

The Pioneer

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Photo by Sarah Vissers

Winter that never ends

Patti Thornton braves the wind to deliver the mail to businesses downtown Belleville during the snow storm on Wednesday, March 12. A total of 16cm fell throughout the day, setting a record for March. Weather is supposed to warm up again next week.

Lost diary returned after 60 years

By Kaitlin Abeele

Sgt. Bill Ferguson never expected to hold his war diary again after leaving it hidden inside a barn on a German farm in 1945.

Ferguson had been injured and captured during the raid on Dieppe during the Second World War, after he was hit in the chest by shrapnel.

"Think of the loudest noise you've ever heard. I don't care what kind, just noise. Then double it, triple it and so on, for the noise on that beach," said Ferguson in a taped account of his war time experiences, prior to his death in 2005.

Ferguson spent four years as a prisoner of war in Germany, in the Stalag IX-C POW camp near the town of Bad Sulza.

"Life in the camp was very exciting of course,"

laughed Ferguson, whose voice crackled on the tape recorder in his kitchen.

Throughout his captivity, he had kept a journal, which described daily life in the camp, contained drawings done by fellow prisoners, and photos from home.

As the war came to an end, the prisoners were marched out of the camp and through the countryside until they stopped at a small farm to sleep for the night. Bodo Zschack, the 10-year-old son of the farmer, brought fruit and hay to the soldiers camped out in the barn.

Ferguson made one last entry in his journal before hiding it inside the hay, and falling asleep.

"He tucked it in the hay so the Germans wouldn't take it from him. Then he was rousted early in the morning and he consequently left it behind," said

Don Ferguson, who is Sgt. Bill Ferguson's nephew.

It was early in the morning when a fellow prisoner ran into the barn, announcing the arrival of American soldiers. They were free at last.

In all of the excitement, Ferguson forgot the precious journal tucked away inside the barn.

Ferguson travelled back home to Toronto, to his wife Doris and family. But the dampness of the city made it difficult to breathe with the chest injury he had sustained during the war. Ferguson decided to move to a dryer climate, and so he moved with Doris to Thousand Oaks, California and started a family in 1958.

The diary became a distant memory, like the ones contained inside its pages.

That is until the spring of 2004, when an Englishman named John Bennett and his wife travelled to

the Portuguese archipelago of Madeira, where they met a German couple with an interesting story.

The husband, Bodo Zschack, who was nearing 70 years old, told the Bennetts about a diary he had found as a child inside his father's old barn, which he now owned. The Bennetts agreed to help Bodo track down the owner of the diary.

The Bennetts travelled to Bodo's home in Wildetaube a few months later, where Bodo showed them the diary. There was no way to identify the writer, until Bennett found a letter tucked inside the pages, which Ferguson's father had written him, and which contained Ferguson's full name and rank.

Bennett approached Canada's Veterans Affairs, who contacted Ferguson, now 92, in California.

...See Diary, page 2

Loyalist alumnus shares photos of homeland

By Emily Cumming

Loyalist grad and Afghan native Farzana Wahidy delivered a presentation on her photographic work to students in Alumni Hall last night, the same day that Canada's mission in Afghanistan officially came to an end.

In the midst of the 12 year mission, which claimed the lives of 162 Canadians, Wahidy first travelled to Canada in 2007 to study photojournalism at Loyalist College. She later returned to Afghanistan to pursue work on a long-term project to document the diverse lives of women in her country.

When the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan 1996, girls were forced to leave school and many women were not permitted to leave their homes without a male guardian. Wahidy said that the Taliban regime "took everything from us."

With the support of her father and his belief in education, Wahidy began attending an underground school. Seeing her world change around her, she decided that she wanted to study journalism to share the story of women's lives in Afghanistan.

During the presentation she explained how she first became aware of photojournalism. While working part-time, an opportunity came up to apply for a course in photojournalism and she was intrigued because of the "journalism" part of "photojournalism."

She was accepted into the competitive program and soon began working for AFP as a part-time photographer and then for AP full time during the 5 months leading up to her arrival in Canada.



Photo by Justin Chin

Farzana Wahidy, the first female Afghan photojournalist to work for a wire service and a graduate of the photojournalism program at Loyalist College, speaks to photojournalism students at Alumni Hall, Loyalist College on Wednesday.

Farzana began her photojournalism studies at Loyalist in 2007 and said that "photography became more valuable" while at Loyalist. She became determined to "work to do something with photography."

When she returned to Afghanistan in 2009, she decided that she wanted

to freelance rather than work for an agency in order to focus on telling the stories that were important to her.

Wahidy has photographed a wide range of women in many different circumstances and has focused extensively on the violence against women in Afghanistan. While showing a

slideshow of her photographs, she explained the backstory of many of the women portrayed and shared her personal experience photographing and gaining access to her subjects.

Wahidy visited a burn unit in a hospital where women were being treated for burns due to self-immolation. She

has also photographed women coping with drug addiction, and women in prison (often sentenced for adultery and other moral crimes.)

In addition to portraying the many hardships that women face, she has also documented the many accomplishments women in Afghanistan have made in the past 10 years. She has photographed a governor, a police chief, and a midwife.

Wahidy says that things are starting to change since western forces have been withdrawing and scaling back military presence in the country. "If we lose security, women lose everything"

Wahidy is currently embarking on a new project. She is putting together a 23 month-long program to train young photographers in her country, create a database of images that can be accessed by media outlets and is lobbying for copyright law to protect photographers in Afghanistan.

She says that her time at Loyalist helped her to "find the confidence to be a photographer."

"When I think of Farzana, the first words that I think of are courage and commitment," said Frank O'Connor, coordinator of the photojournalism program, who organized the event. "It would be really easy, when you live in a country like Afghanistan where being a woman is so challenging, to just give up. Farzana has chosen to exercise her courage and commitment."

The event ended with many questions from students and O'Connor believes that the talk resonated with many students. "I've already had 3 female students come up to me and say 'I needed that'"