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Editorial Remembrance Day - a time not to forget

"To you from falling hands we throw the torch; be yours to hold it high."

These words from the poem 'In Flanders Field' - the lament to war and its insatiable demand for human sacrifice - penned by soldier-poet Col. John McCrae of Guelph, in April, 1915, have over the years taken on a somewhat ironic twist.

The honor roles of the dead from two World Wars and the Korean conflict give mute testimony to the willingness of Canadian soldiers to make the ultimate sacrifice, when called upon, for a just cause.

Yet aside from a few hours spent every November 11th, on Remembrance Day, in acknowledging and honoring the everlasting debt to Canadian war dead, veterans - and perhaps more important, dependents of veterans - have received short shrift from Canadian society.

Col. John McCrae reportedly wrote 'In Flanders Field', in what quiet moments he could steal while tending to the wounded at a dressing station near the village of Ypres. The compassion he felt for his compatriots is self-evident in his poem.

Ironically, he died in January, 1918, five days after contracting pneumonia, in the year the 'Great War' ended, never aware of the depth of emotion his poem would create.

In all probability, the emotional and positive reaction to his poem would have meant little to him.

The compassion it has and still does arouse, however, would no doubt meet with his approval.

And now, another war looms in the Persian Gulf. A war - which if it does occur will once more undoubtedly require members of the Canadian armed forces to once again make the ultimate sacrifice because of our federal government's commitments to various pacts and alliances.

Countries - and in the same sense, societies - have a strange, ambivalent attitude towards soldiers.

A love-hate relationship that blossoms in time of need but is scorned or discarded in times of peace and plenty.

A country's soldiers are representatives of the nation they serve. They are every man, every woman, every child; they represent the hopes and similarly, the fears of a nation. The responsibility is heavy.

There is no glory in war - only for the storytellers.

A soldier does his duty, does his job when he kills or wounds - is killed or wounded.

Cinematic excesses are the bane of the true 'soldier of the country.'

The real 'soldier of the country' is your father, perhaps your mothers, your brothers, your sister, your next-door neighbour.

Once the country - society - has been saved, their usefulness is over.

The country wants to forget the savagery and the deprivations of war; the bloodletting and sometime atrocities committed.

The soldier then takes the brunt of the blame and becomes a scapegoat, one to pity - even to avoid.

The wounded - physically and mentally - are relegated to veterans hospitals, if they are lucky.

The aging veterans who make a habit of dropping into Legion branches to share comradeship and reminiscences with their few remaining peers are frowned upon.

For shame, Canada - for shame our so-called free society that owes so much to these men and women who, for the most part, sacrificed their youth for the youth of the future.

Remembrance Day, the 11th hour of the 11th-month of the year marking the cessation of World War I hostilities is a special day. And should be treated as such.

However, having noted this, the sacrifices made by members of the Canadian armed forces - veteran and serving - should be appreciated and respected year round.

Certainly, 'Take time to remember' on Remembrance Day.

But also take time throughout the rest of the year to appreciate the debt that is owed.

War Amps programs

This fall The War Amps of Canada is mailing personalized address labels as a special thank-you to its supporters. But the labels represent more than just a simple 'thank-you' - the useful stickers symbolize a unique bond between one of Canada's most active charities and its supporters.

A philosophy of amputees helping amputees has been the hallmark of The War Amps of Canada since 1918, when the organization was founded. When amputee ex-servicemen returning from action in the First World War set up The War Amps (under the name The Amputations Association of The Great War), they envisioned a fraternal society that would provide direction for their members and meet their special needs. Counselling, self-help and practical assistance - along with an appreciation of the history of this country - are common threads that have been retained more than 70 years later in the present-day organization that grew from their efforts.

War Amputees from across the country have helped shape the Association over the years. The experience and expertise they gained in coping with the realities of being amputees are now benefitting the younger generation through The War Amps Child Amputee (CHAMP) Program. Other Association programs and services such as PLAYSAFE, MATCHING MOTHERS, sheltered workshops and adult prosthetics, have allowed the Association to assist many civilian amputees - child or adult - and even non-amputees.

The Association takes pride in the programs it has developed over the years, made possible through the warm support of Canadians all across the country. If you'd like to start receiving personalized address labels of your own, please call our toll-free numbers: for area codes 519, 613 and 705, call 1-800-268-8821; all other regions call 1-800-268-8917.

A Canadian Remembrance

It is one of these grey and cold November days. A gust of wind swirls up the leaves on the edge of the pavement and there is the smell of snow in the brisk air. A young brownie stands alone with her thoughts. She is dressed entirely in brown except for a brightly coloured scarf with beautiful orange maple leaves.

The young brownie watches as the Remembrance parade passes by. Somehow, this is a very different parade from others she has observed. There are no balloons, no smiling clowns, no decorated floats with whimsical characters.

The flags are first and are held proudly as they are carried from the church. The November wind catches the colours and the red Canadian maple leaf unfurls

against the grey sky. Behind the colours come the pipers and the aging veterans wearing their medals of silver and bronze. They are proud men and women in their berets and blazers and blood red poppies adorn their chests. Their lined faces seem to tell stories of heroism and pain, of memories etched in sorrow and battlefields filled with mud. They are no longer the naive young men marching enthusiastically off to war. Now, their steps are slower and their numbers much fewer.

The veterans move on and the young brownie feels drawn to follow the parade as it proceeds to the cenotaph in the heart of her town and she listens to the names of the young Canadian men and women who lost their lives in two

World Wars and in Korea. She hears the lonely call of the bugle and bows her head in silence. She watches as the brittle wreaths are laid at the foot of the memorial and she now begins to understand the meaning of Remembrance.

She realizes that it is the same everywhere, today, in Canada from quiet Maritime cemeteries to western British Columbia; in the K wing at the Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto; or by the lonely monuments that stand tall in the Canadian prairies.

The young brownie has grown older now and she has experienced many more Remembrance parades. As time goes by, she notices that the ranks of those who survived the horrors of Passchendale, in Flanders, the

pebbled beaches of Dieppe and that hill in Korea have become thinner. Sometime in the next century, she thinks, there will be no veterans left. She wonders if Remembrance Day will also be forgotten.

I no longer wear my brown uniform with its brightly coloured scarf, but I feel it would be a mistake to forget the lessons of the past, for they have value in the future. The horrendous acts of war cannot be forgotten. We now live with the threat of global destruction which would have been unimaginable to the soldiers who fought at Vimy Ridge. If there is another World War, I wonder who will be left to march in their Remembrance parades.

Jody Johnson,
 Limehouse, Ontario.



TAKE TIME TO REMEMBER
 THE ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

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