

Education in the midst of conflict

Cpl. Anderson was serving his country, planning for his future

On Oct. 18 I received an e-mail from Kabul, Afghanistan. It was sent by Col. Michael Latouche (Canadian Forces), director of the Air Liaison Element of the International Security Assistance Force. He identified himself as a graduate of the University of Manitoba (class of 1996), and said that he was very proud that his university was awarding Cpl. Jordan Anderson a degree posthumously. He added also that he wanted to thank his alma mater for honouring this young man who "paid the ultimate price doing what his country asked him to do and for helping the people of Afghanistan."

Cpl. Anderson was just 25 years old when a roadside bomb ended his life and the lives of six others near Kandahar City this past July 4. One of four brothers, he was born in Iqaluit, growing up in Pelly Bay, Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik in the Northwest Territories. His wife Amanda, who accepted her husband's degree, said her husband worked hard on his courses, and hoped to become an intelligence officer. According to Dr. George Maclean, the acting head of political studies, Cpl. Anderson had completed all major degree requirements, with only some electives unfinished. He was a good student, showing considerable promise. His widow and his buddies from Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry described him as having a hunger for education, as indicated by having his "nose in a book" as often as he could, by a curiosity that constantly led him to search on the internet for topics that interested him, and by the papers he wrote for his courses that remain still, piled neatly on his desk at home.

It is hard to imagine the path that took Jordan Anderson from the Northwest Territories to Afghanistan where his life ended so tragically. Like so many others before him, he seized the opportunity the armed services offered him to enrol at university, and he chose the University of Manitoba, perhaps because of its long record of making degree programs available through the military support office. He was serious about his studies, and Dr. Maclean has been quoted in a number of newspaper articles that, on the day Jordan Anderson died, he had been in touch with the university to discuss the route to continue his studies to earn an advanced degree in political studies and international relations.



President's Perspective

by Emőke Szathmáry

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Many others worldwide have been awarded degrees posthumously, but in Canada, Jordan Anderson was among the first to die on active duty since the Korean War to have a degree conferred in such circumstances. The media focussed much attention on his story, but one had to have been present at Convocation to appreciate fully the emotion that captured everyone when Mrs. Anderson came forward to receive her husband's degree. She is an articulate, lovely young woman, and had been fighting back tears before and during the ceremony as it unfolded. She gripped a photograph of her husband in her hand as she received her husband's parchment from Dean Richard Sigurdson, whose usual cheerful and proudly uttered congratulatory comments to every Arts graduate turned quiet and serious. It was not possible to hear what he said because every member of the audience of 1,900 people at Convocation stood up spontaneously and broke into thunderous applause.

Were we applauding the young widow, to let her know that we empathize with her sorrow? Were we applauding Jordan Anderson's self-discipline, his devotion to his studies, and his focus on establishing his future through formal learning? Were we applauding all the young men and women of the Canadian Forces

symbolized by Cpl. Anderson, who put their lives on the line daily as the price of freedom in Afghanistan? Perhaps we applauded for all these reasons and more.

I remember reading in the *Globe and Mail* when the first deployment of Canadian troops arrived in Afghanistan, the words of one soldier. He said among other things somewhat incredulously, "Imagine – they are against learning!" I did imagine, and thought of those millions of boys and young men who were allowed to learn only what the Taliban permitted, and the millions of girls and women who were not allowed to learn anything at all. In the comfort and security of Canada it is easy to take things for granted. It is sobering to imagine that not only would my daughter have not been permitted to learn had she been raised in Afghanistan when the Taliban were in control, but I would also have been prevented from learning, as well as practicing my profession. Imagine what the University of Manitoba would be like under such a regime – no women at all on our campuses, not as professors, not as support staff, not as students. No women working outside the home anywhere in Manitoba, no girls in school – and the boys limited to learning only those texts that the Taliban judged appropriate.

There are many reasons why Canadian troops are in Afghanistan, and the provision of schools and protection of those who attend them comprise just a fraction of the actions undertaken by Canadians serving in a zone of conflict on the other side of the world. Nevertheless, I am compelled to focus on the enormous contribution our troops are doing to protect the rights of all to attain an education. To my mind, to be able to learn is a precious thing, and protecting everyone's opportunity to learn is a worthy undertaking. Over 6 million students enrolled in Afghan schools at all levels this year, and 2 million of them were girls. I am profoundly grateful to the Canadian Armed Forces for fighting those who would limit learning to a few, and would deny it to girls and women completely. And I am grateful to Cpl. Jordan Anderson who put his life on the line and lost it, to do something that his country asked him to do.

Please see the related picture on Page 6 for a look at the Convocation ceremony.

The Price Comparisons

Apple Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard

U of M BookStore

Educational Price: \$85.00

Future Shop: \$129.99

Canon Pixma MP160 all-in-one printer

U of M BookStore: \$85.95 WQL

Office Depot: \$99.99

Research Methods for Generalist Social Work by Marlow

U of M BookStore: \$101.95

Amazon: \$105.95

Marriages and Families by Riedmann

U of M BookStore: \$76.95

Amazon: \$80.95

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The conference will focus in part on: establishing a Canadian network of researchers focused on PHEV related issues; the simulation of advanced vehicles to optimize the effective use of renewable resources; reviewing on-going demonstrations PHEV project across North America, and; discussion of the possible role of Canadian government in supporting PHEV development.

For more information go to www.pluginhighway.ca/.

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