

We're allowing it to slip away

At this time of the year, I find myself interviewing those veterans who are willing to share some stories of their war experiences.

It's a yearly task I embark upon with both enjoyment and passion, but I always must prepare myself to be sobered by some of the stories I'm told. Sometimes those verbal images are rather disturbing to imagine.

As I continue my quest to document the experiences of the fewer and fewer veterans we have around, one fact seems to be more and more alarmingly apparent.

We're allowing the reverence and significance of Remembrance Day to slip away.

One vet I know quite well was talking to me the other day about going to schools to talk about war, sacrifice and remembrance.

He summed it up in a quick statement: "I worry that they (members of society) don't really give a damn any more."

Sadly, I could see his point. When I was a kid, Remembrance Day was a school holiday, designated for the express purpose of allowing those students the opportunity to attend the Remembrance Day parades with their parents or grandparents, and in doing so, observe an act of remembrance.

I recall going to the local Cenotaph with my grandfather, a veteran of the First World War.

Factories would stop work at precisely 11 a.m. November 11, to take a minute's silence to remember those veterans who hadn't returned, as well as those who did, but still paid dearly.

Now, it's all immaterial. These days, on November 11, the world carries on pretty much as usual. Only a few businesses take time to observe that solemn moment of silence.

I noticed a sign advertising a new business last week. They're holding their official opening, you guessed it, November 11th.

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Ted Brown

Why on earth would anyone pick that date? What's the matter with November 10th? Or the 12th?

It's a sad reflection on today's society.

As far as the schools go today, I wouldn't suggest for a moment that we give the kids a holiday—it would simply be wasted.

I can take comfort knowing that when students are in school November 11, teachers are taking time to remind them of the significance of the day by holding their own service.

Here at the newspaper, we publish a special section for Remembrance Day.

I'm pleased to be a part of that publication—it serves as a nudge to our readership, a reminder of the brave actions of our veterans, whose numbers are dwindling at an alarming rate every year.

But is it enough? I don't think so.

We must do everything in our power to keep the memories of their actions alive and to give them the respect they deserve.

We must tell the stories over and over, and make sure our children are well educated of the horrors of war, and the costs that soldiers paid on the battlefields in Europe and elsewhere.

If we don't, I fear philosopher George Santayana's words will ring clear:

"Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

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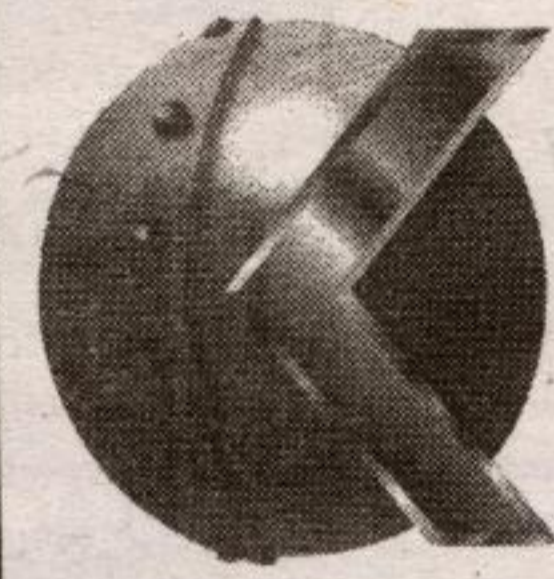
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