

# EDITORIAL

## Remembrance Day: Take time to remember

By Wendy Long

What do you remember for Remembrance Day? It's one day only. One cold day in November, usually grey and strewn with the blood-red color of thousands of poppies. One day to remember masses of dead people, many in unmarked graves. One day to reflect on human stupidity.

Each year there is a respectful parade down Main Street, a parade of youths marching earnestly, trying unsuccessfully to keep in step, and old vets with sad eyes.

The audience consists mainly of seniors and the parents of the marching cadets, juggling their younger children.

The vets are silent and straight and proud, as they are every year, looking as if they are lost in the painful yesterdays of war.

I remember nothing of war, for I am among the young and fortunate that have not experienced the horror.

On Remembrance Day I think of white crosses, of bombs and rations and Hiroshima burning. And I think of Yugoslavia, of Iraq, of places in Africa, and of nuclear stockpiles.

It's funny, in an ironic kind of way. When I think of war I think of global history, but not my own grandmother, who I see daily, or my grandfather, who walks awkwardly because he was shot in the foot fighting the Germans.

People that I can reach out and touch experienced World War II, and yet it still does not quite seem real.

My grandmother gave birth to her son under a staircase, seeking refuge from a bombing raid in 1943 London.

She shudders as she remembers, saying repeatedly, "You don't know what it's like."

My grandfather nods his head and will say nothing, keeping strangely silent.

I met a senior last year who spent five years fighting on the front lines across Europe. Five years. Who can envision five long years of muddy, blood-filled battle?

"We were freeing occupied Paris," he reminisced. "I dived into one house and found a Jewish family who had been hidden by a dentist. They were eating potatoes and grass because there was nothing else to eat. I'll never forget it."

A few weeks ago I met a 71-year-old Polish lady, a student in an English as a Second Language class. She was learning to read and write for the very first time in her life. She had never been to school - ever. In fact, she had spent several years of her youth in concentration camps.

This Remembrance Day, take a few minutes to remember, even if you yourself have no memories. Prevent history from repeating itself. Remember those who gave their lives for the flag of freedom and human rights.

Wendy Long is a general assignment reporter for Halton Hills This Week who covers education, medicine and human interest stories.

### We remember...

Over 112,000 Canadians died for their country through military service in this century alone.

According to the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada, in the First World War 628,736 Canadians served. Of those, 66,573 died and 138,166 were wounded. Prisoners of war totalled 2,818 while 175 merchant seamen died by enemy action.

In World War II 1,031,902 Canadians and 49,963 female Canadians served. 44,927 died and 53,145 were wounded. Prisoners of war totalled 8,271 and 1,146 merchant seamen died by enemy action.

Some 26,791 Canadians served in the Korean war, of which 516 died.

Wear a poppy for these men and women and the freedoms we enjoy because of their courage.

## Seeking information



We admit that this picture has been hanging around since the Acton Fall Fair but we're sure a lot of the kids in this picture are still looking for information as they plow their way through the school year.

## Dave's Diversions Autumn colors on the wane

By David Featherstone

As I write this article the brilliant forest colors of early October have faded and many deciduous trees have lost their plumage altogether.

A combination of nippy autumn nights, shorter daylight hours and vicious autumn storms have once again wreaked havoc upon the leaves that shaded us during the summer months. Soon our deciduous trees will lie leafless — dormant — waiting for the warming days of late winter to renew their life processes.

Deciduous leaves are green in summer due to the presence of chlorophyll. Chlorophyll is the chemical that captures the sun's energy. This energy is used in combination with water and carbon dioxide to produce sugars. These sugars, in turn, form starch, cellulose and other materials that make up a tree.

Leaves also contain precious quantities of nutrients obtained through the tree root mass which gathers nutrients from the soil. By the end of June, most of a tree's nutrients are contained in its leaves. It would seem wasteful to lose these nutrients every autumn. Waste is a commodity not often found in nature.

Accordingly, deciduous trees have developed mechanisms to

conserve these nutrients.

After the long, prime growing days of late June and early July, trees begin removing nutrients from their leaves. These nutrients are stored within a tree's trunk and root system. This process continues through the summer and early autumn. A corky layer of cells forms within the leaves' stems. Leaves lose their ability to manufacture chlorophyll.

As the remaining chlorophyll breaks down, yellow pigments come to the fore. These pigments are present within deciduous leaves throughout the year but are camouflaged by thick layers of chlorophyll during the spring and summer months.

Various shades of yellow soon permeate the forests. Sumacs and maples add fiery touches of scarlet to the autumn display, red pigments being a product of excess sugars

within their leaves.

By the time a leaf falls, over half the nutrients contained within the leaf at the height of the growing season have been transferred back to the tree.

Nutrients that remain within the leaf are quickly transferred to the forest soils where they support a thriving forest floor community of wildflowers, seedlings and shrubs. Ultimately, the fallen leaf assists in maintaining the system from which it emerged.

A biologist by profession, David Featherstone devotes a large portion of his spare time to volunteer groups which are working to protect and enhance the environment.

David hopes to provide readers of Halton Hills This Week with a mix of interesting and informative outdoor and nature articles.

## Letters Welcomed

Halton Hills This Week welcomes your letters. Letters must be signed and include your full name and address. Names will be withheld on request.

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by Roe

