

# Canada is in good hands

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During the past year, members of the media, students and citizens have asked me many questions. One of the most popular is whether the young people of today would make the same sacrifices as their fathers and grandfathers did over 50 years ago.

The answer is, no question. Discussions I have had with Canadians aged 12 to 60 over the past year have firmly convinced me of that. Canadians today love their families, their beliefs and their country just as the young people did when they volunteered to fight nazism and fascism years ago. They believe in justice and are strongly against evil.

Yes, Canadians of all ages would stand up and be counted, from all provinces and territories.

How can I be so sure?

First, if you had been with me at the Beny-Sur-Mer cemetery in Normandy last March with the camera crew from Norfolk Productions and the reporter and photographer from Maclean's, you would have seen the understanding and their concern for their country come shining through as I wept for the 63 Canadians from The Queen's Own Regiment who died within the first few minutes on the beach on D-Day. They came from many countries to fight as Canadians.

The same goes for all the news people who did interviews at home. On one television interview, the young woman left me to talk on my own while she wiped away the tears.

No one can convince me that Canadians are not proud to be Canadians, no matter where their forefathers came from.

On June 6 of this year, 125 young cadets and reserves from the Queen's Own Regiment paraded at dawn on the cold and wet beach at Berniers-Sur-Mer. One of the most moving moments took place after the ceremonies were completed and I was asked to speak to the soldiers.

I was choked, but it was important for me and the young soldiers that I not refuse. With tears in my eyes I called them to attention, stood them at ease and then I walked along the ranks, speaking and touching each one as I looked into their eyes.

It was unbelievable, remarkable. There stood "A" Company — young women and men with the same devotion, love of freedom and their country as their predecessors of over 50 years ago. The faces of my fallen friends Art Richardson, Sammy Hall, Jimmy Simpson, Jimmy Young and many others appeared before me.

And I can't close without mentioning that more than 50 students have visited with me at home this year, to talk about my war experiences, as well as many interested adults.

To a person, these young students explained how much they loved their way of life, their families, their belief in freedom and their love for Queen and country.

It is to these young people that I proudly say, "To you with failing hands we throw the torch, to hold it high."

They will, forever.



**CHARLIE  
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Guest  
column

*Charlie Martin was a Company Sergeant-Major with The Queen's own Rifles of Canada, and was among the first Canadians to storm Juno beach on June 6, 1944. He is the author of Battle Diary: From D-Day and Normandy to the Zuider Zee and VE. He will be among thousands of veterans traveling to Holland to celebrate the 50th anniversary of victory in Europe, May 8.*