

## But He Never Enlisted

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by Sewell Hall

He served in the Army but... "he isn't a soldier." We believe there is a lesson in the following Associated Press report:

An Army spokesman said Friday that 15-year-old Walter Lee Martin is not recognized as a soldier — despite two periods of serving in Vietnam, because he did not enlist, was not drafted and did not enter the Army through any regular means.

"He was not officially in, did not officially enlist or enter through any normal means," Barrante said. "He was, in fact, not a soldier. He isn't a soldier."

Two periods of service in Vietnam, twice wounded in action; yet no purple hearts, no honorable discharge, no veteran's benefits; he did not *legally* enlist.

This reminds us of a host of men and women we have observed serving among the soldiers in the army of the Lord. They serve faithfully and even sacrificially. They reject the sins of the flesh and live a pure life. They attend services regularly, give liberally of their money, are ready unto every good work. They often study the Scriptures, defend the truth and attack error. Often they are outstanding in their performance as soldiers, except that they have never enlisted.

The "*captain of our salvation*" knew in advance there would be such individuals. He warned in advance of the fate they may expect — "*Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* (Matthew 7:22-23). What a pity to spend a lifetime enduring "*hardships as a good soldier,*" only to miss the veteran's benefits because of a failure to enlist!

There was no way that the young man described above could have legally enlisted, he was ineligible. There was no way that the young man described above could have legally enlisted, he was ineligible. But anyone who is a sinner can enlist in the army of the Lord if he is willing to leave his sins. The conditions are simple: "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*" (Mark 16:16). "*Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'"* (Acts 2:38).

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