



BACK TO THE FRONT

The eNewsletter for VeteransofCanada.ca members

June & July 2011

Have you seen our Veterans Directory?

The businesses listed here have created special offers just for VeteransofCanada.ca members only.

Locate products and services available from companies who want to do business with you.

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The screenshot shows the homepage of the Veterans of Canada directory. At the top, there is a red navigation bar with the VOC logo and the text "VETERANSOFCANADA.CA 'A Community for Canadian Heroes'". Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for Home, Directory, Veteran Member, Corporate Member, News, Community, and Contact Us. The main content area features a "Welcome to our Thank-A-Veteran Directory" message and a large graphic that says "For your bravery, hard work and dedication to Canada thank you." with the VOC logo. A sidebar on the left contains a "DIRECTORY MENU" with various filters like "All Categories", "Recently Added", and "Most Favourite". There is also a search bar and a "REFERRALS" section.

Canadian Soldier Killed in Afghanistan



June 25, 2011 - Master Corporal Francis Roy from the Canadian Special Operations Regiment based at CFB Petawawa, Ontario died of non-combat injuries in Afghanistan June 25, 2011.

VeteransofCanada.ca wishes to send condolences to the family and friends of Master Corporal Francis Roy.

Master Corporal Francis Roy - Stand Down Trucker - Rest in Peace

“We Will Remember Them”

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God

How to Make Positive Change for Serving and Retired CF, RCMP and Their Families? (Hint: Only Veterans Affairs and Treasury Board Win When Veterans are Divided).

**By Sean Bruyea
July 14, 2011**

Exclusive to VeteranVoice.info and VeteransofCanada.ca

Far too many veterans shoot the messenger instead of aiming their sights on government. This is worsened by the impulsiveness which the internet encourages in instantaneous messaging. Veterans have much to contribute to determining their own destiny. The question is how to focus that energy to maximize chances of successful positive change.

There are many veterans active on the internet which is a good thing. Information portals like VeteranVoice.info, VeteransofCanada.ca, [CanadianVeterans Advocacy](http://CanadianVeteransAdvocacy.com) and [HomecomingVets](http://HomecomingVets.com) as well as a number of other fine initiatives have provided a valuable service. Up until their appearance, the only message being delivered was from government and Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC). The message has been something akin to "all's well" and "veterans are overwhelmingly satisfied with VAC services."

The dedicated volunteers running these portals have often provided a more transparent and truthful interpretation of this official broken record.

Beyond these portals, a select number of veterans have established an email client base. To this base, they send news stories and information on veterans' assistance, all while sharing ideas within the community. Sylvain Chartrand, Billy Willbond, John Labelle, David Palmer, Kenneth Young, Jacques De Winter and many other dedicated veterans give generously of their time and energy to informing veterans.

Rob Gallant also caters to an extensive mailing list in a service Dennis Manuge (lead plaintiff on the SISIP Class Action Lawsuit) passed on to Rob. It was Rob who provided me with the incentive to write this article.

In the flurry of internet traffic, misunderstandings often occur and veterans' anger and suffering are frequently misdirected...at the messenger. That is why the work of Rob, Dennis and others, including portal managers, advocates and experts is really the work of true loving charity. The reward is minimal but the cost of receiving misdirected anger is discouraging.

Why so much frustration and anger in the veteran community? Far too many veterans are suffering and may not always understand why. For many of these veterans, the unaddressed hurt can stem from a sense of having been abandoned by their government for which they were willing to sacrifice their lives.

For a military member to be summarily kicked out of the Forces by a unilateral government decision due to injuries sustained defending that same government is a difficult, soul-destroying pill to swallow.

Unfortunately, for many veterans, it is easier to attack each other than it is to admit the following reality:

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The overwhelming majority of politicians and senior bureaucrats have never and will never make the same sacrifice caring for veterans as veterans and their families have sacrificed giving up everything to care for government and Canadians.

That is why it is so ironic and frankly sad that so many veterans focus on criticizing each other...as if a fellow veteran has the power to change government policy. Far too many veterans play this "blame game" upon their fellow brothers and sisters. Veterans and injured soldiers likely feel powerless to force change in how they have been so shamefully neglected for far too long.

Veterans themselves may not be able to change policy. However, veteran groups certainly can. Certain high profile groups must stop rubber stamping change such as they did unilaterally, blindly and hastily in endorsing the so-called New Veterans Charter back in 2005 and 2006.

Had the leadership of these six veteran groups not blindly offered their support, the New Veterans Charter would have been, at the very least, forced to a House and more appropriate Senate Committee and then back to debate on the floor. As a consequence, many of the more than 400 unaddressed recommendations made by official advisory bodies since 2006 could have been raised and addressed before the New Veterans Charter was passed.

Sadly, we all know this did not occur.

Astoundingly, leaders of most of these same veteran groups then repeated the same misguided and blind endorsement of Bill C-55, the "newer" New Veterans Charter (with fresher spring scent). Bill C-55 was passed without substantive debate which otherwise could have effected change in either Parliamentary Chamber.

Politicians could get away with this because the leaders of all or most of these six groups supported rapid passage of the C-55 without close scrutiny.

For these prominent veteran groups, it appears far too many of their leaders prefer a select seat at closed door proceedings held with VAC. This clandestine relationship and unquestioning support of VAC consequently excludes those with needs who most need to be heard, including their own membership in many cases.

These groups need to undergo some soul-searching. They represent far less than 10% of the more than 700,000 serving and retired CF members and their families. If this closed door system works so well, those half dozen leaders of the same number of veteran groups must ask themselves exactly what positive change has occurred in the past six years because of closed-door lobbying?

Is this miniscule positive change, if any, worth the isolation and indignation of keeping the vast majority of veterans and their families in darkness, in silence, and most importantly, feeling powerless over their future?

One might also ask if this miniscule change was worth abandoning the lifelong security once provided by the Pension Act benefits and allowances.

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Ultimately, what right do these leaders have to decide your destiny?

If the goal of the leaders of these six veteran groups is to meaningfully help veterans and their families, why is maximum public pressure not being brought to bear by these groups on the system?

Leaders of some of these groups will one day have to account for this apparently conspiratorial alliance with VAC and their accompanying inaction.

Meanwhile, whether such pressure is brought to bear by veteran groups or veterans themselves, where should it be focused?

Of course those with the actual power to make decisions which will change the situation are not other veterans, but the senior mandarins who work in Veterans Affairs, Treasury Board and Finance. What is also clear is that these mandarins will not take the initiative to change the shameful status quo which prevents veterans and their families from direct participation in deciding their own destiny.

When veterans attack other veterans we all lose. Veterans should instead focus their energies upon government and upon leaders of organizations who have power to effect change. Otherwise, the only ones to benefit are senior mandarins and those few veteran leaders rewarded with appointments for supporting or remaining silent on poorly thought-out initiatives such as the New Veterans Charter.

Certain Veterans Affairs senior managers have also played an adept game at encouraging division in the veteran community. One can only speculate the benefit to senior mandarins. These senior bureaucrats are not only provided with disproportionately high salaries but they also receive "at-risk" and performance bonus lump-sums annually. For instance, a senior DM at VAC could be earning the maximum salary of \$309,600 plus an annual bonus of up to 39% or \$120,744.

Even though such senior mandarins claim to serve our interests, such bonuses are awarded for reasons which are not disclosed. Nevertheless, it is safe to speculate that the criteria for a \$120,000 bonus is based upon minimizing payments to veterans and limiting increased expenditure for veterans and their families.

It is hardly comforting to realize that a DM in one year can earn a total of \$430,000. This is 50% more than the amount 134 veterans have received for a 100% disability award of \$285,000...an award to compensate for substantial lifelong pain and suffering.

The only way to force mandarins to serve the public they claim to serve is to in turn force Ministers and Cabinet as a whole to skip a few photo ops. Ministers could thereby actually manage their Departments in a manner which truly provides dignity to veterans and their families.

And the only way to motivate these politicians to act on our behalf is to have the public and media carry stories of outrage, protest and suffering from veterans and their families. For the media to carry these stories, veterans must overcome their fear of criticizing the system for which we were willing to die.

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We as serving and retired military have to also learn to manage our anger. This is because far too many managers in VAC are well-disposed to ignoring, belittling, dis-empowering and demeaning veterans. When veterans subsequently become either angry or suicidal as a consequence, VAC then quickly shoots back that such veterans are not credible because they are obviously mentally unstable. Of course, VAC seems to forget their significant role in provoking and causing such instability.

Memorials, ceremonies and vigils have their place but they do not carry a message of much-needed change. They instead carry a message of continuing status quo; as long as participants remember, we need not change anything.

Hoping and praying that the government system which we honoured will somehow spontaneously honour veterans and their families while we suffer in silence is a highly misplaced and futile hope. More and more veterans are awakening to this reality. We are thereby showing that we have indeed 'grown up' beyond the 'yes sir' indoctrination of the military.

Once a critical mass of veterans and organizations accept these realities, then the "fire for effect" of so many can finally concentrate on the target of those who can indeed make the change, i.e., the political party in power and, by extension, the senior mandarins. Influencing the party in power can only occur through the media, including internet, courts (in the longer term) and any other vehicle to get the message out there to change law and policy.

Public demonstrations, individual acts of protest and poignant personal stories in the mainstream media are the most powerful tools. These vehicles send the message that veterans and their families will no longer tolerate being ignored by politicians. Nor will they continue to be dictated to by civilian senior bureaucrats who are glaringly disconnected from the realities of what veterans and their families need.

Otherwise, the politicians have absolutely no reason to risk taking on what are in fact far more powerful senior bureaucrats. If these senior bureaucrats are not confronted by politicians, veterans will continue to be a very low priority indeed...except when the PM or Minister need a photo op and a rubber stamp on misguided VAC Workfare programs like the New Veterans Charter.

Sean Bruyey is a freelance columnist, advocate for the rights of disabled veterans and a retired Intelligence Officer who served in the Persian Gulf War. He is also a graduate student in the Masters of Public Ethics program at St. Paul University. Last fall, Sean settled his lawsuit with the federal government after the Privacy Commissioner ruled VAC had violated the Privacy Act in multiple breaches

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We extend our thanks to all soldiers and Veterans for their service to our country.



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What do we have to do to finally have veterans issues fixed - here is my suggestion Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

By Donald Leonardo
July 14, 2011

Over the years many upstanding veterans have brought issues forward in order to right a wrong of the miss-treatment of injured and ageing veterans. Veterans all across Canada write letters, make reports to committees, create on-line petitions, write articles in newspapers, get Members of Parliament to introduce private members bills over and over again, open class action lawsuits against the Government and even go to the extreme of a protest march and hunger strikes. None of these tactics have produced any favourable results which have changed the system.

On June 14, 2011 I was invited to Ottawa by Veterans Affairs Canada to attend the first working session to discuss the establishment of a Departmental Stakeholder Committee with leaders from Veterans' organizations representing both traditional war Veterans and modern-day Veterans. At this meeting I emphasized that I was only 80% in support of the Government's Bill C-55 (17 November 2010), *An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act and the Pension Act*, (a.k.a. The New Veterans Charter).

I also asked the new Minister, Veterans Affairs Steven Blaney and the Deputy Minister, Veterans Affairs Canada Suzanne Tining the following questions:

- Will Bill C-55 (2010) be backdated to 2006 when the New Veterans Charter was enacted?
- Will Bill C-55 (2010) be backdated to 17 November 2010 when Jean-Pierre Blackburn, previous Minister of Veterans Affairs, introduced Bill C-55? Or,
- Will the Bill be backdated to 24 March 2011 when it received Royal Assent?

The answer which they gave to these questions was **NO**. Sadly, Bill C-55 will start in the fall of 2011 (at the earliest), one year after it was introduced.

How is this delay of 365 days helping the most vulnerable injured veterans?

During the few times I was allowed to speak at the meeting, I used a hospital emergency room as an analogy for the urgent and profound needs of unemployed, disabled and/or psychologically injured veterans and their families. By taking a full year from the time Bill C-55 was introduced to the time that the Bill takes effect in the fall of 2011 the condition of the patient on the table will have severely worsened, and in some cases we have seen over the past few months, the patient has died.

What this shows me is that the Government of Canada is not sincerely interested in actually helping those injured veterans who are psychologically injured and/or at the low end of the pay scales.

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There was many things that disturbed me by this meeting of the Stakeholder Committee for VAC:

- 1) We were told the participants and content of the meeting were confidential. We were also asked to be involved in a group picture with the Minister of Veterans Affairs Steven Blaney. However I did not sign a release to give permission to publish the picture, let alone use it as some public relations gimmick for the Minister and Veterans Affairs Canada. It seems that the more things change the more things stay the same - so much for VAC respecting privacy let alone affording us dignity.
- 2) In attendance were six veteran's groups who have up to now been part of an exclusive schoolyard clique invited to VAC's secret meetings. Some of their leaders were not pleased to consider establishing new alliances or sharing new perspectives with the other groups like Veterans-UN Nato-Canada, Canadian Veterans Advocacy and of course VeteransofCanada.ca.
- 3) I have to also point out that VeteransofCanada.ca can provide proof of having more individual CF members in its ranks than perhaps all of the six veterans' groups combined. VeteransofCanada also has the only instant messaging system for its members which can take immediate feedback and polling on any issue. We have much to offer in representing the views of Canadian Forces veterans. Why would other groups not be supportive of an alliance with VOC?
- 4) This new Stakeholder Committee for Veterans Affairs Canada will meet at most 2 or maybe 3 times annually. How can it accomplish anything of substance? With secret agendas, clandestine minutes, no official reports planned and no public transparency, it appears this lame duck committee will instead be just another PR tool for VAC to claim it is doing something when nothing of substance changes.

Nevertheless, I commit to continued attendance in hope of making substantial and positive change while being a voice for all Veterans of Canada, serving members and their families.

I also would like to emphasize that the Veterans Organizations present in the meeting, in spite of some discomfort with our presence, truly do care for the members they represent. They have participated in a number of advisory groups over the last decade, submitting positive and substantial recommendations for change. However, none of their many recommendations were ever accepted by Veterans Affairs Canada.

In the last month there have been many emails being sent from veteran to veteran. The subject was who should be on the "Stakeholder Committee for Veterans Affairs Canada." Many veterans who were not at the meeting questioned why they were not invited. From what I understand and observed at the meeting, some of the groups that were invited were organizations seen by VAC as having the ability to reach veterans so as to assist the Veterans Affairs Canada propaganda machine.

Other groups were invited not for their membership, which is less than a few hundred or even a few dozen in some cases, but because that same propaganda machine can use the names of these groups to convince the public VAC is doing something when it actually is doing very little.

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Some of these veterans groups are quite willing to send out information provided by Veterans Affairs Canada without questioning whether VAC may be sending out empty PR material. I for one will not allow VeteransofCanada.ca to be used in this manner. Only if the information is to the advantage of the serving member, the injured and ageing veteran and their families will I send the material out. I will not buy into this type of social networking and advertising for the benefit of Veterans Affairs Canada.

I understand the anger and frustration of many veterans that they or their issues were not represented at the committee. I also emphasize that unless Veterans Affairs Canada is willing to make serious changes with input from the members of the Stakeholder Committee, raising any issue will be a waste of time.

Other emails that have been making the circuit concern having one group and one voice for all veterans. How could such a unified voice work? Far too many veterans wish to have a voice for their own concern or their particular medical condition. Unifying a multitude of such interests would be impossible.

Furthermore, any advocacy group needs financing to carry out substantial work. Where would this money come from? CF veterans have been reluctant to join any group, even if it requires a mere \$20 annually to fund administrative and lobbying activities. In fact, less than 10% of CF veterans belong to any advocacy group.

When I started VeteransofCanada.ca five years ago we charged a one time \$10 fee so we could send out a plastic membership card. Our advertising budget for that year was over \$15,000. We placed ads in military magazines and newspapers as well as brochures. After a year of effort and expenditure, we only had 300 members. A third of those members after the first year changed their address, phone number or email address without notice, thereby leaving us with only 200 members that we could contact.

As a result, we decided to create a Veterans Community with free membership. In the community your email address must be active or the website will suspend your membership. So all our membership numbers are true and accurate. However, even our community does not reflect a unified viewpoint on how to fix VAC.

Since we will never have one advocacy group on behalf of all veterans, I suggest that we bring Canadians, veterans and veterans' groups together to advocate on an issue by issue basis.

There are many issues to deal with but there is only one particular tool that can deal with many issues all at once:

An independent public inquiry into Veterans Affairs Canada and the government's treatment of injured soldiers, veterans, RCMP and their families.

For the public inquiry to be independent and powerful, it would best be formed as a Judicial Royal Commission into Veterans Affairs. Such a commission would tackle many systemic issues at once while allowing a public viewing of the truth, not just the PR marketing message coming from VAC.

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Because of the public education that a Royal Commission naturally brings, the findings of the commission would naturally receive widespread support. Canadians, veterans and especially politicians would not be able to ignore the urgency and justification of the recommendations. VAC has been far too sneaky and adept at ignoring hundreds of recommendations from not just its own advisory groups but it VAC has blatantly ignored dozens of Parliamentary Committee recommendations.

It is time to fix Veterans Affairs Canada once and for all. It is time to have, injured soldiers, veterans, RCMP and their families live in dignity. **Don't you agree!**

Let our first common issue be a widespread call for a Judicial Royal Commission into Veterans Affairs.

If you agree, please ask your Veterans Organization President to contact me so that we may all partner in this fight so that all organizations, their members and veterans and families at large can move forward together for dignity and truth.

Donald J. Leonardo
Veteran / Founder / CEO
VeteransofCanada.ca
Toll-free 1-888-210-4376



R/Adm Fox

Here is the top photo for June 2011 submitted by Raymond Matwick. An image becomes the Top Photo because it receives the most comments and or members LIKE of the image. Please add a description to your photo's when you upload them



Calgary, AB



Lower Mainland, BC



Gander, NL

June/July 2011

Dear VETERANSOFCANADA.ca member,



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While I personally will be dealing with Ontario members directly due to licencing issues I would be happy to insure that those members outside of Ontario receive service in a prompt and timely matter and will follow up with Waterloo Insurance Company for those who do not.

Here is what one member had to say; "These are unbelievable insurance rates. See the numbers for yourself. Waterloo insurance is well worth looking into for at least a quote." *Andre Astle VeteransofCanada.ca member*

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Sincerely,

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Group Representative
tpettrey@carletoninsurance.ca
www.carletoninsurancebroker.ca

PS: Hope to hear from you soon.



Making a Difference for Canadian Heroes

By Donald Leonardo

September 11, 2008

Picture a downtown Calgary park on a cold, winter's night. It is supper time. A cube van loaded with food and clothing has arrived. The chef rolls up the back door. He and his team systematically unload and assemble the prepared food. Clothing awaiting distribution hangs on racks inside the van. Clean socks, underwear, toothbrushes and toothpaste are available for those in need. The long line of homeless and hungry wait patiently. A resounding cheer breaks the silence as the team of dedicated volunteers begins to serve the food. The long line never seems to dwindle. Portion by portion and plate by plate, eager hands display their gratitude. Occasionally, a face in despair manages a smile.

My mind drifts to another image that is permanently etched in my mind as I stare out at the faces in the food line. I recall a visit I made to a mission for street people in Los Angeles. Walking through a homeless area there, I was overwhelmed at the number of veterans that lined this 10-block area known as the "Toy District." I remembered how distraught I felt being confronted by the large numbers that had served in conflicts like Vietnam. To me these were not faceless people; they were heroes who were deserving of dignity, destiny and the ability to realize their dreams.

At one point during my LA visit, I walked over to a homeless gentleman. The man stood up and shook my hand. He told me he was a veteran and how he could spot another. The leader of the group was amazed. In seven years of serving this neighbourhood, no one had been able to connect with this man. It broke my heart to see a hero in this situation. Little did I know that coming face-to-face with veterans who were living on the street would be a life-changing event for me. The overwhelming sadness and helplessness of that day would stay with me forever.

These feelings kept returning, with a summons I could not deny. I decided to take action. I decided that I was going to make a difference. I did not want to see the dilemma I witnessed that day in LA repeated in Canada.

As a Peacekeeper, I served in the former Yugoslavia in the early 90's and I frequently came face-to-face with death, destruction and despair. I was stunned by the devastation and how this once-beautiful land was now scarred. One might think of peacekeeping as preserving peace and warding off war. It is much more than that. For me, being a Peacekeeper was more than serving my country; it was a calling. I discovered that the peacekeeping qualities that I came upon in that mission are a part of me.

In the months ahead, I began to share my concern and develop a vision to make a difference in the lives of Canadian Heroes. I thought of veterans on fixed incomes and what I could do to stretch their pay a little further. One evening, two years ago, the moment of inspiration arrived. I met a friend for coffee and between the two of us we devised the start of a workable plan that would provide more door-opening opportunities for them. My dream was starting to take shape.

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The plan? A website as a support system for Canadian Heroes. Not only would veterans have access to special offers from the Canadian business community, but these business sponsorships would contribute to the implementation of a special charitable fund for heroes in need. Not only would veterans be able to shop here, but they would also be able to make use of the website to find friends, engage in dialogue with other veterans and look for jobs with veteran-friendly employers. VETERANSOFCANADA.CA was born.

Peacekeepers face situations where they find themselves in the midst of conflict and strife. Yet they persist in their desire to make a difference in the world and in the lives of others. Help us to make a difference in the lives of Canadian Heroes who serve to make a difference for others. Canadians of all ages and from all walks of life can join in my journey of being a peacekeeper at home. Register on our web site to become a member. Encourage a business you know to become a sponsor – offering jobs, discounted products and services to past and present members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Forces, Police Officers, Correctional Services, Firefighters, Coast Guard, Paramedics and Peace Officers, as well as opportunities for those starting a second career – through VETERANSOFCANADA.CA

The future is bright for Canadian Heroes. The future is bright for those who serve, thanks to you. In the months to come, our proposed charity, the Foundation for Canadian Heroes, will be launched. My dream to provide sustainable support beyond the uniform will become reality. Join with me, it is time.

Donald J. Leonardo CD was the Executive Chef of the Calgary Dream Centre from 2002 to 2005. He is now the Founder and CEO of VETERANSOFCANADA.CA and lives in Calgary, Alberta. As a veteran he understands first hand the pain and suffering of stress injuries. He understands how Canadian Heroes suffering with these illnesses could end up homeless themselves. He understands the treatment for these stress injuries must include body, soul and spirit. Don has a plan to end homelessness for Canadian Heroes in that situation. To support VETERANSOFCANADA.CA, call 1-403-980-4376 or email don@veteransofcanada.ca.

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Just email us a referral of a
business you have talked to**



For example; if you have a friend, neighbour, or relative who owns their own business you could earn a few extra \$\$\$.

Here is how it works, just tell them about our Veterans Community and ask if you could have someone call them.

If they say yes, send their contact information to don@veteransofcanada.ca. If they join we will send you a cheque for fifty dollars for every referral. Do you own your own business? Take \$50 off and list your business.

The website is free because of the support from the business community – Please help keep it free.

Those Young Men

Where are you, Major John McCrae,
Who built a vision one sad day
Of poppies, wild in Flanders Fields,
Of death and sadness, wartime yields,
And those young men who couldn't stay.

You spoke of torches passed along
When young lives taken formed a throng
Of crosses in a thousand rows
All those young men

Held in remembrance through the years.
You call for faith in times of tears.
And ask we all remember when
They were young men.

Your voice illuminated how
The battlefield can make us bow
Beneath its weight, yet we go on
For those young men

And proudly raise their standards high
So their impressions cannot die
Like divine lines of poetry
For those young men.

We've entered in your sacred trust
Remember, not because we must
But because we are honour bound
For those young men

And women who have joined their ranks
On marching feet, in planes and tanks
And ships upon an endless sea
With those young men.

In Ypres inspiration fell
From losses. Was a private hell
Of wounded soldiers what you saw
Or your dead friend who left you raw?
The world still hears the truth you tell
Of those young men.



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