

# Editorial

## A special day

Sunday is Remembrance Day and like countless other Canadians I will be attending one of the local services to pay my respects to the war dead.

I also have another reason for attending Remembrance Day services, on a more personal note.

My father is presently in the Veterans Hospital in London, Ontario, and has been in residence at the hospital for a number of years.

He served 17 years as a professional soldier in the British army with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, a regiment he joined as a boy soldier when he was 14-years-old.

At age 15 he was serving in the Northwest frontier of India (what is now Pakistan) and didn't return to his native Scotland - 16 years later - until after the Second World War.

In the intervening years he went through experiences and suffering that would have felled a lesser man. He survived and in fact wrote about his life in the British Army and his wartime experiences in two books, 'Highland Laddie' and 'The Boat.'

The Boat was published in 17 different languages and excerpted by Reader's Digest in the two volume 'Greatest Stories of the War' issue.

He survived the retreat through Burma and along with 500 other souls was attempting to escape the onslaught of the Japanese, in a steamer out of Sumatra, when it was torpedoed.

Only one lifeboat was salvageable and the survivors of the torpedoed swarmed in and around 'The Boat.'

Twenty-eight days later the lifeboat beached on an island and my father was the only white man left alive. The others included a Chinese girl and four Javanese sailors.

My father was subsequently captured by the Japanese and spent three years in a prisoner of war camp.

Because of his wartime wounds, he was forced to leave the British Army and embark on a new - albeit late - career.

Colin Gibson



Editor's Notebook

He became involved in social work in Scotland and when we emigrated to Canada his initial job was with the Children's Aid Society.

It was only as he grew older and I, in turn grew up, that I was able to get him to talk to me about his wartime experiences.

On a number of occasions the tears would flow as he talked about seeing his friends and comrades die - often horribly. The tears he shed were for them, not for himself and I often broke down and cried with him.

At times, it seemed, he blamed himself for surviving while those around him were dying.

He talked of the torture he and his comrades suffered at the hands of the Japanese, but bore no malice against his captors. He was a professional soldier, they were the enemy. He had been captured and was at their mercy.

My father is in his late 70's now, but following the death of my mother a number of years ago, I would find him more and more living in the past.

He would talk of his fallen friends and his wartime experiences as if they had just happened yesterday, not years ago.

It became increasingly obvious that his harrowing wartime experiences had taken their toll.

He will live out his remaining years at the Veterans Hospital in London where he is looked after and finally safe.

My father is another casualty of war. One who survived.

I shall not forget his sacrifices. I love you, dad.

## The Halton Hills HERALD

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## Healthy people are sick!

It doesn't happen very often, but sometimes the newspaper can cheer you up wonderfully.

I was flipping through the paper and butting out a cigarette while reaching for another handful of Cheezies when I stumbled across the most amazing story about physical fitness.

Apparently, doctors are increasingly alarmed by the number of fitness buffs who have developed a serious and debilitating addiction to exercise.

Well, There we have it. Scientific confirmation of the belief every couch-potato has always secretly cherished.

Healthy people are sick.

This news item was even more welcome for the fact that the same issue of the newspaper contained a feature article on movie star and fitness guru, Jane Fonda, stressing that, at the age of 52, she still has the physical conditioning of a 25-year-old.

There are, of course, two ways to look at this. It all depends on which 25-year-old you're talking about. When I was 25, my conditioning was almost as laughable as it is today.

This, I might add, is the chief advantage to letting yourself go to seed as early in life as you possibly can. If you peak at the age of seven, your decline can be gradual and thus graceful.

But I digress. We were discussing the fact that an increasing number of fitness buffs are in the clutches of a chronic affliction as powerful and insidious as drug addiction, alcoholism or vegetarianism.

The newspaper stressed the grave physical damage that exercise-addicts can inflict upon



Ian Weir  
Weir's View  
Thomas Ross Series

themselves, and presented a list of eight warning signs for those who fear they might be addicted.

Naturally I read this list anxiously, since a fellow can never be too careful. Just the other day, for instance, I caught myself exclaiming, "Never mind the car - I can walk to the corner store for cigarettes."

And you never know. This could be the start of the slippery downfall that leads to the horror of grown men performing aerobic exercises in leotards.

Mercifully, I'm not exhibiting any of the warning signs - which include scheduling your life around workouts, or exercising so much that you lose interest in sex. And it's always possible that at least a small minority of fitness buffs do not fall into the "dangerously addicted" category as well.

I remember, for instance, my initial alarm when a former neighbor of mine - let's call him Richard, since that's his name - abandoned a gloriously sedentary lifestyle to begin training for a marathon.

But although Richard began running horrifically long distances, he never did manage

to quit smoking, and thus you could often see him loping down the highway with a cigarette in his mouth.

This, I thought, was an intriguing example of the Aristotelian ideal of the Well-Balanced Man. And it seemed a healthily mixed message for Richard to be sending to his heart and lungs: "Enjoy yourselves ... but don't get TOO cocky."

Still, let's not forget history. The original Marathon was run in 490 B.C. by a Greek messenger who dropped dead at the end of the 26 miles.

So let's keep in mind one crucial point: strenuous exercise is meant to kill you. Current standards of human longevity are largely due to the invention of the bus.

And thus a burning question presents itself. If exercise addiction is a growing menace, what's to be done about it?

It's clear the surgeon-general had better start placing warning signs on jogging shoes. And it's obviously unconscionable to continue selling athletic equipment to children under the age of 18.

But our government leaders remain appallingly silent.

Not a single one of them has had the courage to proclaim a war against racquetball. There have been no commercials urging kids not to bow to peer pressure and counselling them to 'Just Say No' to physical education class.

We're talking about an epidemic, gentlemen. Right-thinking Canadians are waiting for some action.

And - since we care about our health - we're sitting in front of the TV's while we do so.

## Poets' Corner

**LOST FOR WORDS**  
Bill Smith, an ordinary name.  
Bill Smith, an ordinary man.  
Bill Smith, an ordinary death.  
It was an extraordinary pleasure  
And a privilege  
To have known you, Bill.  
You will be sadly missed.  
By J.B., Acton.

**WHAT WOULD YOU DO?**  
I am the Native.  
Some may think me, taboo.  
But, if they were me,  
What would they do?

Greed came with speed.  
They never did care.  
That our lands are our need.  
There was plenty to share.

Our children have been taken.  
Virtually, snapped!  
Condoned by government,  
But, were actually kidnapped.

We had a holocaust here ...  
Of our own.  
When all we required  
Was to be left alone.

The First Amendment,  
Stripped away from us.  
Talks of freedoms,  
We are not to discuss?

This couldn't be true!  
But, it is, so you see,  
The whole plot,  
Reeks of misery.

We didn't take care,  
Thought Peoples were fair  
Until, forked-tongued;  
We could no longer bear.

We don't force  
Our customs on you.  
So, if you were me,  
What would you do?  
By Lois Richardson.

**YEARS GONE BY**  
Sit and cry  
To think they're in the past -  
All hope is gone  
And in the dawn  
The memories won't last.  
A lifetime fades  
The future trades  
On nightmares out of view -  
With luck sublime  
A lonely rhyme  
A rainbow passing thru.  
A lonely start  
A broken heart  
Recovery from the pain -  
A reaching out  
With minds in doubt  
A bittersweet refrain.  
B. Brooke, Acton.