

Superintendent's Message - December 2, 2009

The holidays are a great time for reflection. This time of year I often find myself thinking about the things I value most – quality time with family and friends, education, and the state of the world around me. In tumultuous times like these, I find comfort in remembering a remarkable holiday story. What makes it so remarkable? This particular holiday story is entirely true. It's a story about hope and peace, and I would like to take a moment and share it with you.

In 1914, World War I broke out. It was the first great European war of the 20th century. Enlisted soldiers were assured that they would be home by Christmas, but the fighting would last until 1918. Soldiers who thought they would be with their loved ones on Christmas Eve instead found themselves bearing arms against a faceless enemy. On December 24 the night was bitterly cold, and slush from rain and ice was freezing in the trenches where soldiers bunkered. All of a sudden, British sentries began reporting small lights appearing on the German side of the Western Front, as German soldiers lit candles and raised them on poles and the ends of bayonets. Even though the lights made the soldiers visible, and vulnerable to being shot, they were determined to celebrate (as Christmas Eve is the main day of celebration in Germany). Raised voices floated over the frozen night, as Germans joined in singing the refrain "Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!" The British recognized the melody and began singing "Silent Night" along with the Germans. Singing this simple song brought about one of the most amazing events in military history. Against the orders of commanding officers, an unofficial truce broke out as soldiers on both sides ventured into no man's land in defiance of the rules of military combat. That day, declared enemies sat around common campfires sharing stories and photos, and exchanging small gifts. Within a day the war would resume, and the soldiers would again bear arms against each other. But history will forever show that in the midst of "the war to end all wars," humanity won out; peace was the goal, and common ground the means of getting there.

I find this story so meaningful because it speaks to the humanity in all of us – it speaks to hope. Regardless of our differences in customs, beliefs, or backgrounds, we have more commonalities than we have differences. This holiday season, I wish you all a time of peace. May you find common ground with those around you, and spend your holiday surrounded by those you love.

Sincerely,
Glen Ishiwata
Superintendent, Moreland School District