

The Realty of a Brutal War

by Daniel Maillet

My pilgrimage to the 90th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge took place from April 5-13. We toured Amsterdam, Brussels, Vimy, Dieppe, Juno, Caen and Paris. For me, even before we left Canada, the biggest part was going to be our time spent at the Vimy memorial.

It started, as did all the other days, with an early wake-up call, a quick breakfast and then onto the bus. As we drove, I started to feel slightly ill, and then off in the distance on the hillside was a visible white monument. It would take us another 30 minutes to arrive. The instant I stepped off the bus and onto the soil of Vimy, I felt sick. As my feet touched the ground, somehow I could sense the cold hard reality of a brutal war. It was all around you, the remnants of a ravaged landscape and thought of all those casualties, and it is monumental.

As a group we slowly made our way towards Canadian Cemetery No. 2, where the vast majority of our group's soldiers are buried. After a short introduction ceremony, we had a small snack and were given time to find our soldier's final resting places. Eagerly I was the first one off looking and quickly discovered there was an index. I flipped through the pages impatiently to find my soldier.

There in the middle of one of the pages read "Lance Corporal Peter B. Armstrong, 87th Battalion Light Infantry, row 1-B 24". I scurried around the cemetery like a child in a candy store, seeking row 1-B. After a few minutes, I spotted it. I quickly counted out 24 gravestones and saw it. The monument I read L/Cpl P. B. Armstrong I collapsed to my knees in front of the grave.

I stayed in that position for a few minutes, until one of the escorting teachers from my school asked if they could possibly take my picture with my soldier's grave. I wiped my eyes and slowly responded with a faint "yes".

It then hit me, the real reason why we were all here. Not to commemorate the restoration of the monument—but to remember all those who gave their lives to have Canada become a nation in the eyes of the rest of the world.

We then moved off as a group to the Vimy memorial ceremony itself. A long and emotionally filled day, well worth the time spent waiting and all the effort to save enough money to be here.

To be in one place with so many people who all want to complete the same goal, to create a living memory of the people lost 90 years ago, and to pass that on, was truly a great experience and wonderful opportunity. I am truly grateful.

Daniel is an Air Cadet with 51 Canada Aviation Museum Squadron, Ottawa. Courtesy The Maple Leaf.

Penny Drive for Operation Homefires

St Francis de Sales, along with nine other Catholic schools collected money in a penny drive for Operation Homefires. They turned over a cheque to the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 322 in Ajax for \$4,000. Branch President Mike O'Hara and 1st Vice Bruce Sharpe visited the school to receive the cheque from Grade Seven students Troy Hardtman and Alexis Collins



Left to right: Mike O'Hara, Troy Hardtman, Alexis Collins and Bruce Sharpe.



Life Signs Monitoring Machine

Ontario Command Branches and Ladies Auxiliaries Charitable Foundation

The Rouge Valley Ajax Pickering Hospital received a cheque for \$4,574.74 from the Ontario Command Branches and Ladies Auxiliaries Charitable Foundation at the November's Senior Luncheon.

The funds went to purchase a vital life signs monitoring machine. We were invited to the hospital to see what our donation had purchased and to visit the Ambulatory Care Unit (ACU).



Left to right: Doug Smith (Public Relations Officer), Carole Chabot (VP of Development for the Foundation), Jennifer Collins (Special Project Officer for the Foundation), Athalie Scott (Clinical Practice Leader of the ACU), Julie Baker (Manager of ACU) and Emma Smith, (Deputy Commander, Ladies Auxiliary). Photo courtesy Tracy Paterson, Acting Executive Director, Rouge Valley Health Foundation.

Athalie Scott hooked the vital life signs machine up to Jennifer Collins to show how it monitored six items at once.





60 Year Membership Awards

Frank Mitchell and Norm Lawton were presented with 60 year membership awards on Saturday April 21st by First Vice Bruce Sharpe.



Left to right: Frank Mitchell, Bruce Sharpe and Norm Lawton

