

How the Korea Veterans Wall of Remembrance Came to Be

When it comes to our military actions, most Canadians will focus on our involvement in World Wars I and II. These seem to be the only wars in which Canadians were involved in modern times which the public in general is aware or feels were appropriate actions. The fact is; Canada was involved in several wars after World War II, starting with the Korean War and including the current situation in Afghanistan. From Korea to Bosnia to Afghanistan, these wars have mostly been over conflicts of ideals and have not received the public affirmation of necessity that the World Wars did.

This phenomenon has often, and rightly so, been decried by Canadian military personnel, and the families of Canadian military personnel, who were involved in our “forgotten” campaigns. Many times, the individuals who have made the ultimate sacrifice at the command of their countries in these “small” wars have not been memorialized in the way that they should.

The Korean War is certainly one of the most glaring examples of neglect when it comes to Canadians who sacrificed their lives for the ideals that we all purport to share. The three-year conflict, which began in 1950, was a brutal one that pitted the forces of democracy against those of freedom, a sticky reason for post-modern analysts. Moreover, the war itself ended in what is still essentially a stalemate; no truce declared, no welcome home parades for those who served, no official monuments for those who died erected at public cost. Even after the war, Canadian soldiers died while peacekeeping on the South side of the Korean divide.

The neglect shown to our Korean War veterans is part of the pride and the shame of the Wall of Remembrance that is located in Brampton, Ontario. This wall, 200 feet long, was dedicated in 1997 and contains bronze plaques with the names of the 516 Canadians who died in Korea. This wall is a testament not only to these soldiers, but also to their comrades in arms who survived, for it was not the Canadian government who chose to so honour those who passed.

Instead, it was veterans of the Korean War itself who devised and undertook a nationwide fundraising campaign to have the Wall of Remembrance built. The campaign was long, and although it is a credit to the determination of our soldiers, it is shameful that it took over 43 years after the end of the Korean War for a fitting tribute to be erected for all of those who gave their lives.

If you do get a chance to visit the Wall of Remembrance, take time not just to say thank you, but also to reflect on the injustice that sometimes occurs in regards to our soldiers.

About the Author

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