

Remember

By Emma Crossan

Every November 11, people across the country gather at local memorials to remember. Red and black poppies are worn over the heart as a sign that we do remember. Cenotaphs covered with names etched into the stone serve as a reminder of why we remember.

We remember those who served our country and continue to serve our country in times of peace and in times of war. Those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom live on in our memories because we remember. Those scarred physically and mentally by the battlefield are regarded as heroes because we remember.

The First and Second World Wars were a long time ago, and as time moves on, people are beginning to forget. People forget that many people died for their rights to education, voting, and religion. People forget that many soldiers charged into battle, knowing that they might never see Canada again, to allow Canadians to live in freedom. People forget those who fought for them because they never knew them.

And alas, many still get November 11 off school or work and go about the things that they feel they must get done without even pausing to think about what the day commemorates. Many are still in bed at eleven o'clock when the last post plays at ceremonies across the country, while those who do remember stand silently in respect for those who lost their lives in the wars. As "In Flanders Fields" is read at many ceremonies, many people sit at home and play on their cell phones or watch television mindlessly. Many do not think remembering is important, and some politicians move that November 11 should no longer be a holiday. Many lose sight of the real point.

Some can never forget, though they often wish to, for the memories of the battlefield live on vividly in their minds. There are things they have seen that cannot be unseen, things so horrid that words cannot even begin to describe the images left in the thoughts of those who saw them. Many turned to alcohol or drugs in an attempt to dull the pain; however, it only worked temporarily. This self-medication tore many families apart and stole many lives of these broken heroes. They were told that they were shell-shocked and that there was nothing to be done. Many years later those who survived with this primitive diagnosis were given a much clearer name for their ailment: post-traumatic stress disorder.

Some never forget because of those that they lost. The silver cross mother lays a wreath in honor of her child who died in combat. She remembers holding them for the first time, thinking about what they might become. She remembers attending their school plays, opening presents with them on Christmas morning, and taking pictures of them at their highschool prom. She remembers their graduation and the pride she felt when they joined the armed forces. She remembers the lump in her throat and the tears she shed when they told her they were going to fight, and the hug they gave her when they assured her that they were going to be all right. She remembers the hole left in her heart that feels as though it can never be filled when she was told that her baby would not be returning alive.

However, there are still others who choose not to forget. Those who refuse to let the memories of our nation's heroes die loyally show up to pay their respects to the young men and women who gave it all for their country. They choose to stand in silence at the last post to meditate on the memory of that sacrifice. For if the fallen are forgotten, how can we not forget the horrors of war and the toll it takes on people, families, communities, countries, and entire

generations? Who is to say that it will not happen again if we forget why war is such a terrible thing? Those who remember will never forget, and will always be trying to make those who forget remember.

Remembrance Day is relevant to those of all ages. From the war veteran to the youngest child who still does not know what war means, it is crucial that all remember. It is crucial that we learn from history and never forget the hard lessons it has taught us. For when those lessons are forgotten, history is known to repeat itself. We cannot forget and we will not forget. We will remember them.

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