

PENTICTON WESTERN NEWS

Mother's Day event issues call for peace

By Mark Brett - Pentiction Western News

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It's the photographs of the children that rekindle the terror Lisa Demetrick experienced growing up in occupied Holland.

"I stand before you as a victim of war," the Oliver resident told more than 100 people gathered at the U.S. Canada border for the 26th annual Mother's Day Walk for Peace. "When I see the images of the little orphans in Darfur, terror-stricken girls in Gaza City and the thinly-clad figure of a little boy in a refugee camp outside Kabul — I see myself as a child.

"I wonder why are we, in this day and age, still inflicting the horrors of war and occupation upon these innocent children? To live in constant fear and be deprived of the necessities of life."

Demetrick is also a mother and her son Paul Demetrick of Pentiction joined her in the march from the Canadian side.

At the head of the procession Paul was particularly conspicuous in the dark green military B.C. Dragoons reserve uniform with the gold, corporal's chevrons on the sleeve.

"I'm taking a bit of a chance being here, I've written letters before and almost got court-martialed for it," said Paul Demetrick. "As a member of an army reserve unit I had a choice of whether I go or not and I chose not to because it is an illegal, immoral and unjust war."

Although he has not been to the region where the fighting is taking place he is convinced the news Canadians are receiving is not accurate.

"Today what I am doing is just encouraging the government to stop the war and the sooner we end it the better," he said. "Here is something to ponder: my definition of war is killing, injuring and destroying, yet those who support the war sometimes make the argument that we are there to help the people of Afghanistan.

"How does shooting, shelling and dropping bombs on people, how does murdering and maiming people and destroying their homes, villages and country help them?"

The Pentiction resident added it is not fear stopping him from going into battle — that he would gladly lay down his life for Canada and its people.

"But my country is not whatever transitory government of the day that happens to be in power," said Paul Demetrick.

And it is those nightmares of her youth and love of her child that has made Lisa completely supportive of his decision not to fight.

"Whenever I hear of another Canadian soldier having been killed there I cringe because it could have been my son," she said.

Like other years, Sunday's gathering was organized in advance and while neither Canadians nor Americans were required to go through the customs or immigration their presence was closely monitored by border guards from both countries.



Lisa Demetrick of Oliver addresses the crowd as son Paul of Pentiction listens during the peace rally at the border park. Over 100 Canadian and American peace activists took part in the annual event.

Mark Brett/Western News

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