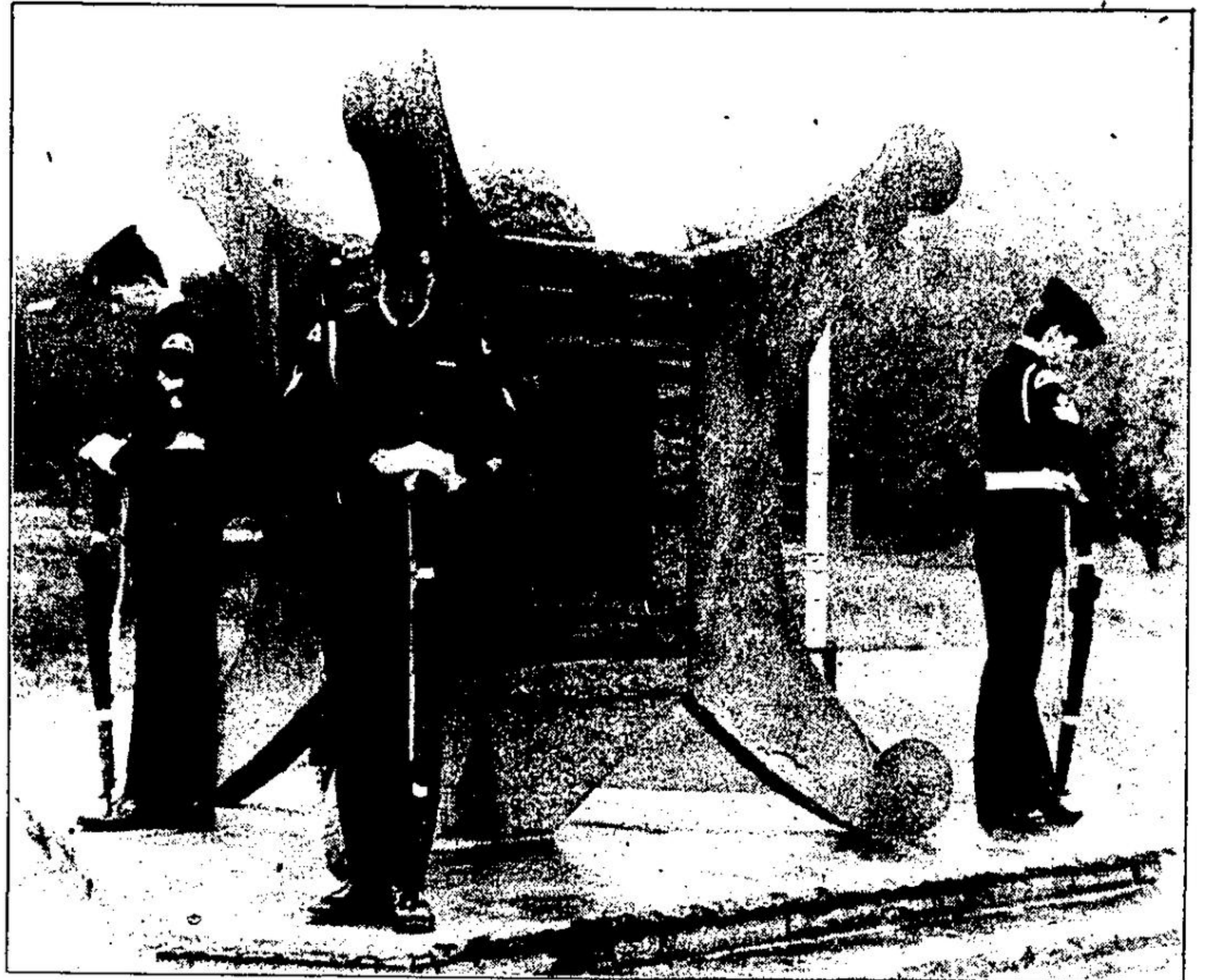
writer and during his three and a half years of service became a sergeant. He said Nov. 11 is a day to "remember all the guys that died in the First and Second World Wars, in Korea and in Vietnam."

The Royal Canadian Legion is the largest veterans' organization in Canada with over 600,000 members including over 97,000 ladies auxiliary members. There are 1,744 branches in Canada, 34 in the United States and three in West Germany.

The Canadian Legion was created in 1925 as a fraternal, non-profit organization. In 1960 the group's name was officially changed to the Royal Canadian Legion.

According to the Legion, in 1988 a total of over \$4 million in poppy funds were handed out; to assist veterans and their dependents; to community medical appliances and research; to provide bursaries to the children and grandchildren of ex-service members; to adult day care centres; meals on wheels; and transportation or other related services; to the purchase, building and repairing of housing or care facilities for the elderly or disabled; and to the operation of service bureau at the Legion's Dominion Command in Ottawa.

The Legion also provides support to the Salvation Army's Red Shield Drive, the Red Cross, the St. John Ambulance, over 500 Boy Scout, Girl Guide and Brownie organizations and the United Way's Red Feather Campaign. According to the Legion the type of support given is in terms of volunteers and financial aid.



Young soldiers stood on guard at the Glen Williams Cenotaph during Remembrance Day ceremonies on a chilly day last year. There are ceremonies in Acton, Georgetown and Glen Williams again this year. Ceremonies in Acton and Georgetown are scheduled for 10:30 a.m. while the Glen Williams ceremony will be held at 2:30 p.m. (Herald photo)

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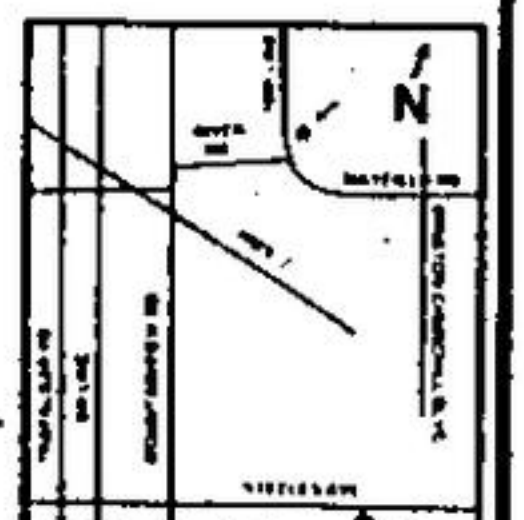
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