

Westlane service a fitting tribute

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Schools, being the educators of a nation's youth, are generally given the responsibility of fostering in young people much more than merely the enlightenment of fruitful thought.

One other such important part of our education is a respect for the principles our nation is founded upon and an essential aspect of this is our fitting tribute to and remembrance of those who died in defence of those principles.

And so it comes to pass that an annual Remembrance Day assembly is held at virtually every school across this great land of ours. Westlane is no exception.

Last year the assembly committee at Westlane broke away from the traditional type of Remembrance Day service. Instead, we had a Grade 6 student as our guest speaker and presented a narrated pantomime whose theme revolved about Remembrance Day.

The 1971 Assembly established an undeniable precedent, as I said in my column last year, but it raised an interesting question: What would we do for an encore? Or, to put it less bluntly, would our "new" approach be used at all subsequent such services, losing effect year by year, or would the same innovative approach be applied over and over again? Friday, Nov. 9, the student body saw 1972's answer to this.

The assembly this year had three things of note. First were the readings of profound and relevant quotations taken from the works of such as Robert F. Kennedy, Kahlil Gibran, The Bible and Dag Hammarskjöld. These quotes were read alternately by Mike Jenken and Kathy Mason. Between them, they moved the audience to just the point they wanted.

This was followed by a film. Generally, films are not shown at such services, but it is to the credit of the assembly committee that they had the courage to once again break from tradition. The film shown was titled 'Neighbours', and many people are familiar with it. If someone watches it any old time, they are apt to miss much of the symbolic significance of the film, but, with their minds so involved with Remembrance Day, the audience picked it up right away. One

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sidenote: I said last week students seem a little bloodthirsty. They proved it again, for, as the film approached the climax, and the two characters brutally murder each other's wives and children, the audience laughed in a few places.

Then, during the two minutes of silence, when the stage is usually bare, except for a cross perhaps, seven cloaked figures stepped on stage and knelt before the cross, under a deep red light. Most people I talked to later said this set the atmosphere well, but they didn't understand the symbolism used. So I'll explain it here, admittedly late.

The seven figures carried a Bible representing Faith, a dove representing Peace, a pick, work; a flag, freedom; a sunrise, Hope; a heart, Love and a flower, Beauty.

I wish now to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to a great man who has left us for better things. Take that any way you want to, because I don't really mean it. You see, Bill White, the long-haired social convener of the student council, decided he couldn't hack it any more, so he retired, which is a euphemism for dropped out. Well, Bill, long life and the best of luck to you, and my apologies for never giving you any credit in my column.