

Lest We Forget

For many of us, war is a phenomenon seen through the lens of a television camera or a journalist's account of fighting in distant parts of the world. Our closest physical and emotional experience may be the discovery of wartime memorabilia in a family attic. But even items such as photographs, uniform badges, medals, and diaries can seem vague and unconnected to the life of their owner. For those of us born during peacetime, all wars seem far removed from our daily lives. We need more than this to help us remember.

Memory is a strange thing. It often serves us well - though what is remembered is often very selective. I can remember significant moments in great detail and forget that I had a terrible cold or that the weather was miserable. Memory is selective. For one reason or another we take a snapshot of a particular moment in time. For war veterans the snapshot is often of smiling faces and comrades in arms, yet these immediately followed by a flashback to a scene of terror or horror, again followed by a moment of levity.

The snapshots that will soon be shared depict mostly the lighter moments. Who takes pictures during a bombing or a firefight?

Through your eyes this morning – those who are living reminders of the Korean war - we receive snapshots of what you went through. We need to see them clearly. We need to know... Lest we forget.

John Melady back in 1983 wrote *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War* and indeed there is much forgotten about this brutal conflict. We need constant reminders of what was at stake.

Yours was the first 'police action' of the United Nations.

Yours was the first attempt by the International Community to put boundaries around conflict to contain it so that the horror of the Great wars of the 20th century would never happen again... and indeed the world became a completely different place after the Korean war. Patricia Giesler, in *'Valour Remembered: Canadians in Korea'* wrote "Canadian action in Korea was followed by other peacekeeping operations which have seen

Canadian troops deployed around the world in new efforts to promote international freedom and maintain world peace.”

Lest we forget

It is significant that the Korean community is instrumental in helping us remember this moment in time here in Halifax. Koreans cannot forget and Koreans are the first to remember to say ‘thank you’ for the support they received in this bloody conflict from 1950 to 53. Lest we forget we also remember that Koreans by the tens of thousands fought and died in the cause of freedom for their homeland. Koreans are still dying because of the division from over half a century ago.

60th Anniversary commemorations are taking place across the country and around the world. Efforts are time and again being made to bring to public attention those events that led to the Korean conflict and the difficult decision made by 27,000 Canadians to participate from half a world away.

Lest we forget

What they were dying for

Lest we forget

What they were killing for

Lest we forget

What the hell it was for

What do we forget when we remember... (by Owen Griffiths: professor at my alma mater Mount Alison University in Sackville NB)

Canada’s efforts have always been fuelled by a commitment to protect the rights of others and to foster peace and freedom. Many Canadians have died for these beliefs, and many others have dedicated their lives to these pursuits. This willingness to stand up to protect human rights, freedom and justice remains one of Canada’s defining characteristics in the eyes of the world.

Lest we forget.

Another poet asks: “what do the living owe to the dead?” Good question. The idea behind this day is to honour the war dead of the Korean war, to acknowledge a sacrifice, to pay attention to the fact that our lives have been protected and enhanced by the choice someone else made to live, and ultimately die, sacrificially. There is still the question of what the living owe the dead... which goes far beyond those who have died as soldiers. There have been so many who have impacted our lives by how they chose to live their own lives. All of them deserve our remembrance and our honour. And it isn't enough just to notice the difference they made. We need a way to name the reality that our lives are still peopled not only by those who breathe around us, but also by our beloved dead.

In our North American culture there isn't much room made for any form of collective remembrance and grief. We tend to honour our dead as we do most other things: quickly, almost efficiently, with eyes resolutely turned forward. We have a funeral or memorial service soon after the death. Friends and relatives gather, share our grief and try to comfort us. But then, within a matter of weeks or at most a few months, life has returned to normal — at least in theory.

As Kendyl Gibbons puts it: “We [live] in a community of the living and the dead, whose imperishable memory forms the foundation of our own being. ...today... urges us to call these presences explicitly to mind, lest we forget.”

I invite you to take a moment now, and call these presences explicitly to mind: grandmothers and grandfathers, mothers, fathers, siblings, cousins, mentors and friends, and children. I invite you to whisper their names and remember – lest we forget.

Finally as a minister of Jesus Christ, I need to remind you that the focus of our Christian faith centres on a cross of sacrifice and around a table of remembrance. We are a people who constantly find our renewal and strength in the words: “Do this in remembrance of me.” Only as we bring the act of sacrifice to the centre of our being and the centre of our faith can we do honour to the One who died for us. I am honoured to be here to help you remember today. I am privileged to do it in the name of Jesus Christ who suffered and died that we might live, we are living reminders that no sacrifice is ever in vain and none will be forgotten... And now to him be

glory and honour and power and praise and dominion for ever and ever.
Amen.