

SPEAKING OUT

Remember the fighters at home



By BRENDA MACDONALD

THE WOMAN IS HUMMING TO HERSELF while washing the dishes, enjoying the sun streaming in through the open kitchen window. When she sees the dust trail created by the car coming down the long dirt lane to her home, she dries her hands on a towel and steps out onto the porch to greet her unexpected visitors. Only when she notices the military crest on the vehicle's door and sees the army chaplain open it do her knees wobble, then crumple in grief. It's at this moment that she realizes that something has happened that will change her life forever.

That scene in the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, when the mother learns of the death of her three sons in the Second World War, is the one that affects me the most. It's certainly not the most dramatic scene in the movie, but it's the one scene that strikes most at what I am - a mother of two sons and the wife of a military man.

Remembrance Day is serious business in my home. I'm an ex-military nurse and I've seen, up close, the physical and emotional damage political conflict can cause. My proud husband will soon complete his military service, slightly battle-scarred but thankfully whole. My grandpa was a prisoner during the Second World War, sent to work in Berlin after being captured in his small hometown in southern Holland, and my grandma was a wartime hospital worker who left her memoirs as a legacy so her family would know the lessons of war.

When I saw that my next editorial was scheduled for mid-November, I knew it would be about remembrance. It was, however, scheduled to appear a week after Nov. 11. With the tributes for the veterans past, the ceremonies complete, the poppies removed from jacket lapels, I wondered what more could possibly be said or done.

Then I realized that we could further honour our veterans by also recognizing those who stand with and support them. Not many veterans would say, I think, that they could have endured so stoically or fought so hard without having someone who was worth fighting for and coming home to. Most current peacekeepers, I know, will tell you that missions are easier on them if they can be secure in knowing their families are well-supported while they're gone.

So think awhile of the wives, children, families and friends of our Canadian heroes. They are fighters as well.

□ *Brenda MacDonald is a former military nurse living in Kingston and a member of The Whig-Standard's Community Editorial Board.*