

**Memorial Service
for
Brian Isfeld
CFB Comox, 16 Feb08**

Dear Brian,

How I miss you, you had so much more to teach me.

We first met in 1994. When they brought Mark back to Chilliwack, I was there as Commandant of the Canadian Forces School of Military Engineering. I had the opportunity to know Mark when we served together in 1 Combat Engineer Regiment – Dan Gratton, the Engineer Branch CWO who is here today, served with us in 1CER at the same time.

We next met at some of the conferences leading to the successful United Nations treaty banning anti-personnel mines, the very type of mine that took Mark's life. You and Carol were ever the grieving parents but you had changed your sorrow into a force for convincing the world that these infernal devices were no longer needed by civilized nations. I remember you at the signing of the Ottawa Convention; what other parents had done so much to ensure that other sons and daughters would not suffer Mark's fate?

Gradually, along the way, you were 'adopted' by us Canadian Military Engineers. We acknowledged, more or less, that you had served your own long and successful career in the Air Force, mainly as aircrew in surveillance aircraft, but we came to love you for what you were doing for us, Mark's brothers-in-arms, and our children, and children everywhere. We admired the work that you and Carol were doing, knowing full well the heavy kitbag of sorrow you must have been carrying wherever you went. We embraced the "Izzy doll" and gave them out with pride in all the bad places we were sent to serve. I hope you know that those little Izzy dolls also helped us preserve our personal humanity despite the destruction and misery we experienced.

I was especially proud when you asked me to be your guest at Rideau Hall in 2006 when you and Carol received the Meritorious Service Medal from the hands of the Governor General. Here was a grateful nation recognizing your magnificent contribution to Canada and the world in the finest of the humanitarian tradition.



When we moved to Victoria, you were quick to welcome us to Vancouver Island. It was a very special occasion for me when I accompanied you to lay the wreath on Peacekeeping Day on the lawn at the B.C. legislature. I felt that Mark was very close to us at that moment.

Now we get to the hard parts. My wife Sharon and I visited you in your home this past July. Carol had recovered well from her heart attack earlier last year and we were all looking to the future with great optimism. How little could we imagine that we would lose dear Carol only weeks later? How could anyone have anticipated that you too were ill and would depart too soon after? Our hearts go out to your extended family and many friends. Nothing could have prepared us for this double blow.

Even in adversity, perhaps especially in adversity, you continued to teach us about life. For reasons I will probably never understand, the course of your illness brought you severe and prolonged pain, pain that medical science seemed incapable of controlling. Here you showed us your Viking roots. Your uncomplaining acceptance and indomitable spirit can only come from the ages of tough Norsemen who learned how to thrive on the ice fields of your ancestors.

The Chief of the Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier, knew and admired you. He asked me to be here in his place today to extend his condolences to your family. He said this in the full knowledge that (and I quote) “these words seem inept somehow”. Rick Hillier is not often a man at loss for words.

I have the dual honour of also representing the Canadian Military Engineer Branch of the Canadian Forces. Assisting me here today in that function is the senior non-commissioned member of our branch, Chief Warrant Officer Daniel Gratton, from National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa. The Canadian Military Engineers join the

Isfeld family in mourning the rapid loss of two of our strongest supporters in Carol and Brian.

I would be remiss if I did not extend my personal and official thanks to 19Wing Comox for their magnificent support, provided right from the top, to facilitate us to be able to give one final salute to an old warrior.

Heroes are rare in any society. They are not extraordinary people but ordinary people who behave in an extraordinary way. Brian, you are at rest but your heroic example lives on to inspire us.

MGen E.S. Fitch, OMM, MSM, CD