

Don't forget to remember

By Sarah Sobanski

?Did you know that your oma used to have war planes flying over her head?? Dad asked me, coming through the front door, returning home from church.

I unwrinkled my nose from the paper's Sudoku, ?What??

?I was talking with her today after service. Planes were going by and I mentioned they were loud, and pretty low. She said, where she grew up, bomber planes used to fly overhead.?

I thought, Oma is more than 80 years old, and over the course of my entire life ? or as long as I've known her ? I've never even thought that she would have lived through the Second World War. Not just the war, she would have been born just a decade and change after women's suffrage. Born in 1933, she would spend her early years as the Great Depression came to a close and then, after the wars, see the '60s, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the disco era and the invention of the internet. All these things that for me, are so far removed from what I know. They're stories and histories I contemplated in grade school but have since neglected to be bothered by much.

?You should write about her,? Dad drew me from my thoughts. ?Someone should record her stories.?

Truer words were never spoken, but not just of my grandmother's stories, but of each of my grandparents, and your grandparents, and every elder we have and their wisdom. It's disheartening to know that some of their tales will simply be forgotten. It strikes closer to home as we come upon Remembrance Day.

This year, the paper focused a lot on leaving and remembering a legacy. In the long run, that's essentially what Remembrance Day is about ? remembering, it seems obvious. But in speaking with members of the Bancroft Legion, and seeing the Bancroft Business and Improvement Area banners honouring veterans, I wonder how many of us remember without a close tie to the legacy of war and after it, peace. The Legion assured me I didn't need to know a veteran, or have one in my family, to be a member. Being a member would be the first time I've felt personally tied to Remembrance Day. I don't mean that disrespectfully, of course I understand the sacrifice that was made for our freedom ? but I'll only ever understand it as a historical bystander.

As the last of our veterans from the great wars of the 20th century pass from this world, we lose heroes and those who have held us accountable for remembering. The haunting idea that those who don't remember history are doomed to repeat it, looms.

This Remembrance Day, if you don't have one, find a personal connection to those who fought and died for us. Think of the circumstances they endured, the sacrifices they made, the families who they didn't return to. Don't just go through the motions of taking a moment of silence.

We talk about remembering, but how often do we actually appreciate that we do? Don't make it as easy as a habit you've had every day on the 11th day of the 11th month at the 11th hour since you were born.

Though my parents told me the story, I never got to ask Opa about stealing potatoes from German soldiers when he was young. Now he's passed. I won't make that mistake twice.

Ask around, hear the stories, remember. It's one moment in 365 days. Hold yourself accountable, and, when you hear church bells afterwards, ringing as they did for peace at the end of the war all those years ago, be thankful and listen.