

Gone but not forgotten...the torch has been passed!

As a young boy I can remember going to Sunnybrook Veterans Hospital to visit my Dad, who constantly seemed to be having an "operation" to relieve the pain from his war wounds.

At the time, it was hard for me and my three brothers to understand why my father was in so much pain, always took prescribed drugs, or seldom was able to play ball with us. Hockey and golf were out of the question.

He served in France and survived Dunkirk. He was commando-trained in Scotland while everyone waited for the invasion that was to come and later dispatched to North Africa to join the battle against Rommel.

My father never really talked about what happened, until near his death. History tells us that the battle of El Alamein was a great victory for the Allied forces. There were 12 days of fierce fighting from late October to early November 1942.

Casualties were high and the victory was significant. Churchill was to say, "Before Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein we never had a defeat."

That victory for my dad meant: capture, escape, and a life filled with 38 operations in an attempt to stop the constant pain, plus his final battle with Melanoma. There was no such thing as sun block in those days for the fair haired boys in the tropic sun.

Diagnosed as terminal, my dad called me and we spoke about how he would like to die and be remembered. He asked that he not be kept alive if he was not able to think and reason. He said to me 'I am at peace with my God and myself. When the time comes... let me go.'

When I asked what he meant by "at peace" he told me that war is hell and although he had suffered all of his adult life, he was able to see his four boys grow up...but because of his actions many men

never did...you don't take prisoners when you are behind enemy lines blowing up fuel depots and poisoning watering holes... everything dies. I cannot begin to image the frequent nightmares my father had. He asked me to maintain a membership in the Legion and to honour all soldiers from all wars. He wrote on his final note to me "We fought so you could live in freedom." Thank you Dad and thank you to all those who choose to serve in our armed forces.

On the 11th day of the 11th month at the 11th hour, take two minutes to say thanks. For although they may be gone they are not forgotten.

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