

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## May we never forget

On Sunday many of us will march, or gather at the cenotaph, for services commemorating those who died in the service of Canada through two devastating world wars, the Korean War as well as in peacekeeping missions for the United Nations.

Although it has been 53 years since the end of World War 2, the memory of the sacrifices and horror remains evergreen, especially for those who lived through it.

The ceremony is brief, military and patriotic. The traditional hymns are played, the Last Post and Reveille sound in the brisk fall air, the flags are lowered and raised in tribute to those who fell in the mud of Flanders Fields, the landing beaches of France, in the skies of Britain, the cold waters of the Atlantic or in other places far from home.

We come from our comfortable homes to offer our thanks to those who died to ensure we could live in peace and freedom. We remember the thousands of others wounded or hurt by a war none of us wanted, or realized how horrible it would be.

The veterans, row on row, ranks slimmer as the years go by, have their own, more realistic memories as the multitude remains silent for the traditional two minutes, until the flags flutter again and the reassuring notes of Reveille sound. Do they remember the good times, the comradeship, the anxiety of their families for their safety?

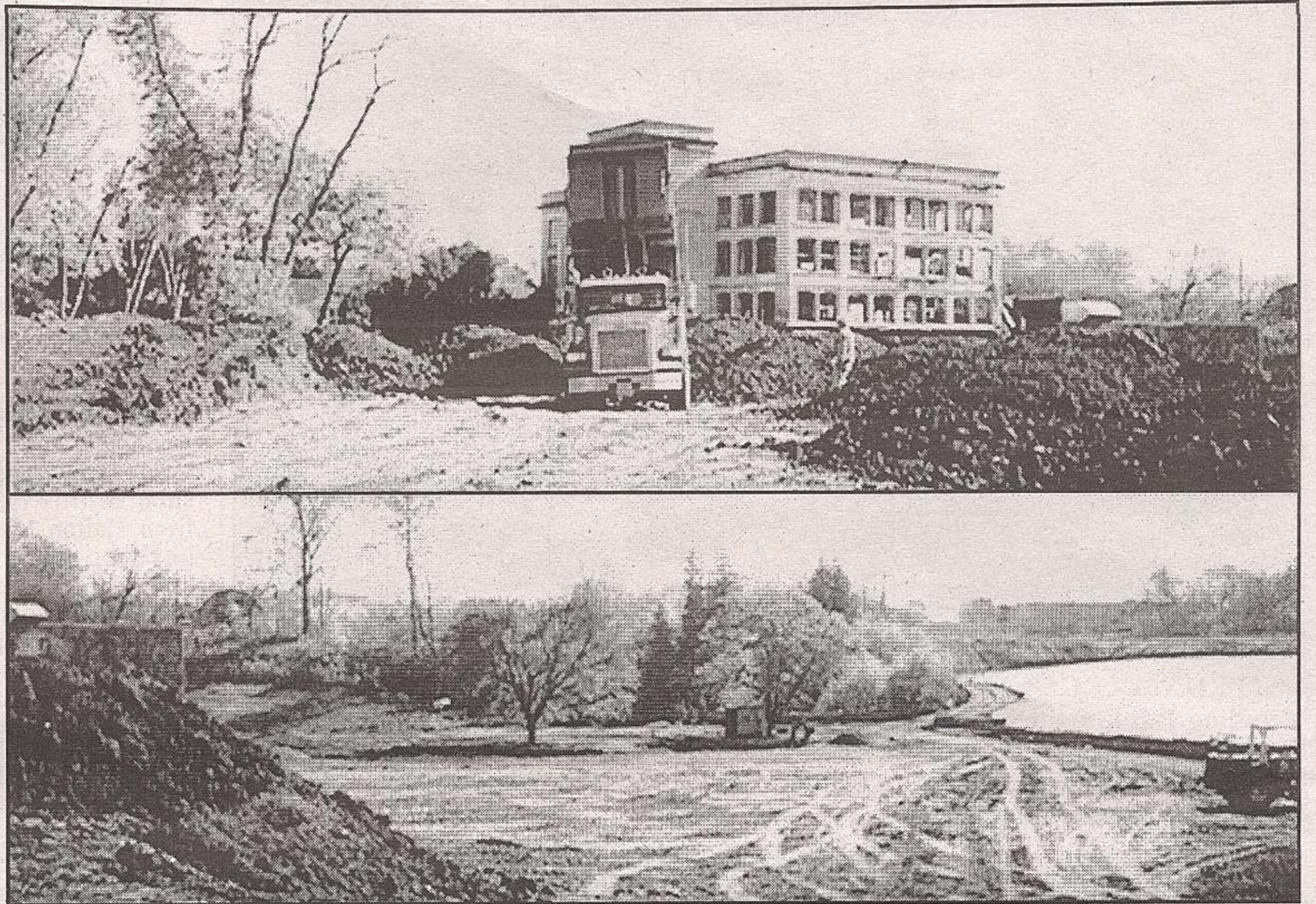
For those who lost husbands, sons or daughters in the conflicts is it a time to reflect on how their lives might have been different if the family unit had not been shattered?

Each of us at the cenotaph ceremony will have their own thoughts, their personal memories of those war years when the whole world was in tumult. Our hope is that we never have to live through another such conflict. The flower of the nation's manhood was sacrificed to stop power-hungry tyrants from taking over the peace-loving world.

Maintaining peace requires vigilance - stemming the power of warmongers before they can wreak their violence on the civilized peoples of the earth. It's a never-ending task as is evidenced by the atrocities committed in Bosnia, Palestine and the countries of Africa. It's a good reason for Canada to have a strong military, one that is ready to help police the trouble spots of the world to ensure they never escalate into wider conflicts, pitting people against people in hatred and loathing.

It would be hard to believe that we would allow the sacrifices of two world wars, where so many Canadians died, to be forgotten. But as they years go by and the veterans fade away, the temptation to be less appreciative is there.

May we never forget.



**COMING DOWN:** Many of the old Beardmore tannery buildings have taken, the land on which they stood reclaimed as Maple Leaf Foods continues to turn the area back into the appearance it must have had when the first tannery was built on the site about 1837. Crews working on the site have finished the first phase of the clean up. They'll return, probably in March, to finish the work. - Ted Tyler photos

## War's end brought new horrors

By MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY

I learned long ago that you hear only the funnier or stupider experiences from servicemen. The grim, horrifying or truly appalling moments don't usually get talked about. Despite the daily dose of blood and guts served up on-the-spot from the latest battle zone along with the nightly news hour, many Canadians are still pretty naive concerning the real emotions of war. Or willfully stupid, thanks to our geographic isolation.

Even on Remembrance Day only Allied soldiers get much consideration while the combatants in all the other conflicts maintain that traditional tight-lipped silence we associate with those who saw the real action. We pay lip service to their past but we don't really understand it and they rarely tell us.

My husband, Vasyl Petrushevsky was one of these political refugees. A soldier in the American army from 1944 to 1950, his real battle to survive began at his birth in Berlin. He was a stateless refugee because his parents were Ukrainian refugees sought by Russia's communists for their service in the Ukrainian government in 1918.

As a child he attended the "Russian School" in Berlin with the offspring of countless others whose families were either Russian or fleeing oppression from Russia's communists. The school favoured a heavy language curriculum and he was starting to study his fifth when World War II interrupted his studies.

That was in 1943 when the authorities walked into the school and marched all the students away supposedly to safer quarters outside Berlin. The real plan was to re-educate these kids into good little members of the Hitler Youth. Of course, these

kids had grown up understanding the various ways to resist indoctrination. One of the favourites, he used to say, was to sing in English. When soldiers marched them for hours and tried to get them to chant German slogans, they would spontaneously start singing - something spirited and non-political, but in English. It drove their captors to distraction.

While Hitler's hatred of Jews is common knowledge, his equal hatred for Slavs seems to have been ignored. He exterminated at least as many Slavs as he did Jews, but since their population is so large there was less threat to the race and no question of genocide. But to families of those who died that distinction is moot.

When indoctrination failed the kids were shifted into labour camps. Some, including a couple of his classmates, were Russian Jews, and the kids protected them by concealing that fact from their captors throughout the war.

He used to refer to himself as a "soil specialist" because he'd either planted or dug up land mines in almost every country in Europe. That was one of their jobs as slave labourers.

As the war turned against Germany food for the labourers went from bad to worse. His last six months in captivity saw camp inhabitants existing on cabbage soup.

He was 16 when exhaustion, overwork, hunger and exposure dragged him down and he took pneumonia. His captors left him for dead somewhere in Czechoslovakia. A woman and her teenage son found him, took him home and nursed him back to health. Whether that took days or weeks I never understood. He only learned later when he met the woman's husband that someone betrayed her and the SS executed both mother and son mere hours after Vasyl left them.

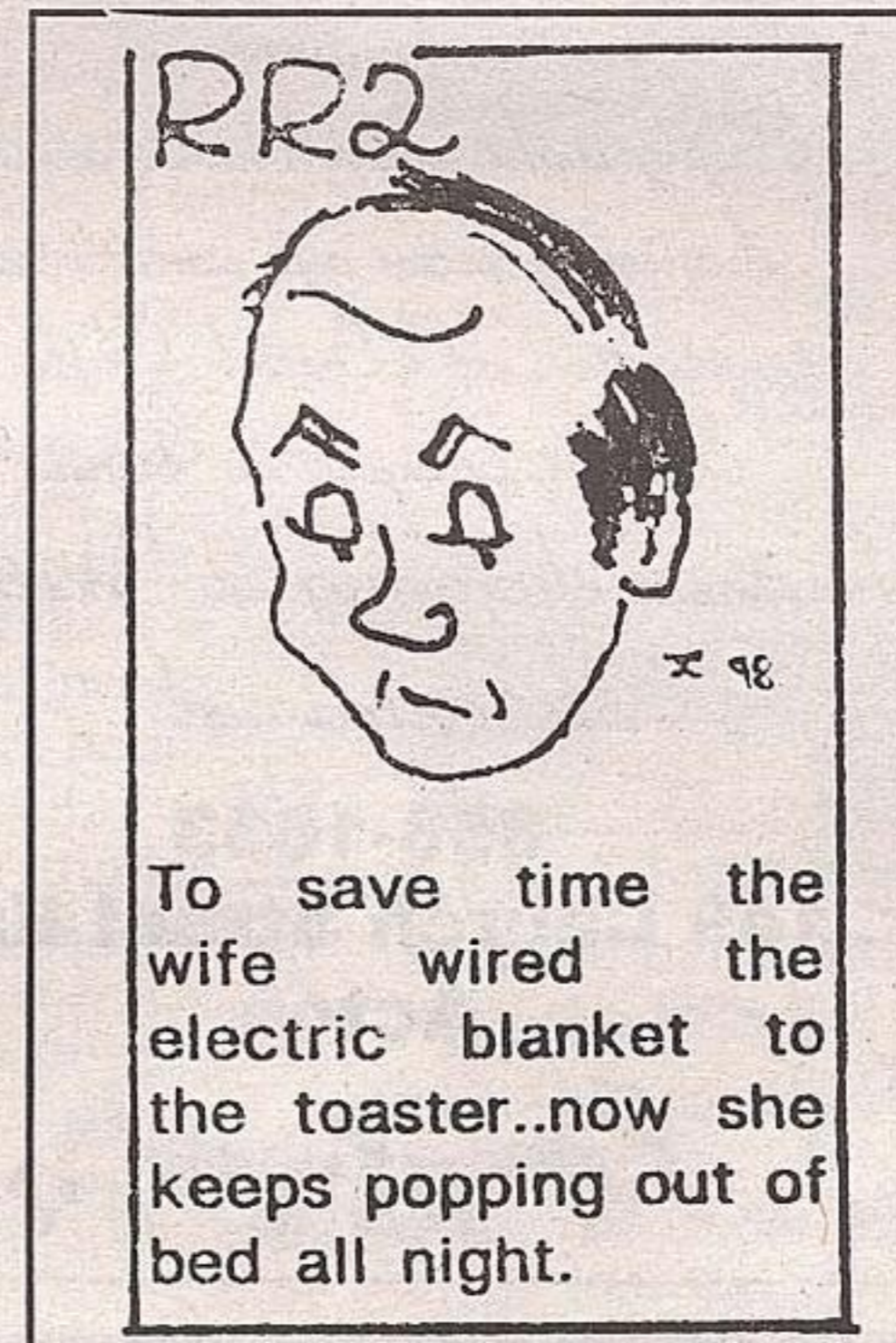
When he left them Vasyl headed for Berlin because German square thinking being what it was, the safest place to hide was right under the German's noses, he said.

The events on that trip never were clearly detailed as to which came first. But it was during that time he followed a déjà vu situation from a dream and survived a firestorm (not the famous one in Hamburg) in a city which the British bombed. He listened to his dreams after that.

He was on the run when he took shelter in an abandoned barn where a woman was already hiding with her two young children. A mortar hit the barn demolishing a section of it and killing both kids. The mother went mad at the sight.

Watching Wouk's The Winds of War or some of the death camp documentaries, he'd always say smells

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**THE NEW TANNER**

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Distributed to every home  
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