

## Lest We Forget the Price of Peace

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Tomorrow we will commemorate Remembrance Day. This year, many of us will miss the moments of shared tears as we stand beside our friends, neighbours and family members in public ceremonies to honour our veterans. This day was proclaimed by King George V, one hundred and one years ago, with this proclamation, "All locomotion should cease, so that, in perfect stillness, the thoughts of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the glorious dead."<sup>1</sup>

Since then, we've lost many of the victories our soldiers won for us. Our ceremonies, since 9/11, have been presided over by the protective presence of teams of on-duty police officers in full gear. This year, Remembrance Day will be different as the physical connection with other people in our communities will be lessened.

I fear that we are beginning to forget the huge price that has been paid for our peace and our freedoms.

My grandfather was born in Canada; his parents were immigrants from England. When WW2 started in 1939, he enlisted, along with his brother, and became a soldier in the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders. He was shipped overseas where he remained for five years.

My grandfather trained in England and served as a sniper in Italy. He was part of campaigns such as the Battle for Monte Cassino<sup>2</sup> and the Battle of Ortona.<sup>3</sup> His final battle, before returning home, was at Ravenna, Italy.<sup>4</sup> Among the shared stories, we heard that, as he sat beside another sniper, he fired at a German soldier — who also fired at them. The sniper beside grandad was blown to pieces. Grandad was only mildly injured.

Grandad was injured four times in battle. He arrived home in 1944 with the symptoms of what today would be diagnosed as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

My father was five years old when his dad went overseas. Dad's younger brother was born nine months after Grandad left. My uncle didn't know his father and dad grew up during those important years without his father. His mother and grandmother worked in the munitions factory to support the war effort. WW2 was huge both for soldiers and those at home. The effect did not end with the soldiers' return home, because years of battle left them scarred; some of those emotional scars were passed on to their children.

My mother is from England. She remembers being fitted with a gas mask; the training sessions for when the air raid sirens sounded; and the wardens checking to ensure that not a glimmer of light showed through the windows that were darkened for six years. She remembers hearing bombs dropping in Aldershot, Cardiff and Bristol. She remembers kids that were evacuated from London to her hometown. They were housed with their extended families or at the local orphanage or billeted wherever a spot could be found for them. "Over the six years of the war, more than two million children were sent away from their family homes. Most returned, but how they had changed and how the separation affected their relationships with their families is seldom considered."<sup>5</sup>

Your family, I'm sure, has wartime memories that have been shared over the years. Memories that have affected your family in both positive and negative ways. Memories that are woven into the fabric of our families and the fabric of our nation.

Our soldiers — and their families — have made (and continue to make) huge sacrifices over many wars and peacekeeping missions. On November 11<sup>th</sup>, we emotionally and actively consider these sacrifices; at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, of the 11<sup>th</sup> day, of the 11<sup>th</sup> month, (which is when the Armistice ending World War 1 became effective) we keep silence and also repeat, "we will remember them".

I'm sure most of us will regret that, during to these COVID times, we are unable to stand shoulder to shoulder, surreptitiously blotting our eyes, while the trumpet plays "The Last Post".

But there is more to the story of this year's Remembrance Day.

On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, we read that the "Ottawa Police issued an appeal for witnesses to come forward and identify a suspect, who is accused of using tools to carve a swastika on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the National War Memorial."<sup>6</sup>

Lack of respect for the traditions and memories of our country has been a hallmark of 2020. We have seen statues of our founding fathers pulled down or defaced. The crimes for which those founders are being judged by the 'woke folk' of 2020 are easily seen to be the natural responses of those living in a time of very different commonly-held understandings and moral expectations.

In 2020, we have increasingly seen Canadians muzzled, "cancelled", or expelled<sup>7</sup> in spite of the freedoms for which our soldiers fought and died, for which our fathers and grandfathers sacrificed their childhoods. The freedom to think differently is being eroded very quickly in Canada.

Freedom is not free — a price has been paid, and will always need to be paid, to preserve these precious attributes of our heritage. Our armed forces stand ready to pay that price. We pray that, as a nation, we will continue, in these times of relative peace, to honour those who have offered to stand and protect our homes and families. The soldiers of today become the veterans of tomorrow. For their love for country and countrymen, we salute them.

Tomorrow, as we commemorate the sacrifices of our military yesterday and today, may we take the time to offer our minutes of silence as a remembrance for the heavy price paid among our soldiers and their families to protect our way of life.

Many years ago, someone sent to me this very moving and graphic display of the respect owed our armed forces, written by Terry Kelly, "A Pittance of Time".<sup>8</sup> Each year, I pull it out as a reminder to myself of the importance of that brief moment of silence as we contemplate the cost of war and the price of peace.

May the Lord protect our troops today. May He protect the mothers as represented by this year's Silver Cross Mother. May He protect our vets as they set their military years behind them. And, may He protect the wives and children that support them at home.

God Bless Canada!

## **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> [royalcentral.co.uk/uk/king-george-v-and-the-first-remembrance-day-133185/](http://royalcentral.co.uk/uk/king-george-v-and-the-first-remembrance-day-133185/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/video-gallery/video/7341](http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/video-gallery/video/7341)

<sup>3</sup> [www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/news-media/infographics-infobytes/ortona2018](http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/news-media/infographics-infobytes/ortona2018)

<sup>4</sup> [www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/cem?cemetery=70505](http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/cem?cemetery=70505)

<sup>5</sup> [www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2011/mar/12/children-evacuation-london-second-world-war](http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2011/mar/12/children-evacuation-london-second-world-war)

<sup>6</sup> [www.indiablooms.com/world-details/USN/26444/justin-trudeau-condemns-swastika-carved-on-canadian-war-memorial-statement.html](http://www.indiablooms.com/world-details/USN/26444/justin-trudeau-condemns-swastika-carved-on-canadian-war-memorial-statement.html)

<sup>7</sup> [thepostmillennial.com/medical-student-expelled-for-refusing-to-change-his-personal-beliefs](http://thepostmillennial.com/medical-student-expelled-for-refusing-to-change-his-personal-beliefs)

<sup>8</sup> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kX\\_3y3u5Uo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kX_3y3u5Uo)