

ROSS MUNRO AWARD VIMY AWARD DINNER

MUSEUM OF CIVILIZATION

GATINEAU, QUEBEC

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PRESENTATION COMMENTS

BY

CHAIRMAN CDA

LGEM (RET) R.J. EVRAIRE

“It was the worst night of the blitz, Germany’s bombing offensive against London through the winter of 1940-41. Newcomer Foster Barclay had been in town only a few hours that December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1940, and he could hardly believe what he saw. On Fleet Street, the Canadian Press office where he had come to work was bombed out by a direct hit. Up Ludgate Hill, St. Paul’s Cathedral stood with magnificent defiance amid walls of fire nurtured by tens of thousands of incendiary bombs. Beyond it, The City, the financial heart of the British world, lay in ruins.

Barclay made his way through the streets with other Canadian Press war correspondents. He finally couldn’t resist asking a simple question: “Is it always like this?”

It wasn’t, but Canada’s war correspondents did have numerous comparable moments before the war was over.

They were a varied and colorful crew: the brilliant L.S.B. Shapiro, later a best-selling novelist, who would arise from his typewriter and proclaim, “I have just written a magnificent story”; the trenchant, red-headed Ralph Allen who agonized over every word he wrote - and wrote so well they all liked to read him; the beloved raconteur, Greg Clark; the buoyant Charles Lynch; the dramatic Matthew Halton whose throbbing CBC broadcasts brought the war into thousands of Canadian living rooms. There were dozens of them and, in their army uniforms, they followed Canada’s soldiers everywhere they went.

The best-known and most respected of them all was a lean, gangling, quiet, serious reporter named Ross Munro. Wes Gallagher, an American war correspondent who later became general manager of The Associated Press, said: “Munro was not only the top Canadian correspondent of the war. He combined great personal courage with extremely lucid writing and reporting”.

Ce texte est pris du livre “Canadians At War – 1939-1945 », publié à Montréal en 1969 par l’Association canadienne de Reader’s Digest, texte qui illustre clairement la raison pour laquelle

la Conférence des associations de la défense, avec le concours du Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, a choisi de créer et nommer un prix Média en son honneur.

[This brief text, taken from “The Canadians At War – 1939-1945”, published in Montreal by the Reader’s Digest Association of Canada in 1969, very clearly illustrates why tonight, the Conference of Defence Associations, in cooperation with the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, and in partial fulfillment of a shared mission to stimulate informed public discussion and debate on Canadian defence and security and to promote the efficiency and well-being of Canada’s Armed Forces, have chosen to honour Ross Munro in creating a special media award.

C’est avec grand plaisir que je préside cette première présentation du Prix Média Ross Munro, une présentation qui sera faite annuellement lors du dîner Vimy parrainé par l’Institut de la Conférence des associations de la défense.

[It is my very great pleasure to preside over this inaugural presentation of the Ross Munro Media Award, a presentation that will be a special feature of the CDA Institute’s Annual Vimy Dinner.]

Le Prix Média Ross Munro a pour but de reconnaître, annuellement, un ou une journaliste canadien/canadienne qui a contribué de façon exceptionnelle à faire connaître les enjeux touchant la défense et la sécurité du Canada auprès du grand public. Le comité de sélection, choisi parmi les membres de l’exécutif de la CAD et du milieu journalistique, se penche sur ce qu’ont produit les candidats sous forme de documents préparés pour la presse écrite ou électronique et destinés au grand public. Recherche et analyse sont certains des éléments clés figurant au tableau d’évaluation du matériel soumis. La personne déclarée gagnante du Prix Média Ross Munro aura contribué des documents dont la qualité professionnelle et l’impact sur le public ne font aucun doute.

[The Ross Munro Media Award recognizes a Canadian journalist who has made a significant and outstanding contribution to the understanding, by the general public, of Canada’s defence and security issues. The selection committee, consisting of five persons from the CDA Executive and the Media, consider what material (in print, or electronic format - radio or television) nominees have produced for public consumption. Depth of research and analysis are essential elements of the evaluation of the material. The winner’s contribution will have received wide acclaim and be considered as significant journalism.]

Before asking this year’s Ross Munro Award winner to come forward to receive his prize, may I say, on behalf of the CDA and the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, how grateful we are to Mrs. Beth Munro and to Mrs. Ann Purdy, Ross Munro’s daughter, for having graciously consented to lend Ross’ name to our media award, and for providing us with invaluable information in setting up the award and deciding on the nature of the prize itself. Excellency, Minister, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in warmly greeting Mrs. Munro and Mrs. Purdy who will present the first Ross Munro Media Award to our winner.

Le gagnant du premier Prix Média Ross Munro est journaliste depuis plus de 23 ans. Our winner has been a journalist for 23 years, 18 of these as a reporter, editor and photographer with the Canadian Press on major regional and international stories, for print and broadcast. He accompanied the soldiers of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry on their assault of the Whale's Back in eastern Afghanistan on March 13, this year, as well as on two other combat operations in the same theatre. He also reported from the front in Kosovo in 1999. He has been honoured three times at the National Newspaper Awards, and received nine Canadian Press Livewire awards for outstanding performance on breaking stories. Among numerous other accomplishments, he currently is the editor of the CWCA Newsletter, the official quarterly of the Canadian War Correspondents Association.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs, je vous demande d'accueillir, please join me in welcoming this inaugural year's Ross Munro Media Award winner, Mr. Stephen Thorne.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Thorne.

Thank you, Stephen.

The CDA and the CDFAI are also pleased to offer Mrs. Munro and Mrs. Purdy with replicas of the Ross Munro Media Award, in recognition of the essential role they played in making this Award possible.

Mrs. Munro

Mrs. Purdy.

Thank you.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this magnificent likeness of Ross Munro, wearing the typical battle dress and other accoutrements of his profession, will be on exhibit in an important venue, soon to be chosen, so as to allow for its viewing by the largest number of Canadians possible.

Mesdames et Messieurs, il est très important, je crois, de reconnaître l'excellent talent d'artiste qui a réalisé cette magnifique sculpture qui est devenu le symbole du Prix Média Ross Munro. Je demande au Colonel à la retraite André Gauthier de bien vouloir se lever et recevoir nos remerciements et nos applaudissements.

[Finally, it is important to recognize the marvelous artistry of the creator of the Ross Munro Media Award sculpture. I therefore ask Colonel (Ret) André Gauthier, to please stand and be recognized.]

May I now introduce Brigadier General (Ret) Don Macnamara, the President of the CDA Institute and our host for this evening.