

## **Veteran's Day Tribute to Educators: Poem Learned in School Helped WWI Soldier Find Peace**

---

### **Education Law Notes**

11.11.2014

My grandfather, William A. Brennan, kept a diary of his experiences as a soldier in the U.S. Army in France during World War I. He wrote about the poor food, dysentery, marching all day and night without a meal, being cold and soaked for days by rain. These difficulties became more intense as he entered combat; he saw American dead for the first time (gassed to death), heard news that his old company of three platoons had been reduced to six men in a single battle, and saw friends injured and killed in combat. Then, in the midst of days of severe shelling, where "the shrapnel fell like rain," he wrote this on October 20, 1918:

*20th, Sunday. On O.P. all day and all night. Raining all day. O.P. in station room of Grandpre R. R. Station. This Town of Grandpre, I am sure, must have been as beautiful before the war as Longfellow's Grandpre in Nova Scotia. Its lovely forests, rivers, valleys and churches, though all badly mutilated, still remind me of "Evangeline." River Aire runs all through the town and it is first town I have seen with such a beautiful river valley. How I wish I were back to those good old school days. I am afraid that the great adventure of this war game is beginning to lose its lustre for me. I never before wished for the end of this war as I do this day. Too much hardship. Too much of the horrors and gruesomeness of war has taken away my spirit for adventure, which was my greatest asset up to the present day. For now, I am for peace at its earliest possible moment. Such slaughter of human life as I have witnessed is appalling to me; my only wonder is how the good Lord allows this sacrifice of human life to continue. May you, dear Lord, this day hear my prayers for peace.*

Three days later, he was wounded and sent to an evacuation hospital and then on to a base hospital. Because his wound was not severe, he was returned his unit on November 10, the day before the war ended in Europe. His prayer for peace had been granted and he had been spared the final days of combat.

As we mark another Veteran's Day, it is worth pointing out that in this soldier's time of greatest distress, he found solace in a poem that he had learned in school. With the French town of Grandpré in ruins before him, he was inspired to see beauty in the face of horrific devastation. His ensuing desire for peace is a tribute to the power of the thoughts and ideas that he learned in school.

*"Thus, at peace with God and the world, the farmer of Grand-Pré*

---

**[pullcom.com](http://pullcom.com)**  [@pullmancomley](https://twitter.com/pullmancomley)

**BRIDGEPORT** | **HARTFORD** | **SPRINGFIELD** | **WAKEFIELD** | **WATERBURY** | **WESTPORT** | **WHITE PLAINS**  
203.330.2000 | 860.424.4300 | 413.314.6160 | 401-360-1533 | 203.573.9700 | 203.254.5000 | 914.705.5355

## **Veteran's Day Tribute to Educators: Poem Learned in School Helped WWI Soldier Find Peace**

---

*Lived on his sunny farm, and Evangeline governed his household."*

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "*Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie*"