

July 2017



### To be somebody or to do something

I've read an amazing book called "Ego is the Enemy" written by Ryan Holiday a few times now. As a matter of fact, it sits in my desk drawer and every once in while I pull it out for inspiration.

The concept of being somebody or doing something is not new, but my eyes have been opened to the difference a few times lately. One important example came to me when my daughter Grace and I were on our trip to France and Belgium in April, as a part of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vimy Ridge battle. This was a battle that took place in WW1 and was considered a great triumph for the Canadian forces.

Grace and I are both very interested in all things history, my grandfather was at Vimy Ridge and it was a chance to go to France and Belgium, having never been to Europe. The highlight was of course supposed to be the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Vimy and that unfortunately was the real disappointment. We were two of 25,000 Canadians who made the trek (felt like a pilgrimage) to pay our respects to this great achievement.

In actuality, it was an exercise of extreme political correctness, (more French and indigenous speaking entertainers than English speaking) no opportunity to pray and much attention paid to the dignitaries speaking. For those who watched on TV, it appeared to be a huge success that showcased our inclusiveness, when in reality it felt more like a disgrace to those in attendance. No food, no crowd organization, minimal respect for our service men or women – basically the "show" was for the TV audience not for we, who were in attendance. And we were expecting a ceremony not a show.

It felt as though I was forced to listen to those who "wish to be somebody" and I'll be honest, I was more than a little upset when I left the ceremony/show. Did I mention that we were in line for 3 hours to get in (after we had pre-registered and received clearance) and then spent 3 hours waiting for shuttle bus to get out?

Then we continued with the rest of our wonderful tour, which was a huge history lesson guided by a British gentleman who was a WW1 historian. Because we were with our historian, Andy, our group was granted access to tunnels not open to the public (not deemed safe by some bureaucracy) the day after the Vimy ceremony. In the tunnel, I found a carving created by a soldier who was in my grandfather's battalion – proof that my Grandpa stood in that very tunnel – talk about goosebumps.

The day before at Vimy, I was discouraged and wondered how my grandfather would feel about what I'd witnessed. How did we become so politically correct that I didn't even get a chance to pray and thank all of those soldiers for their sacrifice? However; as the tour continued I was able to pray on the morning of Good Friday in a cathedral built in Belgium in 1045 and in a Commonwealth cemetery while Grace's geography teacher piped Amazing Grace. I was in the very tunnel that my grandfather (who I never met) slept in before he went into battle, had a picnic with my daughter on Dieppe and toured the bunkers left behind by the Nazis at Juno Beach – all because of the sacrifices made by those soldiers 100 years ago.

That sacrifice means that I'm free to travel to these places, free to find my own way in the business world, not be discriminated against because of my social status or my gender. My children will grow up with that same freedom and every opportunity in the world.

To me, the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Vimy is the perfect example of "To be or to do". We should have been there to honour those service men who either made the ultimate sacrifice of their life or the sacrifice of leaving home to fight in an unknown land, leaving their families. Instead, we were expected to be in awe of the dignitaries and entertainers who are simply trying to be somebody important. I think that's my real problem with entertainment news, reality shows, and selfies with our prime minister – I think to myself, who cares what they look like what have they done?

And believe it or not, this does pertain to the investing world. Each and every investment manager with whom we deal is low key. This was not a conscious decision, but it is a fact. They carry on doing their work with much success with no need for fanfare. This is counter to our culture that says to shout our successes, brag and be somebody. The bigger people in the world would rather do something, and I've been around long enough to have seen the proof over and over. It's the unassuming people who are actually doing great things in the world while the egotistical simply look for the spotlight.

The book I referenced at first has a chapter on an American fighter pilot who did not ever rise very high in the ranks, yet changed the air force (for the better) with his skill as a pilot and through his training of pilots. He taught his students that they have a choice to make – do you want to be somebody or do you want to do something, and that the two paths will lead them to different places. The point is that Ego gets in the way of true greatness, of course that depends on how we define greatness – doesn't it?

#### Happy Anniversary!

We are happy to be celebrating 18 years this summer and decided it was time to update our website. Take a look and let us know what you think.

[www.janstonfinancial.com](http://www.janstonfinancial.com)

I hope you thoroughly enjoy your summer and as always, if you need us we are here.

Jane Kaminsky CFP FMA

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