

Intermediate Essay 1st Place

Zoe N.

Branch 544 Lancaster

Zone G-4

(Provincial – 3rd Place)

On November 5th 2018, I traveled to Beechwood cemetery with six other cadets and my father (who was in charge for the day) for No Stone Left Alone. That was a day that meant a lot to me, and I have a feeling that I won't be forgetting about it soon.

When we got there from nearly an hour away we were rushed and running a little late. We quickly marched out to where the ceremony was taking place. Surprisingly, there was only a sea cadet squadron and our own squadron at the cemetery.

We all listened attentively while the children from local schools read In Flanders Fields. When the kids were finished were handed out small white envelopes filled with about five poppies in each, after those were passed out to everyone we were instructed to set one poppy on each of the graves of veterans. I had assumed this would be no simple task with the rows upon rows of stones, but with everybody helping it passed quickly.

I ungloved my cold hands and started to place the poppies by the gravestones. When I approached the first stone, I knelt down onto the grass, it didn't bother me that the creases in my pants were being a little squished, and I placed the poppy into the soft ground before it. I took a deep breath and looked at the name on the stone, reading the name in my head. I gave the poppy a little pat, before standing up and moving onto the next one. I did it until there were no more poppies in the small, white envelope. After I was out of poppies I went to get more.

While I was looking for the familiar blue of the parkas of my fellow air cadets, I spotted my father. He knelt in front of a gravestone, almost the same way that I had been, and he placed the poppy. He mumbled the name aloud, he must have known that soldier, I think as he stands up again, saluting to the stone. Then he moves on, searching for more names that he may happen to recognize, and I continued to find myself another envelope after the ten second distraction.

I find a cluster of air cadets and I ask for another envelope, and I'm given a few envelopes before I go back and continue placing the poppies at the stones. I quickly finish up the poppies I'd been given and wait for everyone else to be finished, and then I go to another part of the cemetery and we place poppies there. I still can't stop thinking of the sorrowful look on my father's face and I sigh, but think of how lucky we are to be free, and how my father's old friends, and everyone else in these sections of the cemetery, helped all of us be free.