

# Deaths of soldier, young boy hit home

**T**wo Afghan sisters were recently brought into the hospital by a helicopter, which landed under a clear, cold starry night, kicking up a tremendous cloud of dust.

The sisters, aged 6 and 12, were sitting at the family supper with their parents and little brother, when a member of the Taliban lobbed a grenade in amongst the family.

The father of the girls had been working at one of the NATO bases as a labourer. The father and mother were slightly injured and were taken to a local Afghan hospital. The sisters' little brother was killed instantly by the Taliban grenade.

The two girls were brought to our hospital in Kandahar with their uncle, in serious but stable condition. As they came in they looked in pain, but very brave, despite the terrible attack their family had suffered. It was heart-wrenching to see.

As I examined them, our Canadian nurses immediately gravitated towards the sisters, holding their hands and stroking their hair, reassuring the girls that they were in good hands. The sisters, in return, immediately took to our nurses, reaching their little arms out for an embrace.

The sisters both had grenade fragment wounds to their abdomens and needed urgent surgery to stop bleeding and repair bowel injuries.

We took them to the operating room and quickly they were placed under general anesthesia by one of our physicians, who hails from Uxbridge. We repaired the damage to the girls' bellies with little trouble, and soon after, they were in the recovery room, again holding the hands of Canadian nurses.

## SISTERS INJURED, BROTHER KILLED

Our Canadian nurses here in Kandahar give excellent clinical care, administer essential services and manage precious medical resources in all areas of the hospital. They also soothe and comfort those damaged and broken by war. They treat and care for all casualties of war here, from the Canadian soldier wounded in action, to the American soldier who just had his appendix taken out.

No matter how sick, how wretched the patient, they care for them all. Our nurses even give care of the highest standard to Taliban detainees. But I know our nurses take a special pride in caring for our own Canadian wounded.

Clara Widdifield is the name of a nurse inscribed on the pillars leading into Stouffville Memorial Park, to those from Stouffville who served in First World War.

I like to think that Clara Widdifield also treated patients in the same efficient, caring and cheerful manner that our Canadian nurses in this war do. I also like to think that Clara Widdifield would approve of them, as they carry on the Canadian nursing tradition of compassionate, competent care in difficult and austere situations.

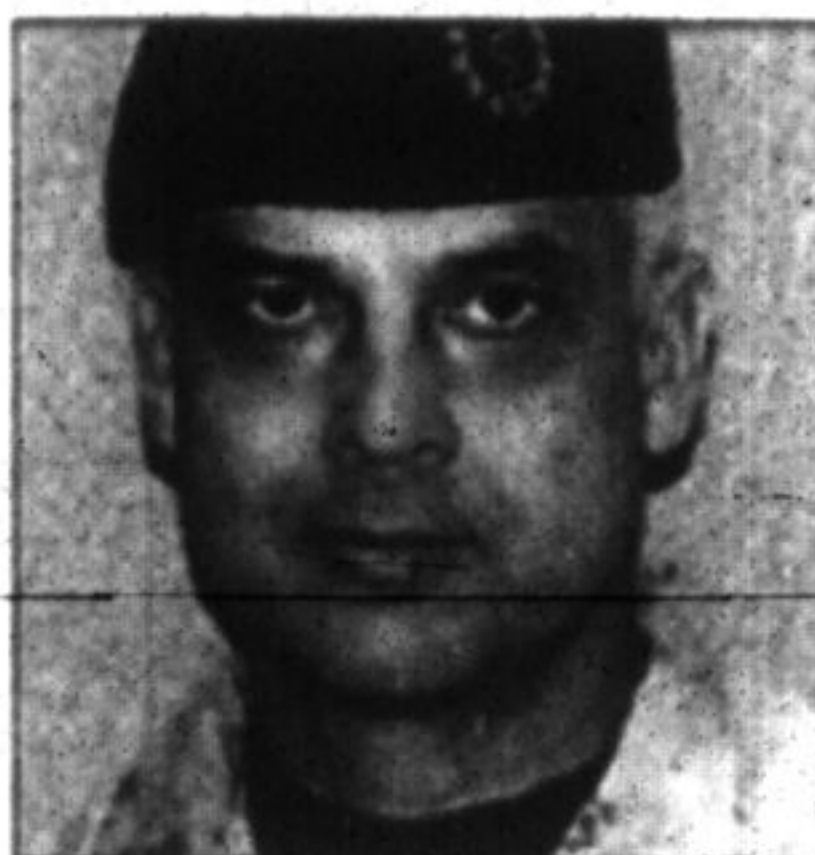
Several days later, the sisters were well on their way to recovery on the ward, eating ice cream and were surrounded by a herd of Beanie Baby dolls. They asked through the translator if they could become "Canadian nurses" too when they grow up, which they said is a "special kind of nurse". Hearing this gave me great hope for the girls and the future of Afghanistan.

Christmas Day dawned cold and clear in Kandahar, with the nearby mountains leading into Pakistan standing out sharply in the clear blue sky. The strong southwest Asian sun gradually warmed the morning into a pleasant, crisp afternoon. We went to work like any other day here to see the casualties of war we care for.

## CHRISTMAS ROCKET ATTACK

Despite our work dealing with the terrible wounds war brings, our spirits are good and some people are quite festive in their attitudes and dress. It is interesting to see soldiers and nurses in their combat uniforms topped off with a Santa hat or reindeer antlers. Packages and Christmas cards from Canada bring us cheer and remind us of that sane and beautiful country, which we have been blessed to call home.

As a tradition, the Canadian Forces holds a Christmas dinner with all the fixings for the junior ranks. The officers and senior non-commissioned officers serve them, in a reversal of roles. This tradition truly brings up the spirits of all ranks, perhaps even more so because every one is entitled to two beers. A beer is a rare treat here, as Task Force Kandahar is officially dry. Only the Canadians are allowed to have a maximum of two beers on special occa-



Andrew Beckett  
Kandahar Dispatches

sions, in contrast to all other nationalities on this camp.

I went to my Christmas dinner at the mess hall later in the evening, after night had fallen on Kandahar. As I was eating my plum pudding, the rocket attack alarm sounded, so we dived under the table and waited for the impact of the rocket. An explosion was heard and after several minutes, the all clear was given and I returned to the table

to finish my dessert. The rocket attack brought us back to the realities of war, from which we had been enjoying brief reprieve. Since Christmas Day, we have had daily rocket attacks from the insurgent forces.

As 2010 ended, many of us here wondered what the New Year will bring for us and the mission in Afghanistan. We also think of the sacrifices Canadians have made in the past year here. The recent death of one of our brave Canadian infantryman, just one week before Christmas brought that message home to us.

## WISHES FOR SAFE RETURN

Above all, we hope for peace, stability and a better life for the Afghan people. We also wish for our own safe return home to friends and family. But whatever the hardships we face, we are secure in the knowledge that we are making a difference here and the sacrifices we make here are worth it.

*Dr. Andrew Beckett of Stouffville is in Kandahar this winter working as a trauma surgeon. The Sunnybrook hospital doctor is writing about his experiences for The Sun-Tribune.*

YELLOW  
BRICK  
HOUSE



## Volunteer

Eliminate  
women abuse  
in our  
community

905-727-0930

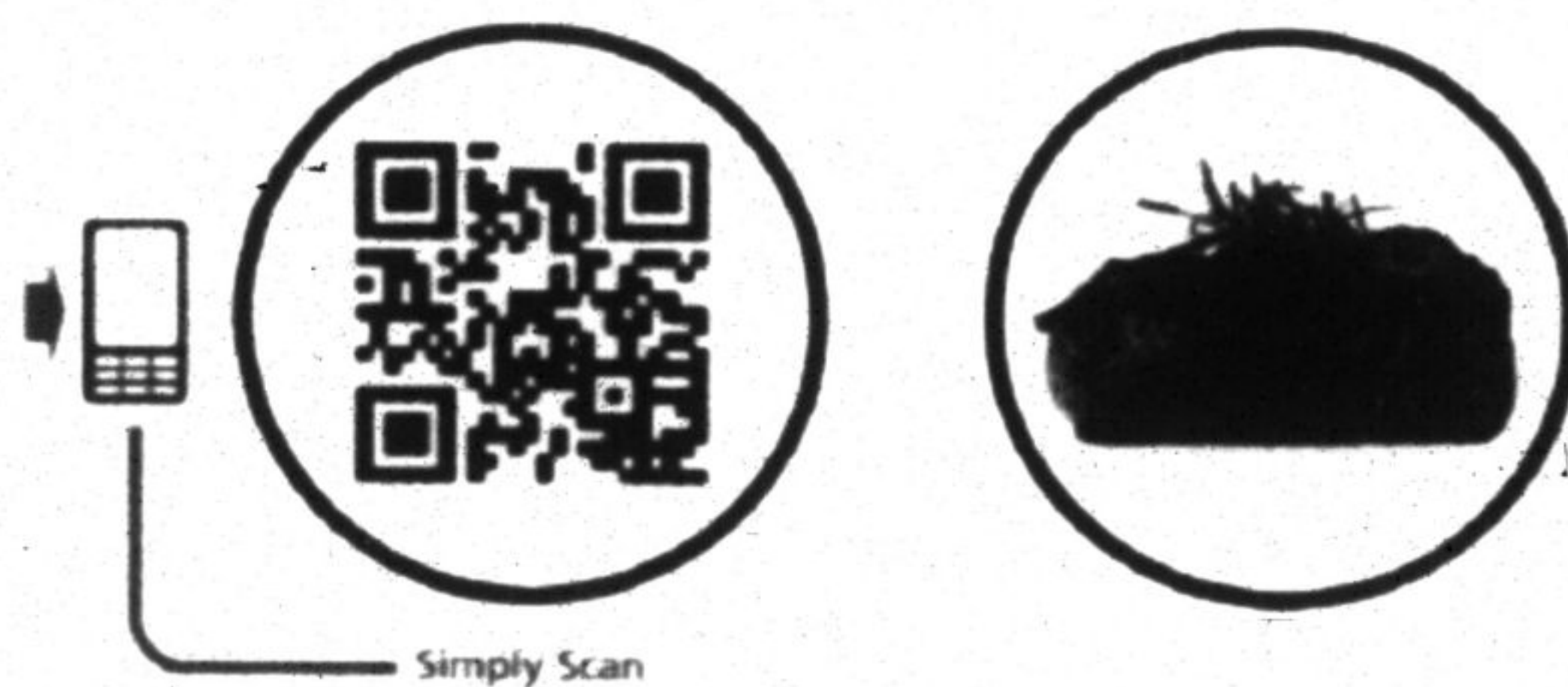
1-800-263-2231

yellowbrickhouse.org

This message brought  
to you as a community  
service of The Stouffville  
Sun Tribune

7, Stouffville Sun Tribune ■ www.youkregion.com ■ Saturday Jan 22, 2011

# SCAN THE STEAK TO WIN!



Simply Scan



## Contest Details:

**WIN 1 GRAND PRIZE:** One All-Clad 7 slow cooker  
+ One NEW slow cooker cookbook by Donna-Marie Pye  
Estimated value: \$430.00 ALSO 19 secondary prizes  
of one cookbook each. Estimated value: \$30.00 each

### App download instructions:

1. Download / Start QR-Code Application  
- ScanLife, BarCode, or i-nigma
2. Scan this QR-Code
3. Alternatively SMS to 393929: "get steakprize"



CANADIAN BEEF  
Goodness in every bite™

