

Prayer for the dead, prayer for the living

by Sarah Murphy

Fourteen women were murdered shortly after my tenth birthday. I don't remember every detail, but the image of fourteen white caskets, painfully new, painfully occupied, lined up, surrounded by a crowd of broken parents, confused classmates, and other sorrowed souls, is still with me. There were tears of anger and tears of pain a ten year old could not understand, but they have left their traces nonetheless.

These women were in their early twenties, and now I am in my early twenties. They were bright, ambitious women, aspiring scientists, aspiring engineers, and now I find myself sharing their aspirations. They were killed because they tried to make their mark, take their place in a field deemed non-traditional for women, a man's milieu.

What if a man walked into my class? What if he asked the men to leave the room? What if he shot me? What if he shot me because I thought my place at this university was rightfully mine, not because I am a woman, but because I earned it. I didn't steal his place, but I am willing to share.

Wednesday, December 6, 1989 a young man, Marc Lepine, 25 years old, entered the University of Montreal's Ecole Polytechnique. He was carrying a .223 calibre semi-automatic rifle.

Walking into a classroom, he shouted, "I want the women." He separated the men from the women, ordered the men to leave the classroom, and lined the women up along one wall. "You are all feminists!" he yelled and began shooting to kill. All nine women in the classroom were either killed or wounded. There had been 48 men in the classroom.

Lepine continued his hunt,

stalking his victims without obstruction. He had already murdered one woman near the copying room prior to entering that first classroom. After leaving the classroom, he walked through the corridors firing randomly, entered the cafeteria, killed three more women, then went into a second classroom, where he murdered four more women and killed himself. By the end of his spree, he had murdered fourteen women and injured thirteen others: nine women and four men.

Lepine had applied to the Ecole Polytechnique but had been rejected. He blamed feminists for ruining his life.

The following letter was found on the gunman's body:

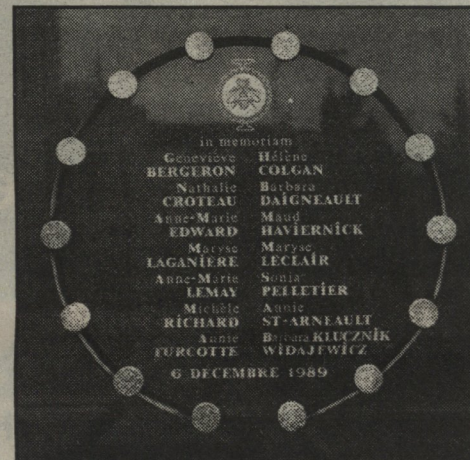
Forgive the mistakes, I only had 15 minutes to write this.

Please note that if I am committing suicide today 89/12/06 it is not for economic reasons (for I have waited until I exhausted all my financial means, even refusing jobs) but for political reasons. For I have decided to send Ad Patres the feminists who have ruined my life. It has been seven years that life does not bring me any joy and being totally blas, I have decided to put an end to those viragos.

I had already tried as a youth to enlist in the Forces as an officer cadet, which would have allowed me to enter the arsenal and precede Lortie in a rampage (reference to an earlier mass killing in Quebec in 1984). They refused me because of a sociality. So I waited until this day to carry out all my projects. In between, I continued my studies in a haphazard way for they never really interested me, knowing in advance my fate. Which did not prevent me from obtaining very good marks despite not handing in my theory

assignments and studying little before exams.

Even though the Mad Killer epithet will be attributed to me by the media, I consider myself a rational and erudite person that only the arrival of the Grim Reaper has forced to undertake extreme acts. For why persevere in existing if it is only to please the government? Being rather retrograde by nature (except for science), the feminists always have a talent for enraging me. They want to retain the advantages of being women (e.g. cheaper insurance, extended maternity leave preceded by a pre-



Nef Pour Quatorze Reines

ventive leave) while trying to grab those of the men.

Thus, it is self-evident that if the Olympic Games removed the Men/Women distinction, there would be only be women in the graceful events. So the feminists are not fighting to remove that barrier. They are so opportunistic that they neglect to profit from the knowledge accumulated by men throughout the ages. They always try to misrepresent them every time they can. Thus, the other day, people were honoring the Canadian men and women who fought at the frontlines during the world wars. How does this sit with the fact that women were not authorized to go to the frontline at the time??? Will

we hear of Caesar's female legions and female galley slaves who of course took up 50 per cent of history's ranks, although they never existed? A real Casus Belli.

Sorry for this too brief letter.

These words were followed by a list of list of nineteen names of various Quebec women having achieved some advances in traditionally male professions: accountancy, journalism, labor organizing, sportscasting, firefighting, and police work.

"[They] nearly died today," wrote Lepine. "The lack of time (because I started too late) has allowed those radical feminists to survive. *Alea Jacta.*"

And we survive. And although the name Marc Lepine will be forever etched in the mind of women like myself, few remember the names of the dead: Genevieve Bergeron, Helene Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Maria Klucznik, Maryse Leclair, Annie St-Arneault, Michele Richard, Maryse Laganier, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Annie Turcotte. Remember their names.

December 6th has been adopted as a day of national reflection on violence against women, not only for these fourteen victims, but for all women who have had their lives shattered by violence. These lives and spirits were not scarred by male violence, but rather men's violence, a learned behavior, one which must be changed.

On December 6th, remember the name of one victim, wear a purple ribbon, wear a white ribbon, take a moment to reflect.

Remember lest we forget.