

at 9:25 PM -0500 11/11/11, Mark Hiltz wrote:

November 11, 2011

A Day to Remember

Today (November 11), I attended the National Remembrance Ceremony at the National War Memorial in downtown Ottawa. It was a sunny, cloudy day with a north-west wind and a temperature of 4 degrees Celsius. The public had been arriving since 8:00am in the morning.

My friend and I arrived at 9:45am. We stood against the security barrier next to the CBC Broadcast Booth on Elgin Street near the National Arts Centre. We were able to see the War Memorial and the ceremony which was broadcast on a large screen across the street and over speakers strategically located.

By 10:30am local time, the veterans, the military (Canadian Forces), RCMP, Cadets, Youth of Canada etc. had been ceremoniously marched in to take their positions in front of the National War Memorial. Dignitaries, the Diplomatic Corps, representatives of Veterans Organizations, Special Guests and Politicians arrived throughout this period.

At 10:40am, The Silver Cross Mother, representing the Mothers of Canada, arrived at the National War Memorial. At 10:45am, the Prime Minister and his wife arrived at the National War Memorial followed by the Governor General and his wife at 10:52am.

At 10:57am, the Canadian Forces Band played O Canada, followed by a Military Bugler who played the Last Post. Flags had been lowered to half mast.

As the Peace Tower Clock reached 11:00am, on the 11th day, of the 11th month, of the 11th year, a Military gun sounded off. This was followed by a minute of silence, the second gun, Lament and Rouse.

The President of the Royal Canadian Legion read the Act of Remembrance.

"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, We will remember them."

This was followed by a 21 gun salute while two CF-18 aircraft flew over followed by seven Griffin Helicopters.

The Ottawa Children's Choir sang O Canada.

The Military Chaplain presented prayers which was followed by the placing of wreaths.

The Benediction was presented followed by the singing of God Save the Queen.

Finally, there was the march past by the veterans followed by the Canadian Forces, RCMP, and Cadets.

Following the march past, the general public were allowed access to the memorial where many placed their poppies on the tomb of the unknown soldier.

Some observations and comments:

- Thousands of all ages attended the National Remembrance Day Ceremony.

- Everyone was there with one common purpose ... to REMEMBER and to show their appreciation to the veterans.
- There was the one common thread that brought everyone together ... that was the National War Memorial, a concrete and metal structure, that stands tall on Elgin Street near Wellington. Layered concrete steps on all sides lead up to the memorial. In front of it is the tomb (metal casket) of the unknown soldier.
- As the ceremony was going on, I thought about my late father, a veteran of World War II. I also thought of his late close friend, Gordon, who was overseas fighting in Germany and did return to raise a family.
- I was standing against the barricade next to the CBC Broadcast Booth. Inside, I could see CBC Anchor and Mount Allison Chancellor Peter Mansbridge anchoring the national broadcast. I wanted to yell out, "Save the Memorial Library," but I knew that this was not the time or place out of respect for our veterans (also there were many police around). Along with Mr. Mansbridge was Jack Granatstein, noted historian. I thought to myself, how hypocritical to be anchoring this national broadcast and interviewing a noted historian, knowing full well that the demolition of the Memorial Library was taking place at Mount Allison University.

- The program of the National Remembrance Day Ceremony is being mailed to Dr Campbell.

I will remember and I will not forget the decision by the Administration and Board of Regents of Mount Allison University to demolish the Memorial Library. Shame on you!

Thank you.