

THE BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE, APRIL 9 To 12, 1917

(A short summary of various readings)

Vimy Ridge was the heavily fortified 7 km ridge held by the Germans in WWI. Situated on the highest ground in the area, the ridge's highest point is Hill 145 (where the Vimy Monument now stands) and to the north, a small knoll was known as the "Pimple". The Ridge afforded the Germans a commanding view as they looked down on the slopes below, which grew steeper towards the northern part of the Ridge.

They repeatedly repelled the French troops' attacks, causing 100,000 casualties in one attempt and 40,000 in another. But they too suffered heavy losses from raids, artillery bombardment and frontal attacks.

By November 1916, the Canadian Corps had successfully completed their battles at the Somme and were moved north to be positioned nearby the Town of Vimy, to take over from the British. They were now a well integrated, hard hitting force of infantry, artillery gunners, engineers, machine gunners and all ancillary units, nearly 100,000 strong, being Canada's four Divisions, gathered together for the first time in the War.

Under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir Julian Byng, our forces were notified in January 1917 that they would be expected to capture the whole Ridge.

Unlike the Armies before them, Canadians would develop an immense Plan of Attack, never before envisioned or tried. Troops were trained as to every aspect of the Plan, build rail lines and roads to supply 830 tons of required daily freight, gather and position its artillery, machine guns and their munitions, dig endless miles of tunnels and trenches for the Infantry, lay telephone and telegraph lines, water lines, electricity lines, casualty and prisoner stations and endless other chores required for the infantry's assault on Vimy Ridge. By April, each soldier knew exactly where he fitted into the overall Plan and what was expected of him.

In the week prior to the planned attack, over 1,000 heavy and light artillery guns, stationed about 30 feet apart, pounded the German positions on the Ridge, with their nearly endless supply of artillery shells.

On Easter Monday, April 9, 1917, at 5:30 a.m., the Battle of Vimy Ridge commenced with an immense artillery barrage. Each artillery piece fired in rolling order along the line, so that not one gun would fire before the others. Salvos were fired as fast as the guns could be re-loaded. The guns would then fall silent at a given time and, for the first time, the four Canadian Divisions stormed the Ridge in relays. Over 20,000 Canadian infantrymen, bayonets ready, rose out of their shelters and started the long, slow but steady upward advance towards the German lines. German machine gun nests and trenches were overrun.

A strong northwest wind blew with occasional snow flurries. On time, the artillery would raise their gun elevation and send another salvo hundreds of feet in advance of our troops. Again at firing's end, the troops would advance, storming the German lines, often as hand-to-hand fighting with bayonets, rifles, hand grenades or whatever means available.

Eventually, Hill 145, the Ridge's most important position, was captured in a bayonet charge against German machine-gun positions. By midnight the Ridge was secure. April 10 to the 12th were spent flushing out the Germans as they retreated from the Ridge. The Canadians had done their job. They were victorious in Battle, as they were ordered to do so!

Streams of prisoners began to arrive soon after the battle opened and they were sent to the prisoners' station in the rear, under the control of the Provost Corps. On that first day, 4,016 prisoners were taken. The Germans captured 49 Canadians, most of them wounded.

We paid a great price for our victory. Some 3,524 Canadians had given up their lives, while 7,773 were wounded during April 9 to the 12th.

Four Victoria Crosses were awarded to Canadians, whose heroic efforts were well above and beyond their line of duty. After the War, Brigadier-General A.E. Ross declared, "in those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a Nation." Indeed he did!

Canada has always been victorious in every engagement undertaken; we "pick up the torch" when called upon and we finish the job. Let us not waver in our War in Afghanistan and remain steadfast in our mission, lest, "if ye break faith with us who die, we shall not sleep in Flanders Fields where poppies grow"!



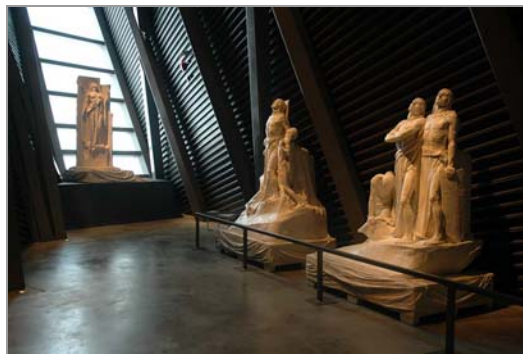
90th Anniversary of The Battle of Vimy Ridge
and the
Re-Dedication of the Restored Canadian National Vimy Memorial
April 9, 2007
Lois and John R. Newell Sr.



Forward

On May 8, 2005, I was on parade for VE Day's 60th Anniversary and the official opening of our War Museum in Ottawa. It was one of the largest parades ever held as Veterans across our country arrived for this special event. Because of our age, they figured this would be the last Veteran's gathering of this magnitude. WWII vehicles, tanks, etc, took part and the large crowd cheered the veterans, the military personnel and the rolling stock, as the parade left the War Memorial en route to the War Museum. The day was warm, leaving us with sunburns! After our arrival at the War Museum, my son David met me there. David, an electrician, had worked during the construction of the Museum and thus he was a great guide as we toured the Museums' exhibits.

When we came upon the Vimy Section, and, as we examined the plaster models that sculpture Walter Allward had prepared for the Monument's figures, I said, "David, these models are small as compared to the eyes of a 13 year old boy as he viewed the statues adorning the Vimy Memorial in 1936!"



A man, who was standing nearby, approached us and after indicating that he was Derek Sullivan, Director General, Canada Remembers Division, Veterans Affairs, questioned me about what I had just said. He indicated that I was the first person that he had ever met that took part in the 1936 Dedication of the Vimy Memorial. As it took place 69 years ago at that time, and with the War shortly after, and with deaths due to stroke, cancer, etc, we presumed that there was no doubt that few of us 1936 Vimy Pilgrimage survivors would still be walking this earth. Fate had stepped into our lives by having us meet and to prepare me for being chosen as "Youth Delegate in 1936 (Ontario)" and to attend the:

90th Anniversary of The Battle of Vimy Ridge and the 2007 Re-Dedication of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial



The Story of this venture follows.

Our journey to the Commemoration Ceremony and Re-Dedication of the restored Canadian National Vimy Memorial began in Ottawa, when on April 4, 2007, we booked into the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Here we registered and then proceeded to the Vimy Reception Area where we were cordially greeted by Staff Members.



After a quick processing, we met some of our fellow Delegation Members and more of the enthusiastic group of Staff people. These dedicated people would care for us, guide us and become friends during the days to follow. We were given a package of items, our name tags and also a Vimy commemorative lapel badge, compliments of the Canadian Legion.

This would be my second trip to Vimy as I attended the 1936 Vimy Pilgrimage with Mom, Dad and my sister Jocelyn, when I was 13 years old. Now, 71 years later, as "Youth Delegate in 1936 (Ontario)", I would be privileged once again to be present to honour our WWI Fallen, the builders of Canada as a Nation, and revisit the restored Vimy Memorial!

We spent the rest of the day familiarizing ourselves with other Delegates, then off for dinner and to our room, to prepare for a busy day tomorrow. A phone call led us to Ted Mahood, President of the Air Force Association of Canada, and fellow Delegate. Ted presented me a gift from "Rosie", who is in charge of AFAC's Store, which consisted of a travel bag, a vest and a cap, all sporting our Air Force logo. The vest sure came in very handy one windy night at Vimy! I served as a pilot during WWII and am a Past President and 55 year Member of 410 RCAF (William Barker, V.C.) Wing, of the AFAC.

Thursday April 5th's Group breakfast was followed by a Contingent briefing and later, Lois attended a Caregivers' meeting where an outline of their responsibilities was presented. Lois, besides being my dear wife, now also became my Caregiver!



Our luggage was collected for transport to the Airport and we checked out of our hotel room. At noon, we departed for the War Museum, with Lauren Nicholson being our Team Leader.



During the departure event, the new Vimy Commemorative Coin was unveiled by Hon. Greg Thompson and Mr. I. F. Bennett. Luckily, later I was given one of the two models of the coin, and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Hon. Greg Thompson, received the other. At the dinner, our table included Joe Geurts, the Museum's Director and CEO, John Corneil, Manager, Collections, and other fellow Delegates. Suzanne Tining, Deputy Minister, had a picture taken with me. The Canadian Forces Band played during the dinner.



The Contingent had a group picture taken and later we toured the Museum and noted the original Red Ensign that flew during the 1936 Vimy Pilgrimage and the statutes used for the creation of Vimy's statutes. Plan on visits to our War Museum....one viewing is not enough.



At 17 h 00, we attended a Group dinner at the Hotel and later we were transported to the Ottawa Airport. We arrived at the Air Force's hanger, where in WWII, Governor General Lord Athlone, our Queen's Uncle, presented me with my Pilot Wings and Commission. Memories flooded my mind of that day. Passing through Customs with us, was our friend Dan Pihlainen, a reporter with Radio CFRA, who would be flying with us. Dan previously did a few radio interviews with me and we are to do more while in France.



We boarded the Air Force's Airbus Flight No. 3265 and headed for Lille, France. Lois and I have nothing but praise for the service we were given during the very calm flight. Dr. Gringas reminded us to walk and do leg exercises to prevent phlebitis. Neither Lois nor I were able to sleep during the trip and two weary travelers stepped off the plane at Lille Airport. A fast trip through Customs had us in buses to the well landscaped Hotel Mercure, our home while in France. We spent this **Friday, April 6** as a day of rest and recuperation and omitted the shuttle service to Lille's downtown. We were able to sleep for a while before we attended the Group Dinner at 18 h 00. Seated at our table was MP Peter Van Loan, with whom we conversed and he outlined his parliamentary duties which we found very interesting. He has a very distinguished and lengthy career in politics and is a down-to-earth person.

Saturday April 7th turned out to be a very touching event when we attended the Interment Service for Private Herbert Peterson, whose remains were unearthed during the Vimy Memorial Restoration. He served with the 49th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, and

in June 8-9, 1917, he was reported missing with sixteen others during a night raid. This day, 90 years later, he will finally rest in peace in this quiet La Chaudiere Military Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France. This is one of the many such cemeteries dotting the lands of Europe.



The military service for Private Peterson was attended by General Rick Hillier, Chief of Defence Staff, Minister Greg Thompson and other dignitaries. We veterans present, witnessed the burial of a soldier, whose war efforts contributed to the victory of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Colonel McLean, Canadian Forces Chaplain conducted the service. Our military performed with solemn grace, their faces grave, as the service unfolded. Family members present were Doreen Bargholz, and Herbert and Kevin Peterson. They laid flowers in memory of Private Peterson and later, received the folded flag that adorned his casket.

Our military's exit concluded the service. Those of us present then paid our respects as we stood by and saluted the casket. We walked around the Cemetery for one last look.

We had a box lunch on the bus containing sandwiches, orange juice, banana, etc., as we traveled to the Canadian Cemetery No. 2, situated in the Vimy Memorial's 248 acre land area, for the wreath laying ceremony.



The ceremony started with the sound of the bugle and Canadian Forces Chaplain Captain Morrison conducted the service. After the ceremony, Lieutenant-General Charles Belzile, Major-General Richard Rohmer and I saluted the Cross of Sacrifice, and later I participated in the laying of wreaths with other Delegates. We were given wooden crosses adorned with a Poppy. Lois placed her cross at the marker of Private C. E. Wood, who died on April 10, 1917 and I at the marker of Private S. Brown, who died on April 9, 1917. It is a beautiful cemetery, befitting those who rest here.

We then visited the Vimy Memorial, and because this was a private gathering, we were able to view this grand edifice closely at our leisure, examining the repairs, the engraved names, the statutes and the Plain of Douai from the Monument's high floor level. Lois and I found the name "B H Newell" amongst the 11,285 names of Canadians who died in Europe during



WWI and who have no known grave. Later Donald Newell also discovered the "B H Newell" engraving. We both are very proud to share his name, although neither of us families are related to him, nor to each other.

When I attended the 1936 Dedication, the Monument had a grayish hue to the marble stone. Here I learned that in those days, coal mines were active, leaving behind huge piles of slag, and the coal's ash blew in the winds. Because the Monument's Seget stone is of a porous nature, the ash penetration gave the Monument this discolouration. Today the restored Monument displays the stone's true colour and with the sky's contrast, it is a marvel to behold and, may be seen from many miles distant. Once again, I was a 13 year old boy gazing at this wonderful Monument; a vision that I have remembered all these years!

Traveling to Arras, where we stayed during the 1936 Vimy Pilgrimage, we were able to do a walk-around of the shops. On more than one occasion, people said "Thank you!" as we passed them on the narrow streets. I marveled at the old buildings' architecture and the stone works with their intricate carvings. Our new modern structures back home lack these features and somehow the character of the buildings is lost, in my opinion. We also visited the exhibits presented in the Hotel de Ville, which faces the Place des Heros Square.



Here we bought Vimy stamped envelopes to be mailed on April 9th at Vimy's post office. I still have mine that we mailed home back in 1936! The City put on quite a display of artifacts and, in the upper level, large pictures of the Vimy Memorial adorned the walls. We picked up pamphlets that were available, as keepsakes. Some views seemed to refresh my memory of Arras. Enquiring about the Napolian Hotel where we stayed in 1936 brought no response; perhaps it was destroyed in later times.

At about 17 h 00, we gathered at the Hotel de L'Univers in Arras for a Group Dinner. Among our table group was Dr. Christina Cameron, Chair of the Vimy Monument Conservation Advisory Committee, Michael Ignatieff, MP. and other Delegates.



Christina has a distinguished career background and of a friendly nature, so I enjoyed my talk with her immensely. Lois on my right, talked with Michael Ignatieff, as I also did during the various conversations around the table. Because we were running late, we had to omit the dessert and coffee. However, boxes of Cream Puffs were distributed on the bus as we traveled back to Vimy.

Around 20 h 00 we arrived at the Vimy Memorial and took our seating for the Sunset Ceremony. Our Servicemen put on a fantastic showing of military procedures; the Band, Pipers, the gun shot volleys, the Navy event and the lowering of the Flags of two Nations, to name a few. An event of this nature, in my mind, should take place yearly across Canada to allow Canadians to appreciate the value of our armed forces. I hope you agree. As the program unfolded, fierce winds swept the Ridge, and the blankets handed out, did little to abate their sting. My AFAC's vest was a God-send!



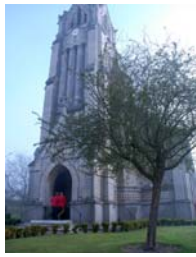
We were then moved closer to the Monument to view the Lighting Presentation of the Vimy Monument. Unfortunately, I had to be moved by wheelchair as my bad knee acted up and the cold winds had lessened my strength. Our Medical Group to the rescue! Ah, my Golden Years! During the presentation, the Confederation Centre Youth Chorus (PEI) performed to the delight of their audience.



As the Lighting Presentation drew to a close, the Monument's statues were engulfed with lights, one at a time, and "Canada" stood like a guardian angel, as she gazes down at the Tomb below her, where warriors sleep! Then the pillars stood out against the darkened sky as they too were swathed in light. What memories of this night to keep!

We arrived back to our Hotel around midnight. I had to go down to the front desk to report some power was out in our room, but nobody showed up to correct this fault.

Easter Sunday, April 8th, brought us sunshine. After breakfast, we boarded Bus No. 3 again and traveled to the Town of Vimy, to attend the Ecumenical Easter Service at the l'Eglise St. Martin de Vimy Church. This is a beautiful old Church with the sunshine emitting through the stained glass windows. One such window commemorates Canadian soldiers who fought at Vimy. Translated it reads; "To Canada, valorous in war, generous in peace, Vimy forever grateful".



Prior to entering I talked to Lowell Green, Ottawa's outspoken Host at Radio CFRA. Surprisingly, Lois and I were seated in the front pews, while Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his family sat in the pews behind us!

The service was conducted by the CF Chaplain Colonel McLean. During the hymn singing, a vibrant voice behind us turned out to belong to Don Newell. Don later told us that he had done some professional singing during his varied career. Jill Younghusband, retired from the military, sang "Proud Canadian Soldier", a recently written song, and her rendition of it was performed beautifully. I suggest you go to WWW.proudcanadiansoldier.com to download it.

After the Service, we milled around the Church entrance, visiting with each other. The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Minister Greg Thompson and other dignitaries lingered to talk with us. I found Minister Greg Thompson to be a very caring, thoughtful, person.



We then moved on to Salle des Fetes in the Town of Vimy. Prior to the luncheon, we examined the exhibits, the Town of Vimy flag and collected the various brochures that were available. Again we boarded our bus and headed for the City of Arras. I must say that our No. 3 bus driver, a native of Holland, had a great sense of natural humour, unlike other drivers whose witty saying are well rehearsed. We celebrated his birthday on one trip and he jokingly said "just leave my gifts on your seats!"

Today we would witness a seldom performed "Freedom of the City" ceremony, an occurrence dating back to Roman times. Marching armies would stop at the gates of a city and request that they be granted entry so they may purchase food, etc, for their needs. We sat in a sheltered stand located directly in front of the City Hall. The mock City Gates were directly in front of our stands at the edge of the Place des Heros Square.

Prime Minister Harper arrived and made opening statements along with the Mayor of Arras, Jean-Marie Vanlerenberghe. They then mingled with the crowd. The Prime Minister with his family then took their seats just in front of us. Can you imagine the American President being allowed this freedom from security?

Derek Sullivan came to visit Lois and me in the stands, which was very kind of him to do so. Dan Pihlainen also joined us and pictures were taken. We also took other pictures before the Freedom of the City Parade began.



Three RCMP riders approached the area and the grounds swelled with cheers. Soon the Place des Heros Square was filled with our military personnel, after their march through the streets of Arras to the beat of the drums, with flags held high. As each unit entered, they were given rousing cheers by the vast onlookers surrounding the Square, waving French and Canadian flags. It was a grand sight watching our Forces parade.



The Freedom of the City Ceremony started when our military commander Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie knocked on his side of the Gates with the butt of his sword. The City's Chief of Police opened the Gates a little and enquired what they wanted. He then proceeded with our Commander to the City Hall to report this to the Mayor, in his office.



The Mayor emerged and proceeded to read the "Freedom of the City Proclamation". As was the custom, he then asked to view our Canadian Forces. Following this, he proceeded with our Commander to the signing table and the historic signing of the documents took place.

The Mayor then retired to his office. The Gates to the City were then opened wide by the Chief of Police and he beckoned our Troops to enter.



I bet there was not a Canadian heart that did not swell with pride as our troop started their march through the Gates into the City of Arras! Following our Troops, were the Scarlet Mounties, the Toronto Highland Creek Pipes and Drums, which included my relative Cory Potten, The Confederation Centre Youth Chorus from PEI, members of the Royal Canadian Legion, students from Etobicoke Collegiate Institute, Toronto, French bands and veterans, personnel dressed in WWI Canadian uniforms, a Celtic bagpipe group from Normandy and other participants, then marched through the Gates. What a historic day to remember! We took the opportunity to have pictures taken with the Arras' Chief of Police, a French Officer, Minister Greg Thompson, our ever attentive Staff members and of the exciting scenes unfolding around us.



Later we traveled to La Ferme des Templiers, Verlinghem to attend a Group Easter Dinner hosted by Minister of Veteran Affairs, Greg Thompson and attended by our Prime Minister, Stephen Harper. Lieutenant-General Charles Belzile was Master of Ceremonies and the main speakers were Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Minister Greg Thompson. We were seated

with Senators, General Richard Rohmer, their wives and Assistant Commissioner Bernie Corrigan, RCMP, and fellow Delegates. Both the Prime Minister and Minister Greg Thompson gave excellent speeches and hearty applause was given to each. I noticed tears in a Delegate's eyes as the Prime Minister sadly told us of the death of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan.

The Prime Minister and Minister Greg Thompson walked around after dinner to talk to the Delegates. Luckily, both stopped to talk to Lois and me and the others at our table.



Another very eventful day ended with our drive back to Lille. Tomorrow would bring us to the purpose of our travels: the 90th Anniversary of The Battle of Vimy Ridge and the Re-Dedication of the beautifully restored Canadian National Vimy Memorial. I know my Mom, Dad and sister Jocelyn will stand beside me in spirit, as we re-enact the 1936 Vimy Pilgrimage Dedication!

April 9th brought us to a 08 h 20 a.m. rapid awakening knock on our door! Mr. Ruslan Tracz stood there asking why we were not ready for my BBC London Interview, due in ten minutes time! We had not received our wakeup call and it was because the front desk did not respond to my earlier electrical problem....the cleaning lady must have loosened the wall plugs, including the phone! Well, you never ever saw an 84 year old and his Caregiver get dressed so fast! Omitting my shave helped. Partly dressed by now, the BBC call to London was transferred to our room. Striving to be alert, I managed to carry on a respectful interview, and mused "Imagine me on BBC London Radio!" Completing our dressing, we were hustled down to our bus. Thoughtful Jim Lynn gave us a bag of fruit, etc, as we had no time for breakfast, and Dr. Gingras gave us a plate of buns as we boarded the bus. Lois mentioned that she had seldom seen me not shaved! On arrival at Vimy, we were met by hundreds of

buses lining the entrance roads. Our Students were observed leaving their stranded buses and walking the rest of the way.



By pulling out of the line, our driver entered the space on the left and was able to move closer to our drop off position. However, this took considerable time and eventually we turned off for the Town of Vimy where our Staff met for some decision making. It was decided that we would forego our planned lunch here and proceed to the Vimy Memorial and enter from another roadway. We eventually stopped at the Vimy Catering Tent to have lunch.

Here, Lois and I were met by our son John and his daughter Jennifer, who reside in Millersville, MD, USA. How they managed to find us in the crowd was remarkable as we figured we would probably not find each other, and with us later being seated in the reserved areas. Guess Fate made this happen by changing our lunch location!



After lunch we strolled up to the display tents and gathered pamphlets and mailed our letters postmarked April 9, 2007 with the image of the Monument. I doubt that I will have these 71 years later as I did the 1936 ones! I did a few Radio and TV spots as we wandered around. When we were at the Museum in Ottawa earlier as a special guests for the High School Student's dinner, we met a Guide named Ashley who said she was going to Vimy at her own expense. She said she would find us over there. Surprisingly she did as we visited the displays! We must look her up when we visit the Museum again. We met up with Don Newell and Dan Pihlainen and introduced them to John and Jennifer and had pictures taken together.



Soon we were gathered and bussed to our reserved seating area. I was placed in the front viewing row and Lois sat directly behind me with the other Caregivers. The hot sun brought out our issued "Poppy" umbrellas for protection, as we waited for the Ceremony to begin.

We watched as the Canadian students entered the back area of the viewing area.



They looked like an army on the march, waving their flags, hooting and singing as only students can do. Word reached me that Nancy Hamer Stahl asked to see us and we were escorted down to meet her. Nancy, a high school history teacher from Port Perry, ON, who volunteered to head the High School Groups, gave each of the students a soldier's name from those engraved on the Monument. The students were then to write a story about their "Soldier" and were given a shirt with his name attached, and a Vimy Commemorative Medal. Nancy will in time produce a book of these stories. Nancy has invited me to write a tribute for this book, and I'll be honoured to do so. We look forward to receiving a copy.



Lois and I enjoyed our talk with Nancy and those wonderful students! Talking to the students was indeed a highlight of our day and their excitement of things to come, reminded me of my earlier boyhood days at Vimy. I told them to gather every bit of available literature and remember each moment to attain a lifetime of memories of this historic event.

Later, a WWI nursing Nun, now in her 90's, spryly appeared and was warmly met by the Veterans. I had my picture taken with her and gave her a kiss. I had never given a Nun a kiss before!



I was then asked to do a CBC TV interview regarding the students and it was aired live here and at home during their simultaneous Canadian broadcast. A sky diver with two Canadian flags floated down from the sky.

The arrival of our troops marching behind the Viewing Stand and over to Her Majesty the Queen's inspection area, indicated the Ceremony would soon start. Prime Minister Harper and his family arrived as did the Prime Minister of the French Republic. Soon H M Queen Elizabeth II and H R H the Duke of Edinburgh arrived and the Royal Banner unfurled.



Prime Minister Harper's daughter presented Her Majesty the Queen with a bouquet. She turned to Mr. Harper and, as the story later emerged, asked him if he knew this child. The Prime Minister acknowledged that she was his daughter and his pride was quite evident in his beaming behaviour. Her Majesty the Queen was then escorted to view our military. What a thrill it must have been for them as Her Majesty walked passed their ranks!



When Her Majesty returned to the viewing stand, Mr. Dominique de Villepin, Prime Minister of the French Republic, was the first to speak for the Re-Dedication Ceremony. He was followed by our Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who received tremendous applause.

Prayers followed and the Last Post was sounded. Following a Minute of Silence and Reveille, led to the Lament. This sequence always leaves me humbled every time I hear it. The Act of Remembrance and the Commitment to Remember were then performed.

Her Majesty the Queen, ever gracious, then rose and Re-Dedicated the restored Canadian National Vimy Memorial. Our Queen received long thunderous applause as she returned to her seat. What a Monarch to be so very proud of!

The time of the Dedication was 5:25 p.m. In 1936, the time was 3:45 p.m.



Music preceded the "Blessings" and the National Anthems. During this historical event, a seventeen year old girl from Manitoba named Sierra Noble, played lonely haunting violin music, entitled "The Metis Prayer, The Warriors Lament" to a hushed crowd.



Trumpeters and a lone Piper also graced the high wall of the Memorial, silhouetted by the fair skies. The Youth Choir participated and Susan Aglukark sang a medley of WWI songs.

Her Majesty the Queen, laid a wreath in front of the Memorial, followed by the other distinguished representatives.



Note: After the Dedication, I wanted to take a picture of Her Majesty the Queen's wreath, but a bus had pulled up in front of it blocking my view. A RCMP Officer appeared as he noticed my dilemma. He then ordered the bus to pull ahead so that I could take my pictures.



Others, with the same thought, then surrounded the wreath, again blocking my view. The Officer told them to all move away so that I could take my pictures, which they did! I thanked him for his kindness, and like the Mounties, "I got my ma.....'er, wreath!"

When Her Majesty the Queen, came down to view us Veterans, I had the opportunity to speak with her. I mentioned that I took part in the 1936 Vimy Pilgrimage when her Uncle, King Edward VIII first dedicated the Monument.



I pointed out my 1936 Vimy medal, ID badge, etc, that I was wearing and stated that after the 1936 Pilgrimage, we held a service at the Cenotaph in London, and then into Buckingham Palace grounds for the garden tea party. I said that she was on the famous balcony and all I could see of her was the upper portion of her face (she was 9 then). The Queen replied, "You know, I barely remember that!" I was now walking on air; Lois pulled me back to earth!

During the TV showing, I also appeared during a live interview I did and Lois and I were spotted in other TV panned views. The Ceremony was aired in Canada at the same time. The CBC is making available a DVD showing this ceremony at the Vimy Memorial and the ceremony held in Ottawa at the War Memorial. To purchase this DVD, go to www.cbcshop.ca and it will cost about \$18.00 total. While I was talking with Her Majesty the Queen, my granddaughter Jennifer in the crowd yelled, "That's my Granddad!", as we appeared on the large outdoor screen!



After the Ceremony, we were again united with our family and we talked about this historic event that had just unfolded as we walked around the Monument's grounds. Jennifer said to me, "I'm so proud of you Granddad!" and my heart melted! We had to say our goodbyes to them when we were asked to board our bus. I know they will carry these memories forever, just as Lois and I will! Dinner was had in Vimy and Tom Eagle rose and gave a little speech.



As we were proceeding to go back to Lille, Marcel Cadieux, the nurse, became ill and had to be taken to the hospital by ambulance. Happily, he was able to greet us next morning at breakfast. Along our bus route from Vimy, we witnessed a candle procession, as people walked in a single line, snake-like through the fields, back to Arras. What a moving event to add to our memories!

April 10th was a day of rest, relaxation and of remembering each day of this historic trip that was now drawing to a close. Again our luggage was assembled and we checked out of the Hotel. We boarded our bus for the final time, for our trip to the Lille Airport. Here we gathered as we waited to board the Air Force Airbus for our trip home. The Duty Free Shop had only one cashier and a lengthy lineup took time to process each purchase.





While waiting to board, we spent our time talking to each other. Minister Greg Thompson and Deputy Minister Suzanne Tining appeared and walked amongst us to bid us goodbye. I guess they were as sad as the rest of us knowing that this would be the breakup of our group that had embarked on a trip of a lifetime, that we shared together, this past while. As we started boarding, our French Ambassador greeted us at the entrance. Soon we were winging our way back home through clear skies. Suzanne Tining handed out a Vimy Lapel Pin to each of us; another memento to keep our memories alive over the coming years.

April 11th greeted us on Canadian soil at Ottawa. An RCMP Piper played a medley of songs as we alighted from the Air Force aircraft. Some of our fellow Delegates said goodbye at the Airport as they caught early flights back to their home towns.



The rest of us returned to the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Lois and I bid our goodbyes to the remaining Delegates and Staff that accompanied us on this historic trip. The Delegates' friendly attitude and interesting conversations with us, the Staff's excellent guidance and care given to us, will always be remembered. We taxied home where we were greeted by our family. Our daughter Wendy informed us that my 90 year old sister Frances, who had broken her pelvis, had a bad spell. We went to the hospital to visit with her and I was taken aback by her appearance. Luckily she has improved since then. So ended our trip, that for two years previous, we dreamed of taking. My boyhood was indeed relived again as we took part in this great adventure!

Because of my meeting with Derek Sullivan, I was privileged to do Radio and Television interviews, both here and in France, attend the burial of a brave soldier, lay a wreath, watch the Sunset Ceremony and the Lighting of the Monument, look on as the Freedom of the City

parade unfolded in Arras, take part in the 90th Anniversary of The Battle of Vimy Ridge and the Re-Dedication of the Vimy Memorial, speak to our Canadian Students, talk with Her Majesty the Queen, meet wonderful people, and given a flood of memories, that I will always cherish. Thank you Derek Sullivan and Fate for making this possible, and my dear wife Lois, my Caregiver, for keeping me on my toes during these momentous historic events.

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

