



Linda Granfield's *In Flanders Fields*, Illustrations by Janet Wilson; GEN Douglas A. MacArthur's USMA Speech: "Duty, Honor, Country"; 12 May 1962

Linda Granfield's book, *In Flanders Fields*, is brilliantly illustrated by Janet Wilson. The paintings poignantly depict the sights and sounds, the moments and memories that inspired John McCrae's beloved poem:

In Flanders Fields

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky,
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields. (p. 117)*

It is now Memorial Day 2004. We are yet again embroiled in combat on foreign soil in an effort to restore tranquility of soul and consequently tranquility to the commonwealth which has had its confidence shaken and its freedom put in jeopardy by a phantom adversary. Many, for whom over 800 have already died, are contemplating forgetting the "quarrel with the foe" and allowing the torch's flame to flicker out, "breaking faith" with the Dead.

But the Dead have done their duty and their fellow warriors continue undaunted in carrying the colors onward and upward. They continue to fulfill General Douglas A. MacArthur's challenge to West Point's graduating class of May 12, 1962, when he delivered his famous "Duty, Honor, Country" speech. The text of this address is so brilliant, and, ironically, so timely, that it could just as well have been delivered this May 12th instead of some 42 years ago.

**General MacArthur's Thayer Award Speech:
Duty, Honor, Country**

The address by General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the cadets of the U.S. Military Academy in accepting the Sylvanus Thayer Award on 12 May 1962 is a memorable tribute to the ideals that inspired that great American soldier. For as long as other Americans serve their country as courageously and honorably as he did, General MacArthur's words will live on.

General MacArthur's service to his country spanned the years from 1903, when he was graduated from the Military Academy, to 5 April 1964, when he died in Washington, D.C., at the age of 84. He was recognized early in his career as a brilliant officer and was advanced to brigadier general in 1918. (In 1917-19, MacArthur was variously chief of staff, brigade commander, and divisional commander during World War I and in the Rhine occupation that followed.) Twelve years later he was named Chief of Staff of the Army, and in 1937 he retired. Recalled to active duty during World War II, he was commander of the Southwest Pacific Area



during the greater part of the war. His wartime triumphs were followed by service as supreme commander of the Allied occupation forces in Japan. When the Korean conflict erupted, he also commanded the United Nations forces in Korea. He completed his active military service in 1951.

Before being laid to rest in Norfolk, Va., General MacArthur's body lay in state in New York City and in the Capitol rotunda in Washington, while a grateful Nation paid its tribute in sorrow.

Duty, Honor, Country

General MacArthur:

No human being could fail to be deeply moved by such a tribute as this [Thayer Award]. Coming from a profession I have served so long and a people I have loved so well, it fills me with an emotion I cannot express. But this award is not intended primarily to honor a personality, but to symbolize a great moral code—a code of conduct and chivalry of those who guard this beloved land of culture and ancient descent. For all hours and for all time, it is an expression of the ethics of the American soldier. That I should be integrated in this way with so noble an ideal arouses a sense of pride, and yet of humility, which will be with me always.

Duty, honor, country: Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying point to build courage when courage seems to fail, to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith, to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.

Unhappily, I possess neither that eloquence of diction, that poetry of imagination, nor that brilliance of metaphor to tell you all that they mean.

The unbelievers will say they are but words, but a slogan, but a flamboyant phrase. Every pedant, every demagogue, every cynic, every hypocrite, every troublemaker, and, I am sorry to say, some others of an entirely different character, will try to downgrade them even to the extent of mockery and ridicule.

But these are some of the things they do. They build your basic character. They mold you for your future roles as the custodians of the Nation's defense. They make you strong enough to know when you are weak, and brave enough to face yourself when you are afraid.

What the Words Teach

They teach you to be proud and unbending in honest failure, but humble and gentle in success; not to substitute words for actions, not to seek the path of comfort, but to face the stress and spur of difficulty and challenge; to learn to stand up in the storm, but to have compassion on those who fall; to master yourself before you seek to master others; to have a heart that is clean, a goal that is high; to learn to laugh, yet never forget how to weep; to reach into the future, yet never neglect the past; to be serious, yet never to take yourself too seriously; to be modest so that you will remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.

They give you a temperate will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions, a freshness of the deep springs of life, a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, of an appetite for adventure over love of ease.

They create in your heart the sense of wonder, the unfailing hope of what next, and joy and inspiration of life. They teach you in this way to be an officer and a gentleman.

And what sort of soldiers are those you are to lead? Are they reliable? Are they brave? Are they capable of victory?

Their story is known to all of you. It is the story of the American man-at-arms. My estimate of him was formed on the battlefield many, many years ago, and has never changed. I regarded him then, as I regard him now, as one of the world's noblest figures; not only as one of the finest military characters, but also as one of the most stainless.



His name and fame are the birthright of every American citizen. In his youth and strength, his love and loyalty, he gave all that mortality can give. He needs no eulogy from me; or from any other man. He has written his own history and written it in red on his enemy's breast.

But when I think of his patience in adversity of his courage under fire and of his modesty in victory, I am filled with an emotion of admiration I cannot put into words. He belongs to history as furnishing one of the greatest examples of successful patriotism. He belongs to posterity as the instructor of future generations in the principles of liberty and freedom. He belongs to the present, to us, by his virtues and by his achievements.

Witness to the Fortitude

In 20 campaigns, on a hundred battlefields, around a thousand camp fires, I have witnessed that enduring fortitude, that patriotic self-abnegation, and that invincible determination which have carved his statue in the hearts of his people.

From one end of the world to the other, he has drained deep the chalice of courage. As I listened to those songs [of the glee club], in memory's eye I could see those staggering columns of the first World War, bending under soggy packs on many a weary march, from dripping dusk to drizzling dawn, slogging ankle deep through the mire of shell-pocked roads to form grimly for the attack, blue-lipped, covered with sludge and mud, chilled by the wind and rain, driving home to their objective, and for many to the judgment seat of God.

I do not know the dignity of their birth, but I do know the glory of their death. They died, unquestioning, uncomplaining, with faith in their hearts, and on their lips the hope that we would go on to victory.

Always for them: Duty, honor, country. Always their blood, and sweat, and tears, as we sought the way and the light and the truth. And 20 years after, on the other side of the globe, again the filth of murky foxholes, the stench of ghostly trenches, the slime of dripping dugouts, those boiling suns of relentless heat, those torrential rains of devastating storms, the loneliness and utter desolation of jungle trails, the bitterness of long separation from those they loved and cherished, the deadly pestilence of tropical disease, the horror of stricken areas of war.

Swift and Sure Attack

Their resolute and determined defense, their swift and sure attack, their indomitable purpose, their complete and decisive victory - always through the bloody haze of their last reverberating shot, the vision of gaunt, ghastly men, reverently following your password of duty, honor, country.

The code which those words perpetuate embraces the highest moral law and will stand the test of any ethics or philosophies ever promulgated for the things that are right and its restraints are from the things that are wrong. The soldier, above all other men, is required to practice the greatest act of religious training--sacrifice. In battle, and in the face of danger and death, he discloses those divine attributes which his Maker gave when He created man in His own image.

No physical courage and no greater strength can take the place of the divine help which alone can sustain him. However hard the incidents of war may be, the soldier who is called upon to offer and to give his life for his country is the noblest development of mankind.

You now face a new world, a world of change. And through all this welter of change and development your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable. It is to win our wars. Everything else in your professional career is but corollary to this vital dedication. All other public purposes, all other public projects, all other public needs, great or small, will find others for their accomplishment; but you are the ones who are trained to fight.

The Profession of Arms

Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory, that if you lose, the Nation will be destroyed, that the very obsession of your public service must be duty, honor, country.



Others will debate the controversial issues, national and international, which divide men's minds. But serene, calm, aloof, you stand as the Nation's war guardian, as its lifeguard from the raging tides of international conflict, as its gladiator in the arena of battle. For a century and a half you have defended, guarded, and protected its hallowed traditions of liberty and freedom, of right and justice.

Let civilian voices argue the merits or demerits of our processes of government: Whether our strength is being sapped by deficit financing indulged in too long, by Federal paternalism grown too mighty, by power groups grown too arrogant, by politics grown too corrupt, by crime grown too rampant, by morals grown too low, by taxes grown too high, by extremists grown too violent; whether our personal liberties are as thorough and complete as they should be.

These great national problems are not for your professional participation or military solution. Your guidepost stands out like a ten-fold beacon in the night: Duty, honor, country.

You are the heaven which binds together the entire fabric of our national system of defense. From your ranks come the great captains who hold the Nation's destiny in their hands the moment the war tocsin sounds.

The long, gray line has never failed us. Were you to do so, a million ghosts in olive drab, in brown khaki, in blue and gray, would rise from their white crosses, thundering those magic words: Duty, honor, country.

Prays for Peace

This does not mean that you are warmongers. On the contrary, the soldier above all other people prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war. But always in our ears ring the ominous words of Plato, that wisest of all philosophers: "Only the dead have seen the end of war."

The shadows are lengthening for me. The twilight is here. My days of old have vanished--tone and tint. They have gone glimmering through the dreams of things that were. Their memory is one of wondrous beauty, watered by tears and coaxed and caressed by the smiles of yesterday. I listen vainly, but with thirsty ear, for the witching melody of faint bugles blowing reveille, of far drums beating the long roll.

In my dreams I hear again the crash of guns, the rattle of musketry, the strange, mournful mutter of the battlefield. But in the evening of my memory always I come back to West Point. Always there echoes and re-echoes: Duty, honor, country.

Today marks my final roll call with you. But I want you to know that when I cross the river, my last conscious thoughts will be of the corps, and the corps, and the corps.

I bid you farewell.

The text of this speech is reproduced from Department of Defense Pamphlet GEN-1A, US Government Printing Office, 1964.



As soldiers for Christ it is an honor to do your duty for the country. As you observe the Memorial Day weekend, take time to remember those who have fallen in defense of freedom. And take the time to offer intercessory prayer for those who continue that daily vigil of prosecuting the War on Terror. We are sequestered in an environment of freedom which they insure. We often fail to keep fresh in our minds that tens of thousands of the best and most courageous members of the next generation are assigned the duty of being sentries on the wall guarding and defending our way of life. For them the reality of war is thick and danger lurks in the most innocent of places. I implore you that during this weekend and beyond to remember these present-day heroes in prayer. Pray for their safety. Pray that the schemes of the enemy will be frustrated. Pray for victory over those who seek to do them harm and in turn threaten our client nation. Pray for divine protection of our forces. And pray for a quick and merciful return home of all who are deployed for duty in the hot spots of this world. Half the country is either opposed to their mission or either doesn't consider it to be of interest. Most of the rest are not capable of prayer that gets beyond the ceiling. Therefore, this obligation falls to us. And so I appeal to you with this entreaty: Do your duty! Pray for our troops and do so daily.

Shall we pray.