

Toast to Fallen Comrades

Commandant, College faculty and staff, fellow ex-cadets and guests, present-day cadets:

As we gather in support of the Alumni Association of Canada's military colleges - Royal Roads, RMC Saint-Jean, and RMC Kingston - let us take a moment to remember those who once studied on this peninsula, marched on the square nearby, perhaps played on the sports field outside, and almost certainly ran circles on the track; lived and learned in the buildings, but now live only in memory - our fallen comrades. Not only those who died while in the Armed Services, in combat or by accident, but also those lived their lives peacefully as citizens of our land. Our fallen comrades; all who shared the military college experience and have since passed on.

They were our classmates, our mentors, our role models, our friends! Some we knew intimately; others we knew only by name or reputation; some we didn't know at all. They, like us who remain, came from many places in our country, great cities, small towns, remote villages, isolated farms. Their experiences before, during, and after attending military college were varied and different. But there is at least one common experience that they and we all share - a singular promise we all made. The oath to let our country send us anywhere, at any time, into harm's way. That oath is perhaps the only thing that truly unites every alumna and alumnus of our colleges. It transcends rank, life accomplishments, and length of life. That oath was not just a formality - it was a declaration of a willingness to give oneself to a greater good for the sake of others.

Those we toast tonight lived with that oath. It matters not whether they fell in combat, in training, or in the years that followed after they took off the uniform; they carried that commitment with them. I believe it shaped them, it shaped those who remain, and I know it shaped me.

We remember our fallen comrades for their presence in our lives. For assistance in studies, advice when needed, support when the going was tough, the wisdom shared over coffee, the plotting of skylarks, and the quiet moments of camaraderie while shining boots that only those who've worn the uniform of our military colleges truly understand.

So tonight, let us toast them - not in mourning, but in remembrance. We toast those who shaped our lives and our legacy; those whose names may have faded, but whose impact never will. May we honour them not just in memory, but by how we live, how we lead, and how we serve our country and our world.

And so, please raise your glasses for a toast to our fallen comrades.

To our fallen comrades!