

Remembrance Day, 2007.

I recall when I was in late Primary School, my grandfather showing a Flanders poppy. He asked me something like, “Do you know what this is?” Thankfully I could tell him.

He went onto say he served in the First World War. As a young lad it was news to me and I was fascinated. I think he also said it was called the Great War and if it wasn't at this time, it was at some other time. While he left me in no doubt that he did not quite agree with this assessment, there are some who believe that Australian mateship was defined at this time.

However, what still stays with me is his comment, that on the eleventh day of the eleventh month at the eleventh hour we have a two minutes silence. He went onto to say, use one minute to pray for peace because it was not the “War to end all Wars” as well as for those who were injured in the war and for the families who lost loved ones. With the other minute thank God for the freedom and the life you enjoy because of the sacrifice of others.

Thus this day – this day as we know as Remembrance Day – what grandfather called Armistice Day – the word armistice meaning to cease hostiles – is an important day in the life of our national life.

When Paul Keating was Prime Minister of our nation he said at the internment of the Unknown Soldier on Remembrance Day 1993,

“The Unknown Soldier honours the memory of those men and women who laid down their lives for Australia. His tomb is a reminder of what we have lost in War and what we have gained.

Some 300,000 troops from Australia served from our nation and about 60,000 soldiers died in the WW1. Another 156, 000 were either wounded or taken prisoner.

Today we acknowledge some did not live the full span of human existence, so that we can. We acknowledge that many unknown people are honoured by their deeds and not by the years they have lived.

Today I give thanks for people like my grandfather because he taught me the essence of this day and above how to use the two minutes silence. My friends may we use the silence well and meaningfully and let us remember them, and those serving our nation both a home and abroad.

(This is the corrected version.)

P.S.

I have referred to the two minute silence. That is what my grandfather talked about.

However, I acknowledge that during October 1997, the then Governor General declared the following:

“11 November is Remembrance Day and I urge Australians to observe one minute’s silence at 11.00 a.m. each year to remember the sacrifice of those who died or otherwise suffered in Australia’s cause in wars or war like conflict.”