

The Last Post or Jingle Bells?

Most people know that I passionately promote Remembrance Day and all it stands for.

I'm a firm believer we should always learn from history, and in doing so, take time to honour those men and women who suffered from any war— be it 90 years ago in France and Belgium, or yesterday in Afghanistan.

Over the years, I've found most people say they agree with me, saying something like, 'Oh yes, I'm all for keeping Remembrance Day a special time to honour our veterans, both past and present.'

But as I attended the annual Remembrance Dinner at Branch 120 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Georgetown last Saturday night, I couldn't help but feel there are a lot of hypocrites out there.

You see, the dinner was held LAST Saturday night, November 3, not this Saturday night (which would have been November 10, the eve of Remembrance Day.)

And why was that dinner held last week, instead of this week?

Because the Georgetown Santa Claus Parade runs this week, November 10— the night before Remembrance Day.

The Santa Claus Parade is held in the evening, with lights attached to all the floats. It's quite a visual sight, and I admit, it's lots of fun.

So what does that have to do with Georgetown Legion and Remembrance Day?

Well, the Santa Claus Parade finishes its run on Mill Street, right in front of the Legion building, at 127 Mill Street.

The Legion dinner organizers were concerned that the parade would distract from their dinner, especially when those veterans attending were standing, silently observing the Last Post and two minutes of silence, in honour of their fallen comrades— just as a passing band was striking up another chord of *Here Comes Santa Claus* to the delight of all those people lining the streets.

For some reason, veterans really don't wish to hear happy celebratory music when they're remembering fathers, brothers, uncles and husbands who died for the freedom we enjoy— oh yeah, including freedom to assemble in a parade.

Ted Brown



And with the crowds of people along the streets, it would also have been difficult for the vets to find parking, or even get inside the Legion.

I wonder, is it really necessary for the retail sector in Georgetown to be so damned driven to launch the Christmas season, that a simple thing like Remembrance Day gets buried in its wake?

And tell me, how many people will flock to the stores Sunday morning, November 11, with their fat little wallets clenched in their hands after the parade, simply because Santa came to town?

I'm guessing none.

I realize Acton's Santa Parade is held the following week— God forbid we'd want to overburden the jolly old elf with two parades in one day— but it could work— Acton's parade is during the day; Georgetown's is in the evening.

I love Christmas as much as the next person, but let's keep it in its place. Geez, the rate we're going here, the Santa Claus Parade will be held the weekend following Thanksgiving.

I know my opinion here won't necessarily be a popular one. But give it one more thought, 'cuz that's another thing our veterans have given us— freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

So I'm sending a simple message to parade organizers: I do love Santa Claus and all the magic he evokes— just not before November 11.

Most importantly, let's join with our veterans, observing Remembrance Day, solemnly and unchallenged, on the day it was designated.

I like to think they've earned that privilege.

(Ted Brown can be reached at tbrown@independentfreepress.com)

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