

# The Struggle to Remember

Remembrance day is drawing near and once again grim recollections of war will momentarily disturb our peaceful lives. For those who lived through a world war, the painful memories must give special significance to Remembrance Day. But for the generation of Canadians who have not experienced war, the day and its meaning are drifting into obscurity.

My earliest memories of Remembrance Day are from elementary school. I remember the little plastic poppies my mother would stick in my jacket and the pinpricks they gave me. I remember standing in a school yard listening to bagpipes and trumpet solos and watching flag-lowering ceremonies. I remember standing for two very awkward minutes of silence at the eleventh hour. I remember being aware that such occasions were solemn and important and I remember always doing my best to be respectful of that. But what I don't remember, is asking myself, or anyone else, what exactly a six year-old boy was supposed to be remembering.

As I grew up, I dutifully swallowed my required dosages of history, and came to know how Remembrance Day began. Being a respectful young boy, I had no problem making myself suitably sombre for the day, especially during those two minutes of silence when I'd force myself to think about how much it must have sucked to fight in a real war (I fought pretend ones in my backyard).

Nearing adulthood I have come to realize, sadly, that the sincerity of our generations sombre remembrance is somewhat suspect. It is obvious that Remembrance Day is not really for the dead, but rather the veterans. It is with respect for these veterans that many younger people will continue to treat Remembrance Day as more than just a holiday long-weekend. We know they selflessly endured the horrors of war, but what is more, it was their friends and loved ones who never returned from the battlefields.

When I walk past a veteran — distributing poppies and collecting donations in my local supermarket — I wonder what they



DANIELLE BOUDREAU

think of me and my generation, and I wonder if they ever think of how swiftly they lost their youth. If I have forgotten to wear my poppy I feel uncomfortably guilty until I have passed out of sight.

I believe that it is an aspect of our society that as time passes, the sacrifices of those who came before us will slip from our minds, deeper and deeper into the history books. In my lifetime the last of those who lived through a World War will die, and with them will go our link to that past. As with the veteran in the supermarket, once out of sight, our reverence for them will subside and we will

quickly forget. As hard as we try to remember, our apathy will overwhelm, and eventually we will see no more significance in the World Wars than we do in, say...the War of 1812.

Thoughts of conscription and trench-warfare already seem unimaginably foreign. War, as we have seen it, is a cut-and-dry exercise carried out by a few highly-trained professionals (as the SCUD missiles and made-for-TV bombing raids of the Gulf War demonstrated). Apart from such minor "interventions", our society has been living in relative peace since the close of World War II.

We are mistaken however,

if we take this as a sign that we have risen above the grossness of war. Born in the shadows of the Cold War, many of us now take it for granted as an extended period of peace, when it was in fact an extended stalemate. The world's nuclear powers were like enemies locked in a closet together, each with big sticks of dynamite, but not the nerve to light a fuse — it is an excess of weaponry that has created our artificial peace.

While we have been enjoying our peace, many poorer countries around the world (the ones not important enough to be included in a "world war") have suffered long periods of bloodshed, often as the indirect battlegrounds of the nuclear powers. War will not go away.

Despite the speed at which we continue to learn about ourselves and our world, the one thing humans seem unable to learn from — and correct — is our propensity for violent conflict. We have an endless supply of hatred, radical ideology and reckless ambition.

In a brief flourish of idealism, I have decided to take some time this November 11, not to remember, but to imagine what life must have been like for someone my age during war-time. To imagine being sent off to fight in a foreign place, and watching my friends die around me, and living every day as if it were my last in the most violent squalor imaginable.

It is not an easy thing to imagine, and perhaps that is what makes it such an easy thing to ignore.

ANDREW SIMPSON



## The Nova Scotia conspiracy theory

As I was reading the October 31 issue of the Gazette, I was startled to see a striking photograph of a fortification and lighthouse with icebergs in the background, highlighted by the caption The Halifax Experience on page 6 (no photo credit was given).

I am not sure if the editorial membership of the Gazette has noticed lately, but that fortification, that lighthouse, and definitely those icebergs are no where to be found in the greater Halifax area; they are not even in Nova Scotia. The photograph is actually of Fort Amherst, at the narrows of St. John's Harbour — in NEWFOUNDLAND!

I find it baffling and insulting that such a blatant disregard for journalistic integrity be allowed. I cannot help but wonder if Anthony Skelton (the columnist who wrote the article to which this photo is linked), Shelley Robinson as managing editor, Tim Covert as Copy Editor and Danielle Boudreau from photography all conspired to create an illusion of Halifax that is completely inconsistent with the region's landscape, or if it was their collective idiocy that allowed this to happen.

I trust that the readers of the Gazette can look forward to a more accurate portrayal of its editorial content in the near future.

Corrie Davis

## The Halifax experience

Being a visitor to Halifax I can appreciate the writer's frustrations with the wind and the rain and how I too long for that "beautiful clear autumn weather." The cold northeast wind blowing over an iceberg grounded in Halifax Harbour sends chills through my bones at the mere thought of it.

The Haligonian driver versus the Dalhousie pedestrian. Whenever I return home, to that beautiful autumn weather, I thank God that I survived another visit as a pedestrian in Halifax. Where I come from drivers approach crosswalks with caution and care, so on this point I find myself agreeing with the writer.

But that's where it stops. I have one question for the writer and that simply is this: what area of Halifax is depicted in the photograph which accompanied your article? Being a visitor to this beautiful city I have explored it from one end to another but for the life of me I can't seem to remember visiting this picturesque and very beautiful place. I checked with Canadian Coast Guard concerning the grounding of icebergs in or near Halifax Harbour and their data showed icebergs hadn't come close to Halifax since before the ice age. Tourism Nova Scotia, well to put it quite simply, was baffled. So I ask again, where is this beautiful place located?

Well, for one thing it sure as heck isn't located in Halifax or even in Nova Scotia for that matter. How does Newfoundland sound? Ah ha, how about St. John's and even more accurately Fort Amherst. Located on the south side of St. John's Harbour, not Halifax Harbour. Where else could the writer have been referring to when he said "beautiful clear autumn weather." That's what I meant anyway.

So a word of advice to the writer, if you're going to comment on Halifax then do it right but leave St. John's out of it.

Sean Coady  
Copy Editor's Note: I welcome the concerns of Mr. Coady and Mr. Davis with respect to the appearance of a photo of Fort Amherst, Newfoundland atop of Anthony Skelton's editorial in the October 31 issue of the Gazette. I thought the photo — which I knew was of St. John's Harbour — was still representative of the East Coast, which was satisfactory to me as Mr. Skelton referred to eastern generalities throughout his article. Perhaps the headline, "The Eastern Experience" would have been more accurate.

I invite Mr. Coady and Mr. Davis to come and write for the Gazette. We can always use staffers with a keen eye for detail.

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