



GOING TO SCHOOL IN WARTIME NUTANA COLLEGIATE 1941-1945

Were they happy days?

While browsing through *Hermes*, I fondly reminisce as I scan the stories, jokes, and pictures in my old NCI yearbooks. I chuckle at the imagination needed to write the yearly biographies created for every student in the school. Seeing the happy face of Jimmy MacNeil, the diminutive and ubiquitous leprechaun, pictured as a member of almost every sports team, and as a volunteer serving on nearly every social committee, always makes me smile. And all memories of Nutana make me think wistfully about those bygone days... and long lost friendships.

We “soldiered on.”

After thoughtfully reading my yearbooks recently I was reminded of a feeling that everyone carried a heavy emotional burden then, for our country, and indeed most of the world, was at war. The years from 1939 to 1945 were times of stress that affected everyone in the school, including our teachers. All war-year yearbooks featured essays, poems, editorials, and Messages from the Principal, about winning the war, the tragedy of war, the loss of loved ones, and the need to support worthy wartime causes. We were preoccupied with war news presented by CBC’s “Voice of Doom” - Lorne Green. We listened to radio programs like “L for Lanky” which dramatized the adventures of an RCAF Lancaster bomber, and we watched war newsreels when we had 75 cents to go to the movies. Admission to our school dances required the purchase of a 25 cent War Savings stamp. We were encouraged to plant victory gardens in our front yard, and most of the food in our lunch boxes required ration coupons. Few families had cars for we had just emerged from the Great Depression, but those who had cars could not buy tires, and gasoline was rigidly rationed. Without complaint, we adapted to these wartime rules. But for those of us with relatives serving overseas, one thought was ever present in our minds - would an ominous telegram arrive today beginning with the dreaded - “*We regret to inform you*”

The Honour Roll

By 1945, the NCI “Honour Roll” listed the names of 565 alumni students serving in the Air Force, Army or Navy. Additionally, 50 were listed as WACS, WRENS, or Nurses. My brother Hector, an NCI student, joined the Navy in 1939 - and later nearly all my classmates had relatives serving overseas. A tribute to “fallen” NCI alumni, displayed in the school foyer, listed 100 former students who had been “*killed in action*” or were “*missing in action*” or were “*prisoners of war*”. This meant one in six NCI families had suffered a tragic loss. Many were neighbours, friends or relatives of my classmates. All Nutana boys were sure they would be called upon to join one of “His Majesty’s Services.” Plans for a university education seemed, to some, irrelevant.

Although he did not attend Nutana, Richard Moody, for whom I am named, died in Loos France in 1915. His Regimental History notes simply that 9,000 men died in action on that particular day. Among them perhaps were Nutana alumni who had been senior students when the school first opened its doors in 1910.

100 Years of History

Nutana Collegiate will celebrate its 100th Anniversary in 2010. In that century of years the school has shaped the lives of thousands upon thousands of its students. But Nutana classrooms could never have adequately prepared its graduates for the brutal wars that have been waged in that 100 year span. Many, many, NCI war veterans never returned home. Those who did found their war experiences had changes their lives forever. And sadly for many, not for the better. Hopefully all students who have served in the armed forces during Nutana’s storied history will be remembered at the school’s 2010 Anniversary Celebration. With the passage of time, those who have served their country in wartime are too soon forgotten. Their sacrifices should be forever remembered.

Dick Moody , 1941—1945

