

pleasant song will make those historic hills even more fancus.

That many people still listen to radio regularly was brought out in a recent survey. Apparently 96% of North Americans over the age of 12 listen to radio during the week and average daily listening of over three hours. Although night radio programs are likely heard by vastly fewer people than their day-time equivalents, I'm convinced that for a variety of reasons the much smaller group is however also a more receptive and appreciative one.

86. WILFRED COUTTS, POET

VALLEY VISTAS column, Brandon Sun, Nov.10, 1972

Except for a year in the reserve army during the mid-1950s I was never in the military. In fact, even under Canadian Legion's recent enlightened regulations regarding membership I fail to qualify. However, I was very closely associated with reserve army units, ROTP, COTC, and regular artillery units at Shilo for five summers as civilian driver and through the years have "talked military" with several hundred Boer-First and Second World-Korean-Vietnam war veterans.

The vibrations I get from talking to men who have fought in war is that three factors that figure strongest in making the hell of killing human beings somehow bearable from a soldier's viewpoint are: conviction that right's on his side, belief his fellow countrymen support his actions, comradeship with fellow soldiers. The current Vietnam war where the first two factors are frequently weak or even lacking strongly supports such hypothesis.

A Minnedosan who joined Winnipeg Rifles during the Second World War transferring to RCEME later as driver when his age made leaving the infantry necessary is Wilfred L. Coutts. He's this district's best known poet. To commemorate Manitoba's centennial he recently published his first book--a collection of 70 poems composed during his lifetime, eight of them while stationed overseas during the war. He's given me permission to quote from Prairie Pioneer Poems for this article.

All of Coutt's poems composed during that terrible war--Memories of Benachie, The Lucky Lost Thirteen, The Mission of a Soldier's Parcel, The Jitter-Bug Girl, The Church by the Side of the Road, Connie Piper, How to Act in Case of Air Raids, The English Rose--reflect a deep sense of humor and an outlook that's unusually cheerful and optimistic. The three factors mentioned also come through loud and clear in verses like:

They were gathered in the barracks
Under cover of the blackout
Singing western songs of homeland,
Others kept the party happy
Thus the greetings and good wishes
Link the golden chain of friendship
And each parcel shared with comrades
Strengthens us to fight for freedom
and:

On a dark and rainy night
Light and life were out of sight.
Thinking of their dear home folks,
Spinning yarns and cracking jokes.
From the thoughtful ones at home,
With all men beneath the dome.
Like the old proverbial Dove
And fair Canada, we love.

In the famed Canadian Army
By her tough and brawny soldiers
But the bravest band of heroes
Was Staff Thompson's group of Ac. Ac.
These boys were the most congenial
Playing tricks on one another
So you see good old Staff Thompson
When he landed in old England
and:

Deeds of valor have been wrought
When they're put upon the spot;
That were ever known or seen
Known as lucky lost thirteen.
Lot that ever crossed the pond.
Was their friendship's greatest bond,
Had some worries in his bean
With the Lucky Lost Thirteen.

The Canadian Boys
With a round at the pub by chance,
Of certain renown,
or:

Were expressing their joys
In an old English town
Then they wended their way to the dance.

If you're inside a building when bombs start their din
You run out on the street; if you're outside, run in.
Oh it matters not where you might linger or dwell
Just be sure you start running and shouting as well.

We tend to forget that all Canadians born since 1927 (the under 45 group) are too young to have fought in the Second World War. But none of us, despite what personal attitudes towards war we may have developed growing up during more recent controversial conflicts like the Korean and Vietnam wars, are too young not to respect our many fellow Canadians who did fight, die or were crippled in past wars. The recent Legion motto of Freedom: Man-Made, Not God-Given is most applicable to us all regardless of age or philosophy of life.