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Be thankful for three oceans

by BRIAN LOCKHART

We have celebrated the Thanksgiving weekend, and I hope many people appreciate this holiday for what it is meant to be.

It is a time when you should reflect on your good fortune and be thankful for the many blessings you have in life, including good health, a decent job, family, and the fact that you live in a peaceful and tolerant country.

We should also be thankful we live in a country that has only one border and is surrounded by three oceans. Apparently, having neighbours is not a good thing because, eventually, they will start lobbing bombs at your houses.

Once again, there is war in Europe and the Middle East. Wars seem to be getting even uglier as the years go by.

War has never been a pleasant experience, but in the past, for the most part, combatants faced combatants ? although that was never a hard-fast rule. There have always been civilian casualties and outright murders.

Most soldiers, at least those that are dedicated professionals, know their job, and during conflict, will display at least some respect for innocent civilians caught in a cross-fire or simply in the wrong place when an armed force enters their town, village, or city.

This recent attack on Israel shows just how despicable people can be. They chose to attack a music concert. It was a concert filled with unarmed people who were there to hear music and enjoy a weekend. People were gunned down and murdered as they tried to flee.

Some of those killed were foreigners who had nothing to do with either side. Other civilians have been taken hostage or had their broken bodies openly displayed on the street for the enjoyment of others.

Retaliation was swift and very destructive ? and it's not going to stop. Bloodshed breeds bloodshed, and a lot more people are going to die or lose their homes in the next few weeks.

Our time to remember past conflicts is coming up in November.

Remembrance Day isn't a statutory holiday, and it isn't a day of celebration. It is exactly as the name implies ? a day to remember.

You've probably seen the war movies depicting battles of the Second World War. There's always a big movie star in the lead role. There's always the quirky guy, the tough guy, the inner city guy, and, of course, the fresh-faced kid from Iowa, who always dies in the movie.

While the movies are usually relatively accurate and, for the most part, entertaining, there's one thing that Hollywood usually gets wrong.

John Wayne was 42 years old when he was in the film Sands of Iwo Jima as Sgt. Stryker. He was 61 when he starred in The Green Berets.

Tom Hanks was 42 when he took on the role of Captain Miller in the movie Saving Private Ryan. Brad Pitt was 47 when he starred in Inglourious Basterds as Lt. Raine and 51 when he portrayed a tank commander in the film Fury.

These are all great films, but at those ages, these guys were already too old to be in a platoon marching across Europe.

John Wayne, himself, had reservations about making Iwo Jima at his age because he knew he was too old.

German actor Jurgen Prochnow was 40 when he played a submarine commander in the classic film Das Boot. Critics of the movie said that even if he were only 30 years old, he still would have been considered an ?old man' among sailors of the day.

The truth is, if you went to a local high school and pulled out 20 Grade 12 students and put them in a group, they would more accurately resemble the men who stormed the beaches on D-Day.

This is why it is so important to remember on Remembrance Day.

It is a time to remember sacrifice, duty, and a willingness to step up and do your part.

It is a time to remember that many of those men did not return. It is a time to remember that for many of those men, no one even knows what became of them. They could have been taken prisoner and executed or buried in a field by an exploding artillery shell.

In the eyes of their comrades who survived, they are still 20 years old.

On Remembrance Day, do your part and participate in a ceremony at the cenotaph in your town.

It's one hour out of the year, but a lifetime to those who are being honoured.