

# “Teaching during World War II from a Student’s Perspective”

by Marg Newby, RWTO/OERO St. Catharines Branch Member and Issues & Concerns Convenor

**To My Teachers, Grades 2-6**

**Church of England School**

**Tankersley Parish, Mr. Barnsley,**

**S. Yorks, United Kingdom.**

When I go to the cenotaph in Thorold, I think of the heroes who fell in the face of heavy, enemy action in World War II. I think of those heroes who survived the horrific enemy action in World War II. I also think of my Grade 2-6 classroom teachers who went above and beyond their normal line of duty for us students in World War II.



Whenever the air raid siren blew, my teacher ushered us calmly into the long, dark, narrow air raid shelter, which had been dug by military trainees from the local armory. Once under cover, our teacher kept fear at bay by engaging us in History, Geography and Native quizzes, Math problems, storytelling, poetry and singing A Capella. We were responsible to bring with us our gas mask and iron rations (dried banana, raisins, 1 wafer and 1 small barley sugar stick) for snacking. I never felt afraid even though I could hear bombs exploding and guns firing.

All through the war, my teachers had daily and weekly duties other than curriculum responsibilities including the following

## Daily

1. Gas mask drill
2. Iron Ration content (dried banana, raisins, wafer, barley sugar stick)
3. Administer Vitamin C dose
4. Administer Cod Liver oil dose
5. Administer bottles of milk

## Weekly

1. Air Raid Drill
2. “Careless Talk Costs Lives” drill. (Say “I don’t know”, to anyone seeking directions to London, Liverpool, Dover, or Scotland)
3. Collect Lunch money
4. Collect Saving Certificate money -- proceeds to WAR EFFORT FUND.
5. St. John’s Ambulance First Aid Drill.
6. Starting in Grade 2, boys and girls were taught to knit. In Grades 4, 5, and 6, we made scarves and blankets for the Army (Khaki), Navy (blue), and Air Force (gray).

When I was in Miss Woofinden’s Grade 2/3 class, a factory in Chapeltown, a small town four miles from our school, started building Sherman and Churchill tanks, which made test runs on the road beside our school. The noise was deafening. As soon as a tank left the factory, our classroom windows had to be closed and then reopened when they reached the four-mile mark beyond the school. Miss Woofinden organized us into opening and closing pairs. She said the window procedure was necessary to prevent disruption to our learning. Similarly, our learning was not disrupted when soldiers came back from the front for a rest and were billeted in our school. We all crossed the fields to our church and there our teacher conducted lessons to us sitting in the pews.

Thank you, Miss Woofinden, Miss Hawkins, Mrs. Moorhouse and Mr. Kinch for your care and protection. You are not forgotten.

Sincerely, Margaret Newby (Crowther)