

# ***Remembrance***

We would like to take a moment to share some very compelling images from Vimy, France last year. Combat boots provide a powerful symbol of remembrance. On April 9, 2017, Canadian and French students took part in laying rows of boots at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France. Thousands of modern day combat boots surrounded the Vimy monument in memory of the almost 3600 Canadian soldiers who lost their lives during the battle. The boots were laid in groups of four which represented the four divisions of the Canadian Corp that fought for the first time as one formation at Vimy Ridge a century before.

When I was just shy of turning 2, my dad did his first tour overseas. While my father was in Southwest Asia, he did 12 repatriation parades. On his tour, there were 12 brave soldiers killed from December 2007 to June 2008. Whenever a soldier was killed, all technology was cut and you weren't allowed outside communication until the next of kin were notified.

Me and my parents had this special thing we did whenever my dad was gone. We would skype him, and often times I cried. I didn't have to be older to know how much I missed him while he was gone.

By the age of 7, I had already grown into the military life. I had lived in Sydney NS, Oromocto NB, Cold Lake AB, and Trenton ON. Most of my life we had lived on a base surrounded by other military families. We shared a unique bond. I was used to my father being away for weeks and months at a time. It was the moments when our family was all together laughing and smiling that I will never ever forget.

I personally felt the effects of the death of a soldier for the first time in 2014. At school, we had our first real hold and secure. We had no idea what was going on. It wasn't until they released us to our parents that we found out what was actually happening. At the Canadian National War Memorial in Ottawa, Corporal Nathan Cirillo, a Canadian soldier on ceremonial sentry duty was fatally shot. People were scared to let their children go to school because we attended a school that was directly on a Canadian military base. All soldiers were asked not to wear their uniforms in public and not write that they worked for Department of National Defense on social media. It was a scary time for all

Canadian soldiers and their families. This was also the time I had attended my first repatriation parade.

My dad retired in 2015 as a master corporal. He may not have laser beams or super strength, but he is my hero. These boots you see on display belong to him. We would like to say a special thanks to my dad, Rob Cromwell, for your service as well as the soldiers of the past and present. Lest we forget!