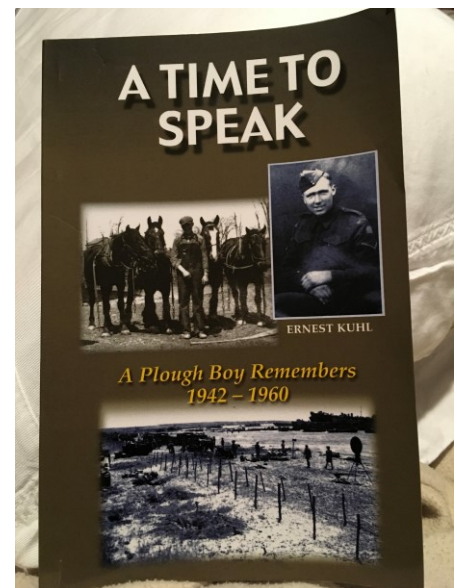


Joel 1:1-3: Has anything like this ever happened in your time or the time of your fathers? Tell your children about it and they will tell their children who in turn will tell the next generation (Good News Bible).

It seems to me that our time will be remembered for the battle with covid-19, as our fathers' time is remembered for the battles of WWII. These days are difficult to get through. As Joel says, we should make sure we tell about these times and how we are getting through them. I know that I have benefited a great deal because members of my parents' families did preserve and pass along stories of their experiences, and some letters, newspaper articles, and documents from World War II. These stories have inspired me, and now give me hope and encouragement during the current pandemic, because these family members, whom I knew well and loved, were able to rise above adversity and some truly horrible conditions by working together and trusting in God. I appreciate my family so much for telling about their time.

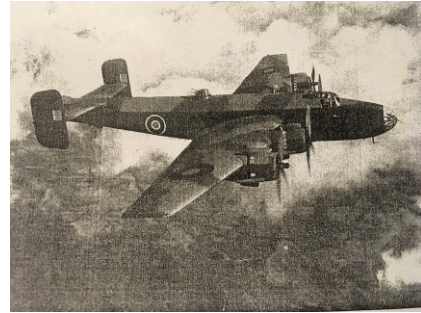
I was born in 1939 in a very close-knit rural community, at the time World War II broke out. My parents knew almost everyone who lived within a five-mile radius. My mother's brother, Gordon Karn, and two of my father's brothers, Ernie and Alvin Kuhl served in the Armed Forces. Three of my mother's sisters, Viola, Reta, and Beatrice Karn all worked in the munition factories in Preston and Malton. My parents and their siblings Otto and Luella (Karn) Kuhl already had established family farms and had begun raising their families. Mom and Dad's eight youngest siblings were left to help their respective parents keep their farms productive. They did the labour intensive farm chores, without electricity nor tractors, to feed their families and supply the war effort. Everyone old enough pitched in and helped.

My Uncle Ernie wrote a book, *A Time To Speak*, documenting his memories of serving with the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment in Italy. When I read his memoirs, I think, "How was Uncle Ernie able to endure what he did?" After six months of intense fighting, he was seriously wounded. He had been struck with shrapnel that left a nickel-sized hole above his heart, and was in hospital for five months before being shipped home and given a medical discharge. I wonder how he endured four of those months without receiving even one letter from home because of the difficulties with the communication channels, and how he managed to write upbeat letters to the family while flat on his back for three of those months. Although he didn't even know if his family were receiving his letters, they were, and in fact Uncle Ernie received a whopping 22 letters all at once when the mail department did manage to locate him in hospital.



I am filled with even more appreciation when I realize it took him 46 years to be able to speak about the harsh realities of war, and relate his experiences to his daughter who put the book together. I am grateful to my family members who kept the letters to and from Uncle Ernie, so that I can read them and appreciate what their lives were truly like. I am filled with gratitude for his witness to his "deep and real faith that sustained and guided him..." (Kuhl, page 4). I am pleased to know that the Lutheran Synod supported the families of the wounded with prayers and letters (Kuhl, page 156). Uncle Ernie's stories are precious to me. "His life was a life lived by faith, expressed in his love for his Lord, his family, his church and his community all of his life" (Kuhl, page xiii).

My Uncle Alvin served as an air gunner in the RCAF Squadron #405 with five other men from various parts of Canada. All six men survived the war together, including a shootout with two German flak boats at close range. Both Uncle Alvin and the wireless operator had shrapnel land within inches of them. The camaraderie of the six inspired them to meet after the war on three occasions, and one of them documented their exploits in a booklet for family members. During one meeting, the Owen Sound Sun Times wrote an article in which Uncle Alvin was quoted as saying "...we were closer than brothers.



When you eat, sleep, and fly with somebody for a year and a half, you get to know them pretty well." I am very impressed with their comradeship and how they coped with imminent death all around them. I remember well the faith with which Uncle Alvin lived. I was so proud of how he served his country during the war and worked to better his community after the war by starting the Keady Market.

My Aunt Mary told stories of the struggles people on the home front endured to provide food for the families and the soldiers. Not only did they work to plant and harvest their own crops, but some young people would also work for at least two weeks to harvest fruit crops in the Niagara region. Aunt Mary wrote 30 pages of memoirs in such vivid detail that I can relive my childhood through her words. I remember the horse and cutter rides on the snowy backroads,

because in those days only the main roads were plowed between Desboro and Chatsworth.



Aunt Mary was the youngest sibling, and wrote many letters to her big brothers in the service. I am so happy that I can read some of her letters in Uncle Ernie's book. She was a natural storyteller and gave them specific details from the farm, like how many piglets the old sow had, and the names of the cows that were milking or gone dry. She also recorded church news, who was in the young people's play, and which friends were in the Confirmation Class.

*Winter 1942-3, when Uncles Ernie and Alvin were home from training camp for Christmas, with Aunt Mary and the future Aunt Fran (page 112 , A Time to Speak)*

In our time, covid-19 has impacted our daily lives in some of the same ways that the war changed life in the time of our fathers. Every day on the news, I see stories of how people in Canada and around the world are rising above adversity by working together. People of faith are managing to support each other through modern technology. It seems to me that stories of everyday life by ordinary folks have incredible power to inspire others. I hope we LAAMB people will find ways to record and share the stories we are living. God knows how our stories will in turn inspire the next generation.

Doreen White