

Your Worship, platform guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

Thank you for joining us today. This past year, your Regiment has lost two soldiers. On July 4th, as many of you will know, Master Corporal Colin Bason was killed in action in Afghanistan. On September 13th, Lieutenant-Colonel Basil Morgan passed away. MCpl Bason has been profiled recently in the news, and his death and funeral were rather public, so perhaps you will be familiar with the events. If so, I hope you'll forgive me for repeating them here.

MCpl Bason's platoon had just completed an operation in the Panjwaii district and was returning to camp. He was the driver of the platoon's command vehicle, which was the third vehicle in the convoy. It's possible that the extra antennas that typically adorn command vehicles led the enemy to choose his target. In any event, the enemy that we are fighting flipped a switch and detonated a buried roadside bomb powerful enough to destroy a tank. Seven men died that day, an Afghan interpreter, and six of the finest, most effective and professional soldiers the world has ever seen. Six amazing Canadian soldiers, one of whom was Colin. Although he died in a far away country, he didn't die alone. In that convoy were four other Westies, two of whom, Cpls Stepan and Guilmain are with us here today.

Those Canadian soldiers were killed by an enemy that doesn't believe girls should be allowed to read, own property, or hold employment. They fought an enemy who thinks it's OK to cut off the heads of teachers whose crime is teaching girls how to read. They died fighting an enemy that was quite content to shelter and train terrorists that have attacked liberal democracies in Europe and North America, and that killed so many innocents on September 11, 2001, including 29 Canadians.

When I first met Basil Morgan, I thought he was a kind old gentleman, the man who ran the regimental museum. With his soft voice and folksy demeanour, he helped me as a young officer to learn about the regiment I had just joined. But I saw only one side of Basil. I later learned that he had fought with this regiment through the second world war. He commanded the regiment's anti-

tank platoon. It was his job to get the 6 pounder anti-tank cannons up and down the steep river banks that crisscross the Liri valley in Italy, so they could be used to protect the regiment from German tanks. Basil Morgan fought his way through Italy and Northwest Europe. He survived the second world war, when so many soldiers didn't.

He was fighting an enemy that believed that Jewish people and Gypsies were not human. He fought an enemy led by a mass-murdering madman, who methodically killed millions of innocent people.

Aside from the fact that MCpl Bason and LCol Morgan were both Westies, they had two other things in common. First, they were both warriors. War has become a bad word in our modern vocabulary, and maybe too, by association, has the word warrior. I don't think it should be so. So what is a warrior anyway? A warrior isn't just someone who makes war, any thug can do that. Warriorhood is wrapped up in words like duty, integrity, discipline and honour. But in simple terms, when everyone else runs away from danger, away from evil, a warrior runs toward it. After 9/11, when everyone was saying 'thank God I wasn't on one of those planes,' warriors were saying 'I wish I'd been on one of those planes, I might have been able to do something.' When the twin towers were burning and people were fleeing, police and firemen and paramedics of New York City were running into the burning buildings, and on that day showed the world that you don't have to be a soldier to be a warrior. MCpl Bason and LCol Morgan were warriors. They were members of a brotherhood which includes the veterans from that long ago war, which includes men like WO Justin MacKay, decorated for valour on the field of battle, which includes men like Captain John Croucher, wounded in action in Afghanistan in 2006, and which, includes all the soldiers I'm privileged to command. Yes, MCpl Bason and Col Morgan were warriors.

The other thing that MCpl Bason and LCol Morgan have in common is that when evil threatened our world, they answered the call. They volunteered to go fight that evil.

It is a sad fact that there is evil in our world. For a great many years, we in Canada have been able to shelter ourselves from this evil, shelter our children from it, cling to the belief that evil only exists in far away places. We've been able to ignore it and the threat it poses. Many also thought that we would be safe in the shadow of our neighbour to the south. But the world is shrinking. Globalization, convergence, and other trends that are happening all around us mean that it is so much easier for evil to sneak into our world, as we found to our chagrin on 9/11.

Fighting evil is what warriors do. They run toward the danger. They go, knowing full well the risk.

Why do they go? To answer that question I'd like to quote Barney Danson, another ww2 vet from BC:

“Our liberties – freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of the ballot box – all these things we take for granted were maintained at a very, very tragic cost. That is all part of our history. Some things are too precious, and without them life wouldn't be worth living: so you risk your life for them. If you do not have values that are that deep for you, I don't think life is worth living! In the 1930s, we had a miniscule military, and yet this country of eleven million people put one million people in uniform, the third-largest army among the Western Allies. I think back to the immediate post-war years and remember feeling that this couldn't have been for nothing. The kids today know nothing about this history, and it's going to be lost unless it's nurtured. I just hope we remember when it comes to times of remembrance, that it's not just us guys with our medals, but the ones that did not live to wear them. That's what most veterans are concerned about. For us, the greatest satisfaction is a personal thing: when everything, our way of life, was at risk and the chips were down, we were there. No one can take that away from us.”

And so where does that leave us on Remembrance Day?

I wonder, what would MCpl Bason and Col Morgan, and all the other fallen warriors who are now standing guard in heaven ask of us? I don't think they would ask for much. I believe they would ask us to do three things.

First, I believe they would ask that the gifts that were given to us by all these fallen warriors, the freedom of speech, freedom of the ballot box, and so on, I believe they would want us to use and enjoy them. So take an unpopular stand when you believe it is the right thing to do. Exercise your privilege to vote in every single election. Good men died so that you can do these things. We must all never allow our society to lose the things those warriors bequeathed to us and that they are bequeathing to the people of Afghanistan. We must help children in Afghanistan have the chance to grow up without fear, so that girls can learn to read just as MCpl Bason's infant daughter Vienna will learn to read here in Canada.

Second, if you are a warrior yourself, I believe they would ask you to dedicate yourself to staying fit and skilled, to train and prepare, so that you too will protect the gifts that those fallen warriors have given us. So that when it's your turn to run toward the danger, you also will be victorious over evil.

And third, once per year, on this day of days, I believe they ask all of us to take a few moments to remember them, as we listen to the bugler play the last post. But remember them not as old men, or as flag-draped caskets, but as the warriors they were, strong and proud.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to close with the words of Thucydides:

“Remember that this greatness was won by men with courage, with knowledge of their duty, and with a sense of honour in action... They gave their bodies to the commonwealth and received, each for his own memory, praise that will never die, and with it the grandest of all sepulchres, not that in which their mortal bones are laid, but a home in the minds of men.”

Thank you.