

A Mid-day Meditation
From
Sue's Perspective

*"Lord God of hosts be with us yet.
Lest we forget. Lest we forget."*

When I was a little girl, my mother used to tell me stories about what it was like when she was a little girl, living in Holyhead, Wales. The stories were about her and her sister walking across the fields to go school at the local convent, about how her sister climbed to the second storey window to watch from the outside as their brother was being born, and a vast number of others. Those stories showed a side of my mother that I was thrilled to see. One day, I found a post card that my mother had received for her birthday from her father when she was quite young. I asked her about it and a far-away look came over her face. Mum turned to me and told me how she remembered getting that post card and why my grandfather had sent it to her. The card was from Africa. That was where he was during the "Great War" and she talked about how she and my grandmother missed him. Mum then went on to talk to me about how important Remembrance Day was to her and how thankful she and my Nan were when the war was over and he came home to them for good.

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In 1980, my aunt came from England to Canada for a visit. It was during the visit that I learned a little bit about my father's family. My aunt had been married to my father's eldest brother. Before her visit, I knew very little about the family other than my father was the youngest of three children. My aunt was staying in Toronto and on one of the visits to see her while she was in Canada, she gave me a gift. The gift was something that took me by surprise. I am not sure why she chose to give it to me but I am ever so happy that she did. The gift was the original copy of the last photograph taken of my grandfather. He was dressed in his infantryman's uniform and it was taken shortly before he was deployed to France in 1914. My grandfather became a casualty of the "Great War" in May 1915. I never knew my grandmother, so I never heard any stories about my grandfather. That photograph is now in the possession of my son. It is treasured as much by him as it is by me. Knowing the little that I do about my grandfather's service to King and country makes Remembrance Day that much more poignant for me.

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The older of my two brothers was born in 1943. That was right in the midst of World War II. I'm not certain when my mother's brother joined up, but he was a sailor in the Merchant Marine. There are stories that abound in the family about my uncle's exploits during his time as a Merchant sailor, most of them rather humorous. My mother had a picture of her brother, all dressed up in his uniform, that I have the honour of having it to this day. If you were to look at it, you would wonder why on earth I hang on to it. The answer is very simple. Every night, before he went to sleep and after prayers were said, my brother gave the picture of Uncle John a sloppy

toddler kiss, to keep him safe at sea. The face on the picture, but for the very distinct eyebrows is almost unrecognizable. I keep it because it is another reminder of what generations of the men in my family have given so that I can sit here today and write what I write, believe what I believe and live with the freedom that I have. Thankfully the Merchant Marine was recognized for their contribution to the war effort because many of them did not come home. My uncle did. He is another reason why Remembrance Day is a day that is of such great importance to me.

Who are you remembering and giving thanks for today?

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