

We will remember them...

During a chat about Remembrance Day earlier this week, a friend asked me an interesting question. "After your trip to Europe last spring, do you find you're more passionate about Remembrance Day?"

An interesting question—one I'd never considered before that moment in time.

There's no doubt I've been changed by that trip, a tour of Holland, France and Belgium, celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Liberation of The Netherlands, and Victory in Europe. How could one not be changed?

I walked on the ground our veterans fought and died on, saw the places they liberated, as well as felt the outpouring of love and appreciation from the Dutch people to Canadians.

I felt solemn pride as I saw the trenches at Vimy Ridge where, almost 90 years ago, Canada actually came into its own as a country, taking a military objective under Canadian command, that the French and British armies had failed to do countless times.

I walked the road in Otterloo, Holland, where Red Asseltine saved his regiment in 1945, by single-handedly taking on hundreds of enemy soldiers with a flame thrower, with no cover, and certainly no concern for his own safety or well-being.

I walked the lands of the Scheldt Estuary, where, in 1944, the Highland Light Infantry, many of its soldiers from Halton Hills, fought in perilous conditions flooded with sea water after the Germans had blown out the dykes.

I stood in the hallows of The Menin Gate in Belgium, the names of more than 50,000 British Commonwealth soldiers inscribed on its walls, listening to the eerie echo of the *Last Post* at the Service of Remembrance, which is held every night, yes, even now, at precisely 8 p.m., when they close down the street.

I experienced the anger of slipping and slid-

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ing as I tried to walk up the pebble beach at Dieppe, where more than 900 Canadian soldiers' lives were wasted in a raid in 1942, that obviously utilized less military planning and intelligence than the most rudimentary game of checkers played in a school playground.

I visited Tyne Cot Cemetery in Belgium, the final resting place of more than 11,000 soldiers of The Great War, an additional 35,000 names of missing soldiers on the memorial wall.

When one spends two full weeks looking at the affects of war in Europe—the death and destruction, the rebuilt towns, cities and countrysides, and the subsequent rows of grave markers that are an indication of the cost of freedom—it's impossible to not be changed.

As a result, I'm undoubtedly more aware of the sacrifices our veterans have made in the conflicts our country has participated in.

And yes, I've certainly become more passionate. I realize the importance of keeping our children, their children and their children's children, all aware of the lunacy of war.

*'They shall not grow old,
as we who are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun,
and in the morning,
We will remember them.'*

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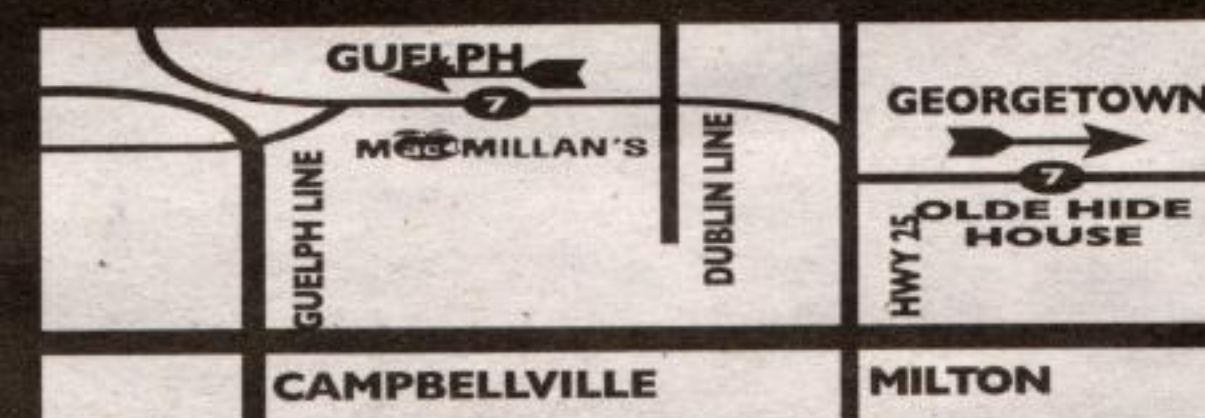
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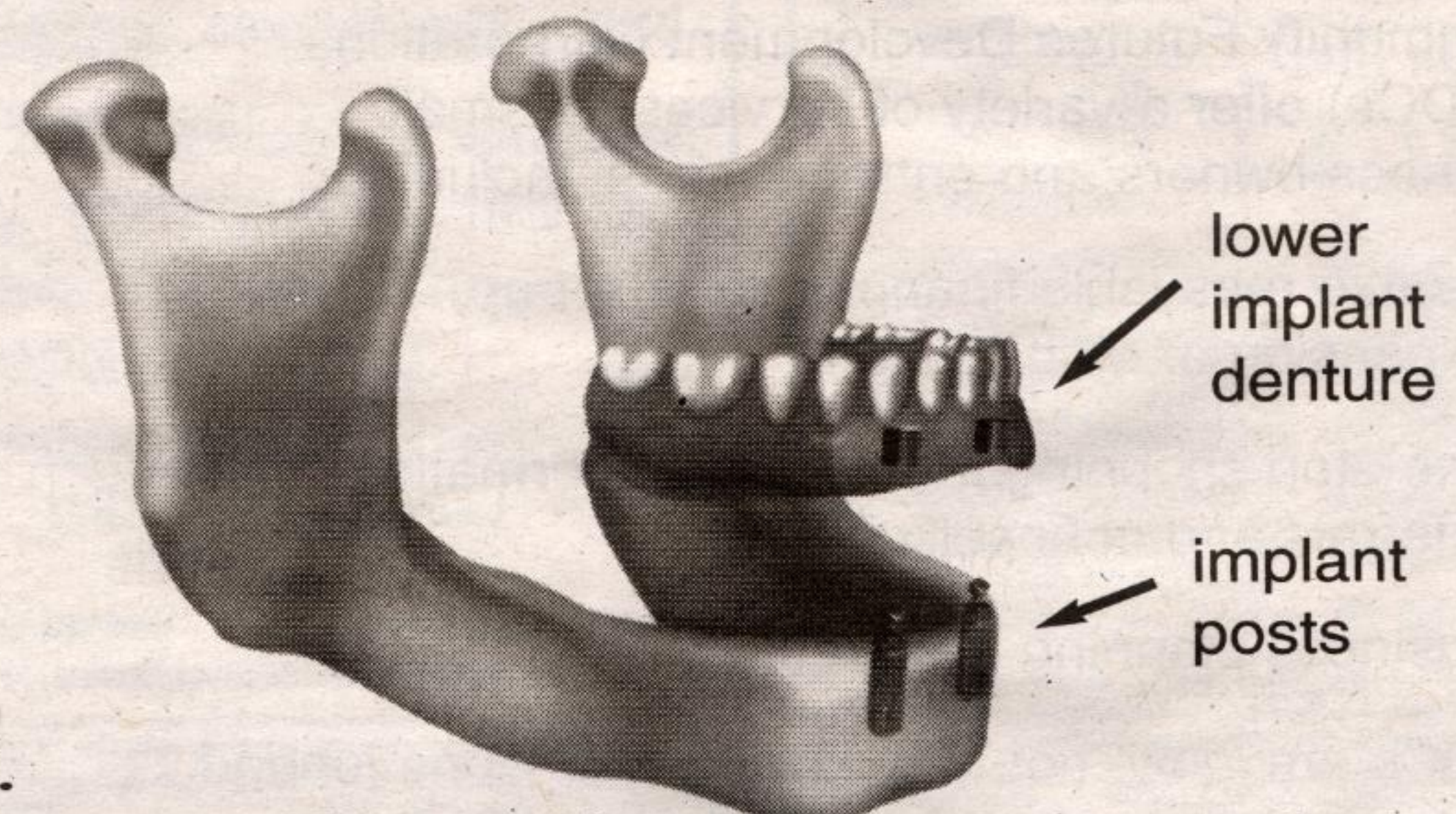
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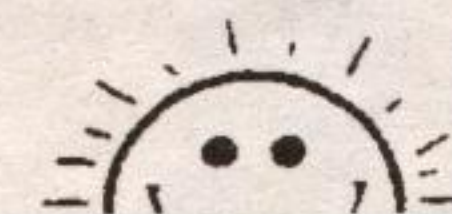


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