

Remembrance in our Elementary Schools

A Silver Cross Mother's Reflections

Sandy Mellish, mother of WO Frank R. Mellish, was asked to speak at Chiganois Elementary School's Remembrance Day Service 2011. She has graciously allowed her thoughts to be published.

When I look out into the sea of faces before me today my mind goes back to when my Frank was your age and attended a school very similar to your Chiganois School. Like you, when Frank was young, he too gave his parents cards. I have a couple of them here with me today that I could share with you if you like and there is time. He made these special gifts in school for Father's or Mother's day.

It may be difficult for you to understand now, but it really wasn't all that long ago that

Frank, too was full of promise. Much like you and other young people, Frank had dreams and aspirations. From the time he was a little boy he dreamed of doing something that mattered, really mattered, in this world. He joined the Cub Scouts and was in uniform from that day forward. He went on to join the Air cadets at 12 and then the Canadian Forces at 19.

Although we were extremely proud of Frank and all he had become while serving the Canadian Armed Forces, I really did not know much of the Soldier, Frank. I know he left his family seven times to go to strange lands to protect and fight for what we take for granted every day in Canada. NO, it's not the soldier that I miss, who has since become one of Canada's Heroes. It is the baby I held, the little boy with the messy face, and the young teen who became a man that I recall so very often and miss so very dearly. I also miss the man that he became and I miss the father he became. It was so enjoyable to see my little boy with his own boys. Frank had two sons when he was killed; they were 11 and 13 years old. Some of you are in that age range. Can you imagine what it would be like to lose your Dad?

That was our family sacrifice...two boys without their dad forever, a wife without a husband, a sister without a brother, Aunts and Uncles who loved him dearly, and cousins like Sgt Mike McNeil and Eric McNeil, Logan's dad, who are forever without that special someone with whom many great memories were made and shared...and of course, we, his parents...forever without their wonderful boy.



Chiganois Grade 4 student Logan McNeil had several family members attend his school's Remembrance Day Service. Left to right- Sgt Mike McNeil (a cousin of Logan and WO Frank Mellish, who also served 3 tours with Frank), Tina McNeil (Logan's mom), Frank McNeil (Logan's grandfather), Logan McNeil, Carolyn McNeil (Logan's grandmother), Sandy and Barry Mellish (parent's of WO Frank Mellish). (Harrington Photo)



Lauren Mattatall, Jennessa Wolf, Jillian MacMillan and Ethan Dunlap (l to r) hold up poppies they made for the Chiganois Remembrance Day Service. The Grade One class read a poem "Poppy, Poppy". (Harrington Photo)



Barry and Sandra Mellish were guest speakers at the Chiganois Remembrance Day Service on Nov. 10th. Their son WO Frank R Mellish was killed in Afghanistan on Sept 3rd, 2006 at the age of 38. Frank was on his seventh overseas deployment, and his second mission to Afghanistan. (Harrington Photo)



Luke Vantol, Lynh Choi and Sophie Shepherd were busy decorating the Chiganois Elementary gymnasium with colorful posters and decorations prior to the Remembrance Day Service. (Harrington Photo)



Lest We Forget. Chiganois Grade 4/5 student Hailey McMillan was looking forward to her school's Remembrance Day Service on Nov. 10th. (Harrington Photo)



Robert Collins was a guest speaker at the Debert Elementary Remembrance Day Service. Mr. Collins served over 30 years in Canada's military. His last service was at the Folly Mountain NATO site, which closed in 2006. He is a member of Royal Canadian Legion Branch #106, Debert. (Harrington Photo)

We Remember

I am not going into the role that Frank took on after he joined out military. I will leave that task for my nephew, Sgt Mike McNeil who was as close as any bother and one of Frank's dearest friends and cousin. He knows better than most, what Frank, and what he too, did in service for this country and why Frank was willing to give up his life for his country.

What I do want to emphasize here today is for you to realize and I know that some of you may be too young to fully understand this, but you need to know that our soldiers, our military service personnel and the veterans of our country are the very reason you are able to get up every day, both boys and girls alike and attend school, and for the most part you have your choice which school. You can attend the church of your choice if you like, or choose not to, it that is what you prefer. You are free to tell people in power exactly what or how you feel, without fear of retribution. This means "you are free to do so" and no one can harm you because of it. You are free to take part in any peaceful protest, drive a car if you are able when you become of age, go to a Doctor and hospital when needed. These freedoms that we all enjoy didn't just arrive at our homes one day, they did not come in a bag from Santa Claus one Christmas morning...and they did not come without a price. Like Frank and the other 158 Canadians, who gave their lives in Afghanistan, our veterans of the First and Second World War, as well as the conflict in Korea, also gave their lives. Even those who returned from these conflicts carry a heavy burden of returning to their homeland without their friends. They too, suffer long after the wars and the guns are quiet. You

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Students taking part in the Debert Elementary School Remembrance Day Service on Nov. 9th included: (front left to right)- Cayne Slack, Weston Porter, Ryan Rath, Brylin Smith; (back l to r)- Quinten Bennett, Sarah Murray, Rachael Aikens, Danielle Chater, Lauren Wood, Hannah MacIntosh, Liam Simpson. (Harrington Photo)



Ceilidh MacKay, Ian Kittilsen, Hannah Boertjes and Colin Isenor perform actions to the song 'Peace Like a River', sung by Grades Primary, 1 and 2 at the Debert Elementary School Remembrance Day Service on Nov. 9th. (Harrington Photo)



Billy Hurley and Jalyssa Otterson layed wreaths during the Remembrance Day Service at Debert Elementary School. (Harrington Photo)



Grade Six students spelled out the word REMEMBRANCE, along with a reading, at the Debert Elementary School Remembrance Day Service. (Harrington Photo)



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