

2015 may be last year for Warriors? Day in Coe Hill

By Jim Eadie

The 15th annual two-day Warriors Day in Coe Hill went off with a bang this past weekend on Sept. 5 and 6 capped by a spectacular aerial display by the Canadian Forces Skyhawks team, and one of the largest parades of vintage military equipment in Ontario. The dream of committee members for the past 15 years is to enhance the younger generations education and development of an appreciation for the Canadian military and wartime history.

This year's two-day show included a number of new demonstrations, including a World War One casualty station staffed by volunteer Canadian nurses tending to soldiers wounded in battle in France in 1918.

Barbara Monk who lives in Odessa is a licensed industrial electrician, but has a deep interest in living Canadian history. "Canadian nurses volunteered for this job during the war," she said. "They were issued the details of what uniform was required, and were expected to make it themselves. They were issued military buttons, and their belt buckle." Monk has sewn her own uniform for the demonstrations sewn by herself to the military specifications of the time, locating buttons, boots, and a belt buckle on Ebay. "Injured soldiers were brought back by stretcher from the battle line a few hundred yards away by be cared for by nurses," she said, "it was very dangerous work."

At that time, antibiotics had not been discovered, and medical care of wounds resorted to topical treatments " thorough cleaning, pain management, and maggots or leaches introduced to clean wounds. Nurses faced dealing with horrible wounds, but if a soldier could be patched up, they would be returned to battle.

Interestingly, former Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson was a stretcher carrier during World War One.

Canadian artist and photographer Silvia Pecota also spent the weekend on site. Through photography and art, she portrays scenes in honour of soldiers who served during past historical conflicts.

With perfect weather for the event, the only rain on the parade was news that this will likely be the last Warriors Day at Coe Hill.

Two growing problems have conspired against the organizing committee, according to committee member Barry Landon.

"We are a small group, and we are not getting any younger," he said. "We have needed an infusion of younger people to come forward, and that has not happened. In addition, grants that used to be available for groups like ours, are drying up " and it costs a lot of money to do this every year."

"The youngest members of our group are now in their seventies," said Col. John Sherry, also a committee member.