

Greetings from Ontario, Canada

We are well into our shooting year that started September 1, 2014, but for us in Ontario there is next to no in-province registered trapshooting over the winter months. Hopefully some of our Ontario shooters can escape to shoot at tournaments south of the border.

As I write this article (in November) I am constantly reminded of the great sacrifice that our armed forces have and continue to make so that we can enjoy the freedoms we cherish. Terrorists have vowed to destroy our way of life. Recent attacks on our House of Commons and the murder of two of our military personnel in two separate attacks remind us that we must all be watchful. Homegrown violent extremism appears to be the new normal. What disappoints me most is that men and women of our armed forces on both sides of our border follow the will of their political masters. Many lose their lives or return physically or psychologically scarred for life only to find that their sacrifice is sometimes taken for granted. Many of our wounded warriors are denied the timely treatment and assistance they so desperately need.

How must it appear to our brave veterans when the same (or replacement) political masters that sent them into battle prevent them from doing what is necessary to ensure victory. Do the politicians have the capacity to even know how victory is determined? When a military objective is bought and paid for by the blood of our forces, why is it so often the case that that piece of turf is permitted to fall back into enemy hands? This has happened all too often throughout the ages with more recent examples being Vietnam, Iran and even Iraq. If a soldier were to disobey orders, a court martial would result. What sanction exists for politicians who send our troops into harm's way and then prevent them from finishing the job they were sent to do?

I read a poem recently of a Second World War Veteran who paid an ode of gratitude to forgotten comrades-in-arms. A. Lawrence Vaincourt enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force when he was 17. His poem "Just a Common Soldier" (A Soldier Died Today) spares no punches and although I had not read it, nor even heard tell of it until recently, it has had wide circulation in Australia, the UK, and has had a lot of exposure in the USA especially on Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Vaincourt's son, Randy Vaincourt (note: not Vaincourt) controls the re-publishing rights to his father's poem. I asked and received permission from Randy to publish his father's poem. He asked only two things of me:

1. That I publish the correct version (which I have) because there are several incorrect versions floating around the web; and
2. He asked that I provide his website which is [www.vaincourt.homestead.com](http://www.vaincourt.homestead.com).

Enjoy the poem:

**JUST A COMMON SOLDIER**  
**(A Soldier Died Today)**  
**by A. Lawrence Vaincourt**

He was getting old and paunchy and his hair was falling fast,  
And he sat around the Legion, telling stories of the past.

Of a war that he had fought in and the deeds that he had done,  
In his exploits with his buddies; they were heroes, every one.

And tho' sometimes, to his neighbors, his tales became a joke,  
All his Legion buddies listened, for they knew whereof he spoke.  
But we'll hear his tales no longer for old Bill has passed away,  
And the world's a little poorer, for a soldier died today.

He will not be mourned by many, just his children and his wife,  
For he lived an ordinary and quite uneventful life.  
Held a job and raised a family, quietly going his own way,  
And the world won't note his passing, though a soldier died today.

When politicians leave this earth, their bodies lie in state,  
While thousands note their passing and proclaim that they were great.  
Papers tell their whole life stories, from the time that they were young,  
But the passing of a soldier goes unnoticed and unsung.

Is the greatest contribution to the welfare of our land  
A guy who breaks his promises and cons his fellow man?  
Or the ordinary fellow who, in times of war and strife,  
Goes off to serve his Country and offers up his life?

A politician's stipend and the style in which he lives  
Are sometimes disproportionate to the service that he gives.  
While the ordinary soldier, who offered up his all,  
Is paid off with a medal and perhaps, a pension small.

It's so easy to forget them for it was so long ago,  
That the old Bills of our Country went to battle, but we know  
It was not the politicians, with their compromise and ploys,  
Who won for us the freedom that our Country now enjoys.

Should you find yourself in danger, with your enemies at hand,  
Would you want a politician with his ever-shifting stand?  
Or would you prefer a soldier, who has sworn to defend  
His home, his kin and Country and would fight until the end?

He was just a common soldier and his ranks are growing thin,  
But his presence should remind us we may need his like again.  
For when countries are in conflict, then we find the soldier's part  
Is to clean up all the troubles that the politicians start.

If we cannot do him honor while he's here to hear the praise,  
Then at least let's give him homage at the ending of his days.  
Perhaps just a simple headline in a paper that would say,  
Our Country is in mourning, for a soldier died today.

My question to you is – should you find yourself in danger, with your enemies at hand, would you want a politician with his ever-shifting stand? Or would you prefer a soldier, who has sworn to defend his home, his kin and country, and would fight until the end?

For me – I'll take the soldier.

Paul Shaw

Ontario Delegate