

Letters to the Editor, Fiji Times, Saturday 3 Jan 2015

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Tribute to the fallen

As a descendent of the Faddy family formerly of Wainivesi, Tailevu North, I wish to thank the President of Fiji, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau and the Prime Minister, Ratu Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, and his government for the solemn but moving commemoration ceremony conducted on New Year's eve at the National War Memorial, Veiuto, Suva, to remember the contributions of Fijian families to the World War I war effort.

The roll of honour read out by the President at the ceremony included the names of 124 of Fiji's early sons who paid the ultimate sacrifice and did not return to their homeland.

My grandfather, Norman Faddy, twice awarded the Military Cross in that war, alongside his two brothers, Herbert and Francis and sister, Gertrude, were among the lucky ones to survive and return to Fiji after the war.

They along with other war veterans of the era such as the Harnesses and Lord etc, pioneered the establishment of the dairy industry in the Wainivesi and Waimaro Valleys that continues today.

It was a moment to cherish to witness the laying of wreaths by our high ranking officials, resident ambassadors and high commissioners in Fiji, including representatives of the Fiji Labour Corp that included many of our high chiefs, and also representatives of the Royal British Legion in Fiji and of the Fiji Returned Soldiers and Ex-Servicemen Association. While remembering sacrifices during the war, it is easy to forget that women also contributed.

Their story is perhaps exemplified by my grand aunt, Gertrude Faddy, a qualified nurse, who from Levuka answered the call from the British Secretary to the Colonies and independently made her way to England to work as a nursing sister helping to heal the war wounded.

She was honoured for her services with the award of The Royal Red Cross Medal, the highest award to military nurses.

She and her brothers today lie in simple graves at the Old Suva Cemetery

When reflecting on events in Fiji's past, we must ensure that these events help to shape our future.

We, therefore, have to thank our President and Prime Minister for leading Fiji away from its narrow ethnic focus to a more broader outlook that recognises the service and sacrifice of all "Fijians".

REG SANDAY

Suva