

Remembrance Day Letter to the Editor 2009

The death of every Canadian patriot leaves a scar on the heart of our nation. Those dead patriots left behind all that was dear to them; they endured hardships, faced danger and finally passed out of the sight of humanity by the path of duty and self-sacrifice. They have been sailors, soldiers, airmen and women, stateswomen and men, and lovers of humanity whose combined wisdom, eloquence, courage, and strength of personality have given Canada, and the world, a large measure of the liberties we now possess.

Across Canada, and around the world, every year on Remembrance Day we hear the words: "They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them." How many of us take the time to think about what these words really mean, and how they affect us?

During my time in Afghanistan, I have come to learn that remembering fallen comrades is not merely about loss. My Remembrance Day this year is also about recalling courage, and endurance, and duty, and love of country, and comradeship, and good humour, and the survival of a sense of individual identity and decency in the face of great ordeals and challenges.

How should we face those same challenges? I believe that whether we are in this world as a state of probation for another, or whether we cease altogether when we exhale our last breath, we have duties to perform; duties to ourselves, to our friends, to our country, and to our fellow humans. During my deployment I have been to many services mourning the passing of Canadian patriots. Rather than simply mouthing the words, "We will remember them," this year, and from now on, I have set myself the goal of not simply remembering those fallen patriots, but finding a way to emulate their spirit. If all Canadians did the same, we would not only improve as individuals, but also improve our country as a whole. What higher honour can we pay a fallen patriot? What better way to fulfill our duty of healing those scars on the heart of our nation?

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