



# From a Youthful Heart

## Remembering with heartfelt gratitude

by Alysha de Souza

Even though World War I and II seem long ago in the minds of young children today, it is so important for all of us to never forget and be grateful for all of our freedoms. Remembrance Day is so much more than just remembering those fallen heroes who unselfishly sacrificed their lives for our freedoms from such horrific dictatorship. To me it is about remembering with the "heartfelt gratitude" for all we have today and appreciating the civil liberties those young heroes fought so passionately for.

It is so difficult for all of us to truly understand what it was like for these heroes to face death and the horrible conditions they had to live with. Watching the horrendous devastation war caused millions of innocent people living in war torn countries as planes and bombs hit their homes. Small children going to school with gas masks, hoping the air raid would not harm them, or parents hoping their children would come home safely at the end of the day.

It is important for all of us to listen to the stories the veterans have to tell us because it helps us to understand and appreciate all the sacrifices that were made. To understand just how young some of the soldiers were when they left their families to fight for their belief in freedom. Looking around at the boys in my school, it is so hard to comprehend what it would be like if they had to face those sacrifices, and what it would be like for their families to let them go.

Having the great opportunity to listen intensely, as my great grandmother told me stories of what it was like to live in Britain during World War I and II, has given me a great appreciation for each and every day we have. Even though the times were tough in those days, many had a greater appreciation for what they had in life and how important it was to share what you had with someone who was less fortunate than you.

Granny Peggy, as I would call her, told me a story that I will keep in my heart forever, as it was then that I realized what a hero she was to me. During World War II in Britain food rations were given to families in order to purchase their share of food and clothing. Having four daughters to worry about feeding and clothing was difficult in itself, but one day after receiving her ration tickets to feed her family, she spotted a homeless soldier living under a bridge. Her heartfelt appreciation for this strange man inspired her to take some of her rations and share them with the stranger, expecting nothing in return. It made me so proud of her as she was willing to make sacrifices in order to help this brave soldier, who truly was a stranger to her.

Her stories were many, how her brother's family's home was hit by the engine of a plane, leaving their home destroyed and a young child disabled. How she worked in a shoe store to be able to give many children in the community shoes to wear on their feet. Even though she lived until the age of 93, she still stored pounds of sugar just in case she could not get it one day. That told me she still lived with the difficult memories of the days of rations. Until the day she passed away, every year she would intensely watch the Remembrance Day ceremonies on the television, with quiet tears rolling down her cheeks, as she remembered.

So as November 11th comes upon us, we should take the time to stop and be grateful for all the freedoms we have today and the sacrifices these young brave heroes gave all of us. And remember the millions of innocent civilians who lost their lives due to those horrific times. And most importantly, always hope for world peace for all.

*Alysha De Souza is a 14-year-old Stouffville resident.*



**AUTUMN HOUSE** - This beautiful house on O'Brien Avenue in Stouffville has all the glories of the fall going for it. Photo by Conrad Boyce.

### Early Christmas at museum

You can get in the holiday mood right away at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum in Vaudor.

On either Tuesday, Nov. 9 or Saturday, Nov. 13 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., a Christmas craft workshop for adults will be held, with all materials, instruction and refreshments included. You need to pre-register by calling 905-727-8954.

On Friday, Nov. 26, the annual tasty tradition of the Victorian Tea takes place, a trip back to Yuletide of yore, as plum pudding, trifle and other treats, along with the best tea north of highway 7, is served by ladies in Victorian costume.

The tea runs from noon to 3 p.m. at the Museum at 14732 Woodbine Avenue.

Admission is only \$6 for adults and \$2 for children under.

*Michael C. Deegan*

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