

Lest We Forget

Remembrance Day, 1999

The silence will be brief. But it will be felt across Canada. Tomorrow we'll pause to remember. In towns, villages, cities from coast to coast, veterans will march. Their tributes will acknowledge brave men and women who served -- who made the ultimate sacrifice.

In Fort St. James, B.C., a town of 2000 approximately 150 kilometres northwest of Prince George, the lumber mills will stand still. Five from Stuart Lake Lumber Company will form a significant contingent among the small parade that marches from the memorial service in the Legion Hall to lay wreaths at the cenotaph in the town center. Sales manager John Dean served 20 years in the Royal Canadian Corps Signals, 1954-1974. It included a year with UN peacekeepers in the Gaza Strip, 1958/59. Mike Goodall, from Australia, served in Cypress with British Armed Forces under the UN. Mill maintenance supervisor, Don Allen, served five years in the Royal Canadian Air Force in the '50's. He is parade marshal for tomorrow. Mill quality control and planer supervisor, Tim Hanley, served with the RCMP. Tomorrow he will form part of the Canadian Legion marching contingent in Fort St. James parade. There will be no bands, although it is hoped that participation of a piper may be confirmed by parade time.

A standing room only crowd of 100 will pack the Legion Hall for the interdenominational service, to be conducted this year by the local Catholic priest. The forecast is for cold, wet weather. This will not deter the contingent that will assemble to march. It will include one or two ladies from the Ladies Auxiliary. The Brownies pack of several youngsters will march. There will be one or two older veterans who will be able to march.

Solomon Prince will probably ride on the bus, arranged for those who are too frail to undertake the parade route on foot. He is 84. Solomon is one of the many First Nations veterans who served this country in time of war, but only recently granted pension eligibility for that service. John Dean of Stuart Lake Lumber, along with Don Allen, served as pall bearers at the funeral for Ray Prince, First Nations war veteran and hero who was instrumental in the fight to win pensions for First Nations veterans. The Princes served in Germany, France, Italy and Sicily with Canadian Forces in World War II. This warrior was laid to rest in 1996 with full military honors to accompaniment of traditional drum beats, loud and slow.

But tomorrow, traffic in the Fort will again come to a halt. About 300 will have assembled for the outdoor ceremonies at the town center. The two or three dozen marchers will come to a halt, while wreaths are solemnly laid at the foot of the cenotaph in Fort St James. The Historic Hudson's Bay fort nearby will brood over proceedings in silence when the bugler confirmed for tomorrow's ceremonies sounds the Last Post across freezing waters of Stuart Lake at 11 a.m.

"As regards our comrades who have lost their lives - let us speak of them, who have lost their lives - let us speak of them with our caps off - my faith in the Almighty is such that I am perfectly sure that when men die, as they have died, doing their duty and fighting for their country... and to save the situation for others - in fact, have died for their friends - no matter what their past lives have been, no matter what they have done that they ought not to have done... I am perfectly sure that the Almighty takes them and looks after them at once. Lads, we cannot leave them better than like that."

- Sir Edwin Alfred Alderson, Lieutenant-General (May 4, 1915)