

## **The Old Man**

The old man with white hair walks slowly now, but he casts a long shadow. Look closely at that shadow and you may see the boy of seventeen that he was, full of life, his gait straight and steady, his arms swinging in cadence to the beat of his boots. A boy who left home to go to war.

Yes, he walks slowly now, slightly bent and worn from the weight of the years and the memories that flood his thoughts. Memories of friends lost, lives unfulfilled and the horrors of war. Yet the old man does not complain, he doesn't brag, but if you ask him, he might tell you, as if recounting a story, in a matter-of-fact sort of way, what it was like to be a soldier in a time of war.

He'll tell you of his first trip on the ocean with thousands of other boys and how he spent most of his time by the rail. He'll tell you of leaving England a wide-eyed boy, not old enough to go to a pub, yet somehow old enough to go to war. He'll tell you of places with strange-sounding names, such as Dieppe, Juno Beach, Apeldoorn, Arnhem, Ortona and many more.

He'll simply say that his country called and all he did was answer that call... "For King and country". He did his duty, nothing more. He's not a hero, for all the heroes are still 'over there', but the medals on his chest tell a different story. A story of courage and valour, of a duty well done!

As the old man gets closer and the crowd applauds its thanks, look closely at his shadow and you may see the boy of seventeen that he was, full of life, his gait straight and steady, his arms swinging in cadence to the beat of his boots. A boy who left home to go to war and came home a man.

On November 11th, see the old men, but look closely at the shadows...

**André Ouellette**