

RRMC ARCH 4.9907

Young Nicole took the military's motto to heart

TRIBUTE

PEOPLE WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE



**BRIAN
BRENNAN**

Herald columnist

If there's such a thing as an unselfish service medal for members of the military who die serving their country in peacetime, it should go to Nicole Schiele, a 22-year-old Calgary-born naval officer killed a couple of weeks ago in a diving accident off the coast of British Columbia.

She talked about the importance of serving her country during an interview with a newspaper reporter when she was a cadet at Royal Roads Military College in Victoria. "Things like the motto 'Truth, Duty, Valor' don't change," said Nicole. "If you can't live by that, what can you believe in?"

A tangible demonstration of her belief in noble goals was revealed in the winter of 1992, when Nicole came up with the idea of sending a giant canvas greeting card to make Christmas brighter for Canadian peacekeepers serving in Croatia. Nicole spent several days at a Victoria shop-

ping centre, nattily turned out in her scarlet tunic, encouraging members of the public to sign the 25 feet by 6 feet card.

"Some day, I hope someone would do the same for me when I'm far from home," she told a reporter. "It shows what the spirit of Christmas is all about. Getting people to think about things other than themselves, and what they are going to get for Christmas."

It cost Nicole \$400 out of her own pocket to organize the Christmas card project. But that hardly deterred her. "The card is meant to cheer up the guys," she said. "The situation there sounds so grim and dismal." When the mayor of North Saanich found out about her effort, he sent her a personal cheque for \$100. "I am sure that few students can easily find this kind of money," said Mayor Maurice Chazottes. "Congratulations on your initiative."

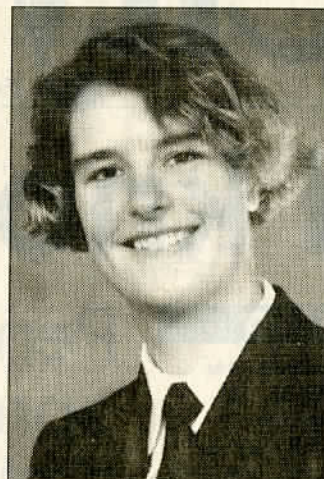
Serving her country in the military was the only career Nicole wanted to pursue after she graduated with honors from St. Mary's high school in Calgary in 1989. She might have taken advantage of scholarships, gone to university, and perhaps followed a career in medicine like her mother Martha, a

Calgary nurse. Or she might have pursued a career in professional skating, because she had attained national gold in the figures part of the sport while training with the Calalta and Bonavista clubs in Calgary.

But Nicole wanted to be in the armed forces. The discipline of year-round skating from age four to 18 had prepared the tall six-footer for the drilling of military service.

She had no problem making the entrance level requirements for military college. French immersion courses had brought her to fluency in Canada's second official language, and her other scholastic and athletic achievements made her an obvious choice for the recruiting officers. Nicole was the only female from Calgary to go to the prestigious Royal Roads Military College that year.

At the college, Nicole studied honors history and literature, served as col-



Photocourtesy Gunther Schiele

UNSELFISH: Nicole Schiele had noble goals

lege communications officer, played on the ice hockey team, and earned her ticket as a scuba diver.

"How does she manage such an assiduous schedule?" asked a literate fellow student in an article written for the college newspaper. "In part, her youthful enthusiasm keeps her going. Beyond this, however, it is her resolve and the strength of her cause which leads to her unrelenting motivation."

Nicole graduated from the college with the commissioned rank of sub-lieutenant in May of last year, one of only 10 graduating officers and the only female to receive a distinction medal. She was assigned for service to the naval base in Esquimalt, and just two months ago became a navigator aboard the destroyer HMCS Saskatchewan.

She was serving on the HMCS Saskatchewan when the accident occurred. Nicole and a fellow ship's diver, Sandy Schreurs of Powell River,

were involved in a training exercise in the waters of the Shoal Channel, off Gibson's Landing, when the current swept them away. Their bodies were found two days later.

Nicole had been the only female at Royal Roads to earn the coveted double-dolphin insignia, denoting her qualification as a naval scuba diver. "I wish now that she hadn't," says her father Gunther Schiele, a German-born fleet manager with a Calgary Chrysler dealership.

A military funeral was held in Victoria a week ago Saturday. A second memorial service is planned for this coming Monday at 7 p.m. in the St. Maximilian Kolbe Chapel, CFB Calgary. Nicole Patricia Schiele is survived by her father Gunther, mother Martha, and other relatives in Germany.

Suggestions for Tribute are always welcome. My telephone number is 8671.



The TALKies 243-7253

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