

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS:  
THE FRANK CHRISTENSEN STORY  
A FREE VERSE POEM

OLIVIA FAVARO  
MR. STACEY  
KELOWNA SECONDARY SCHOOL  
GRADE 11  
SOCIAL STUDIES 11 HONOURS  
MAY 4, 2012  
657 WORDS

AUTHORS NOTE: THIS IS A FICTITIOUS ACCOUNT TOLD FROM THE POINT OF VIEW  
OF DEATH

## COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS: THE FRANK CHRISTENSEN STORY

Since the day you were born, I have been watching  
December 28 of 1920, or as your mother says, the 27  
In Cypress, Manitoba  
Raised in McCreary, attending school there until the age of 18  
I have my eye on many, all really, but there are those select few  
Whom I watch  
Your daily activities, so mundane. I wait for something interesting to happen  
But nothing ever does  
You perform odd jobs, here and there  
Trying to make a go of it, but luck is not behaving in your favor  
Until  
The war breaks out  
An opportunity arises  
Your friends come home with money in their pockets, a steady job  
And so, in 1940 you join the Queens Own Cameron Highlanders  
You take basic training at Osborne  
You take on the job of Signaler  
Shortly after you transfer to the Winnipeg Grenadiers  
And leave on train, to a land unknown  
Aboard the Awatea, now, bound for Hong Kong  
The ship arrives in late November  
This is what I had in mind  
Had you only known, would you have still enlisted?  
I continue to watch, excited at the prospect of a new and exciting venture  
In your life.  
Perched and ready to take action  
I continue to wait  
After your arrival you practice your maneuvers  
You visit Victoria  
Then, on December 5, 1941, you leave camp  
Leave all your belongings  
And the Japanese start bombing  
You never return to camp  
Christmas Eve rolls around  
And I have a plan, yet  
You escape the hold of my sinister grasp  
But not totally unscathed

## COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS: THE FRANK CHRISTENSEN STORY

I leave you with merely bullet wounds  
Lying on the ground in pain and anguish  
However, you manage to get yourself to a hospital  
Cheating me  
But now  
You have a new title  
Prisoner of War  
If only you knew  
What you had coming  
So I decided to send you around, first to Camp Sham Shui Po to visit the Britt's  
And then to North Point, to reunite with the Canadians  
What fun I was having  
Sending you on this wild goose chase  
A little torture was in order I thought  
So I threw a high fever and dysentery your way  
Yet, it had not the effect I had hoped  
Still you stood, not strong, but standing nonetheless  
I won't lie to you; I was getting rather annoyed now  
I couldn't take you  
And I don't know why  
But I was not going to give up on this  
So back you went to Sham Shui Po  
It was 1942 now  
And now you got to enjoy a new experience  
Slave labour  
Day in and day out, filling quotas  
Miserable  
So I decided to make it worse  
Throw in some diphtheria, why don't I?  
And of course, you can't get diphtheria  
You don't know what you do to me Frank  
So aggravating  
Just to get back, I infect you with Beri Beri  
And you get over that too  
Do you know what frustration you cause?  
Of course not  
I continued to watch

## COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS: THE FRANK CHRISTENSEN STORY

But not with such determination as I had before  
I still observed of course  
And made sure you had your share of hardships  
Pallegra, that one was fun  
Slave labour and the Tatuta Maru  
Nagasaki, Yokohama, and Kawasaki  
Shipyards, coal mines, I could go on much longer  
But I got bored  
Because I just could not get you  
So why not set my sights on something else?  
I moved on, I knew I would get you eventually  
And so, many years after you had been freed  
And spent life in the army  
Married and had kids  
I came back  
Weak and frail, you were  
Aged  
It was pathetic, embarrassing even  
How I had to complete this job  
But now after all these years  
We could depart as friends  
And so, on September 8, 1996  
We did

## Bibliography

"Frank Christensen's Story / Récit de Frank E. Christensen." *Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association*. N.p., n.d. Web. 3 May 2012.  
<<http://www.hkvca.ca/historical/accounts>

Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931 – 1945: Social Responsibility and Global Citizenship. 2001 British Columbia Ministry of Education, Curriculum Branch, co-published by B.C. Association for Learning and Preserving the History of WW II in Asia.

McIntosh, David. Hell On Earth: Aging Faster, Dying Sooner (Canadian Prisoners of the Japanese During World War II). McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., Toronto, 1997.

The Valour and The Horror: Savage Christmas, Hong Kong 1941. National Film board of Canada, produced by Galafilm Inc. 1992.

The Valour and the Horror: The Untold Story of Canadians In The Second World War. Merrily Weisbord and Merilyn Simonds Mohr. Harper Collins Publishers Ltd. 1991.