



“Afghanistan: A Soldiers’ Story” November 2013 Newsletter

As we close in on Remembrance Day for 2012, and prepare to attend one ceremony or another, I’d like you to give some thought to the level of Remembrance most Canadians manage the other 364 days of the year. Canadians, it seems, are pretty good at forgetting their military. We appear to have as many forgotten engagements as we do conflicts noted with celebrations of Remembrance, monuments and plaques. On Remembrance Day we who have served gather with Canadians across Canada to stir their memories as they utter the phrase “Lest we forget” Yet a week later most have already forgotten.

The Afghan Legacy Album “Afghanistan: A Soldiers’ Story” seeks to capture the human experience of those who served Canada in this one deployment. Your stories. A deployment longer in years than any other in Canadian Military history yet one that few Canadians understand or know much about and now appear to want to forget. It would be unfortunate to see the Veterans of the Afghan Mission face the same fate of the Korean Veterans or those who served at the Battle of Medak Pocket, and be forgotten for decades.

To so many of you who served, when I ask you to share your stories, you tell me you were just doing your job. You tell me it’s too hard to talk about. You tell me you don’t want to risk your career. You have so many excuses. At the end of the day, however, I ask you to stop and think a little. The Canadian military is a stranger to most Canadians. Nameless, faceless uniforms that turn out to parade once a year. And yet, when the dust of a conflict settles and the funds for the military dry up, again, you almost seem surprised and confused. You can change this.

Consider this. If the Canadian public do not know you, as people, and include a working knowledge of and respect for their military as an integral part of day to day Canadian identity, it will always be so. It’s up to you, the men and women who have served, to ensure that Canada knows you as ordinary people doing extraordinary work, knows what you do, and how well you do it. It is much harder to turn your back on someone you know than it is to abandon a stranger. We are not looking for official war diaries, academic reflections on the historical and political ramifications of the mission, or the media hype of spin doctors following the premise of “if it bleeds it leads”. We are looking for the human, boots on the ground reflections and observations, what you might write in a journal or send home in a letter or email.

We have a few milestones in our progress to submission cut-off May 1 2014.

LCol Devon Matsalla is in the process of ensuring submissions from Franco Canadians who have served in Afghanistan.

LCol Devon Matsalla is also creating a section that details the nature of Combat Support Services. It would be great to have the same from the other Branches and services, like Combat Engineers, Field Ambulance, Armoured, Infantry, etc., as well as a glossary of those infamous acronyms, especially those specific to the Afghanistan deployments. Volunteers please email consult@mywrldwrx.com

We now have the funding needed, courtesy of the Power Workers Union of Ontario, to pay for publication of the book through publisher John McQuarrie, ensuring distribution through Chapters Indigo and the prospect of an e-version of the book.

The Afghan Film Festival Tour has arrived in Newfoundland and will be showing at a variety of venues before heading to Ottawa for a showing at the Canadian War Museum 10 November:

- Thursday, October 31, 2013 – two showings from 1:00-4:00 p.m. and 7:00-10:00 p.m.
Royal Canadian Legion Branch 8, Gander
- Sunday, November 3, 2013 – one showing from 1:00-4:00 p.m.
Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9, Spaniard's Bay
- Monday, November 4, 2013 – two showings from 1:00-4:00 p.m. and 7:00-10:00 p.m.
Royal Canadian Legion Branch 56, Pleasantville, St. John's
- Tuesday, November 5, 2013 – one showing from 7:00-10:00 p.m.
Royal Canadian Legion Branch 13, Corner Brook
- Wednesday, November 6, 2013 – one showing from 3:00-6:00 p.m.
Royal Canadian Legion Branch 35, Stephenville

We are currently in discussion with The Military Museums of Calgary to expand the web site and the content, following the November 2014 publication of the book "Afghanistan: A Soldiers' Story" to include stories from ALL those who served with the Canadian Military back to the Boer War and forward.

We are also currently in discussion with the Canadian War Museum to introduce an Annual Canadian Military Film Festival. There are currently two of these in the world, one in Poland and one in Washington DC. Such an initiative would provide accessible and more affordable venues for Canadian filmmakers to explore opportunities to better tell the story of the Canadian Armed Forces.

To those who served, this is your book, your story. Help to tell it. For more info go to: www.afghanistancanadianstory.ca or send your stories and photos to consult@mywrldwrx.com