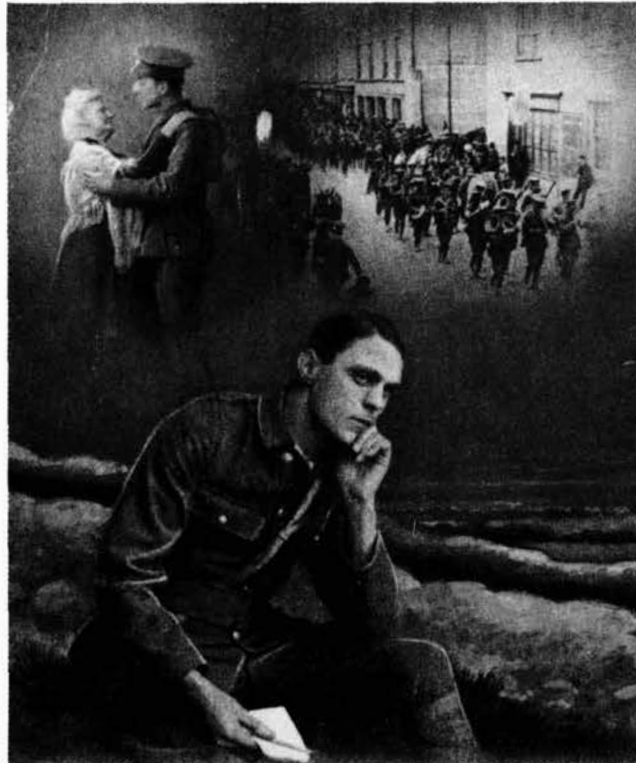
The St. Lawrence County Historical Association

QUARTERLY

Volume XLV - Number 2 - Spring 2000



The St. Lawrence County Historical Association at the Silas Wright House

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is a private, not-for-profit, membership organization based at the Silas Wright House in Canton, New York. Founded in 1947, the Association is governed by a constitution, by-laws, and Board of Trustees. The Historical Association's membership meets annually to elect its officers and trustees.

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The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is a not-for-profit membership organization and museum which serves as an educational resource for the use and benefit of the citizens of St. Lawrence County and others interested in the County's history and traditions. The Association collects and preserves archival material and artifacts pertinent to the County's history. In cooperation and collaboration with other local organizations, the Association promotes an understanding of and appreciation for the County's rich history through publications, exhibits, and programs. The St. Lawrence County Historical Association operates within museum standards established by the American Association of Museums.

SLCHA Membership

Membership in the St. Lawrence County Historical Association is open to all interested parties. Annual membership dues are: Individual, $25; Senior/Student, $20; Family, $35; Contributor, $50; Supporter, $100; Patron, $250; Businesses, $50 to $1,000. Members receive the *SLCHA Quarterly*, the Historical Association's bi-monthly newsletter, and various discounts on publications, programs and events.

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Contributions:
The SLCHA Quarterly welcomes contributions. To submit a manuscript, or for further information, please contact the editor through the St. Lawrence County Historical Association. Please address communications to: Managing Editor, *The SLCHA Quarterly*, P.O. Box 8, Canton, NY 13617.

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Quarterly

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Issue Editor:
Pamela Ouimet

Cover Illustration
"When the War is Over, Mother Dear."
This postcard is from Leon LaFay and was
sent to his mother from Spartanburg, S.C. in 1917.
Courtesy Patricia Carson

Leon's Story
By Patricia Carson

I never saw my grandmother wear anything but black.

Strange how memories stay with you over the years ... be they good or bad, right or wrong. Somehow impressions linger in your mind and you forever recall things in the same way. In my case, my grandmother in a black dress and a black coat and hat. Mourning was observed very differently in the days of long-ago.

This story begins in 1917. The war had been raging in Europe since 1914. There was hope, however, that the United States would be able to stay uninvolved. President Woodrow Wilson felt, as did the country, that it was none of our business. We were scorned by England though, for our reluctance to participate.

Eventually, the President addressed Congress and called for war. "To go into a war in whose origin we had no part, is a fearful thing to do," he said. "It was necessary, however, in order to make the world safe for democracy." The United States entered the war on April 6, 1918. It was a fateful day in history.

Of course, along with the apprehension and misgivings came the buoyancy and hope that goes hand-in-hand with war. Young men were burning with patriotic fervor; ready, willing, and able to serve their country.

My grandmother's oldest son Leon, also called Bill, was just eighteen. He and his friends were eager to sign up, and two days after war was declared they went to enlist at the army recruitment center in Ogdensburg. They were assigned to the 107th *Infantry, 27th Division, Company D. They were sent to Camp Wadsworth in South Carolina for basic training.*

First units of the 107th Infantry, 27ty Division reached France in May of 1918. Upon arriving in France they were assigned to the British Army. They used British rifles to simplify the problem of small arm ammunition supply. They lived entirely on British rations. The wounded and sick were taken care of in British field hospitals and the seriously wounded were evacuated to England.

Courtesy Patricia Carson

Pvt. Leon "Bill" LaFay

From July 9 to August 20 the army was expected to make heavy attacks. Leon was soon in the thick of the fighting. On August 13, 1918, he was shot, the bullet lodging in the spinal cord in his neck. He was taken to the United States Hospital #29 in Talkendam, England. From the beginning his condition was considered to be hopeless.

Today the world seems so much smaller and travel is so easy. It is regrettable that back then none of his family were able to go to him. They had little money and England at that time seemed a world away from Potsdam, New York.

Though paralyzed from the waist down, for a while Leon continued to hope that he might one day be able to return home. This was not to be. He died the day before Armistice was signed.

From his pictures he was indeed a handsome boy…but more than that, my mother said he was the kindest and gentlest person she had ever known. She forever missed her younger brother.

Leon was buried in a Brookwood cemetery in England, about 130 miles from London in beautiful Surrey County. His grave, marked by a white cross amongst rows and rows of white crosses, was in a wooded area overlooking distance hills. From the 107th Regiment 384 died and 1,000 were wounded.

This family had suffered much before. My grandmother was widowed at 35 and lost a baby boy shortly before his second birthday to diphtheria. Somehow, though, Leon's death seemed to be one tragedy from which they could not recover. They were overcome with grief for years, and like so many other families, felt so many dreams were lost.

Shortly after the family received official notification of Leon's death, my grandmother received the following letters from an American volunteer stationed in England.

Courtesy Patricia Carson

The grave site of Leon LaFay in a Brookwood cemetery in England.

Courtesy Patricia Carson

The grave site of Leon LaFay in the Potsdam Cemetery, where his body was moved to in 1920.

Dear Mrs. LaFay,

By now you will have received official notification of your son's death. I have been a Red Cross visitor to Ward 30 and have seen your son each week since early September. You know the nature of his wound, a bullet lodged in the spinal cord near the neck, which paralyzed his lower limbs. An operation was impossible as it would have meant instant death and the doctors had small hope he could recover.

I think you can assure yourself that good care has not been wanting and everything possible has been done for his comfort. He has endeared himself to everyone who has come in contact with him during this long test of courage and patience and all who came into the wards were his friends. I have never failed to find him responsive when I approached his bed, and his look of quiet intelligence was an invitation to talk even when he had little strength to reply.

I do not think he suffered actual pain, but his helpless condition made the latter weeks a weary time for him and the release that has come was the only one to be hoped for. I asked him once what his favorite amusements were at home and he mentioned tennis as one of them. I often suggested writing for him to his family, but he was never willing to have me do it thinking, I am sure, it would alarm you and hoping all the early part of the time that he would get back to you.

It is a cruel sacrifice you have been called upon to make and I feel that the American mothers have won in a special way the great object of the sacrifice won. None was there nobler than the one our nation has made. Nothing can fill the hearts left in the many homes but at least know that the sacrifice was not made in vain and your son has contributed his all to help make the world safe for democracy.

I feel there is little comfort that a stranger can offer, but I have thought of you with very deep sympathy and our remembrance of your son will always be of a beautiful, youthful face, sensitive and refined, lit with one of the rarest and most charming smiles. He was very happy the days he got his home letters.

Believe me, with more sympathy than I can express for your loss.

Yours very sincerely,
Ethel Fletcher

NO MATTER WHAT THE YEAR MAY BRING
ONE THING IS SURE-
THE GOD OF LOVE KEEPS WATCH ABOVE
SO REST SECURE

Courtesy Patricia Carson

A sympathy card sent to Leon LaFay's family.

This year I cannot wish you Merry Christmas-
It would seem as if I knew not how to share
The loneliness and longing that are making
This Christmastide so hard for you to bear
And so I do not send a joyous greeting-
I know that sorrow finds but slow release-
Yet I would have you know my heart is beating
With hope that Christmas bring the gift
of peace.

Courtesy Patricia Carson

A sympathy card sent to Leon LaFay's family at Christmas time.

In May of 1920 my grandmother had Leon's body returned to Potsdam where a military funeral was held in St. Mary's Church. He was then buried with his father and baby brother, Harvey in the Potsdam cemetery.

His friends with whom he had enlisted returned home to live long and full lives, as should have been.

To this date, his bravery is remembered in our family. I have my grandmother's gold star pin, which she was so proud to wear. I imagine she was one of the youngest gold star mothers, as she was only 42 when Leon died.

It's heartbreaking to think of him being hurt and alone so far away...knowing, most likely, that he would never see his family or home again. He was a young man, who like so many others, made the greatest sacrifice that one can make.

I was not born until many years later, but I remember my grandmother always wearing black.

A postcard Leon sent to his mother from training camp in South Carolina had a picture of a lone soldier (see cover illustration). The verse read:

WHEN THE WAR IS
OVER MOTHER DEAR
When the war is over
mother dear,
When the bands all
play and people cheer,
As the boys come
marching through the old
home town,
Joy bells ringing gaily
as the sun goes down,
Though your heart is
aching mother dear
For your soldier boy,
never fear,
I'll come back some
day and kiss your tears
away
When the war is over,
mother dear.

How sad for my family that his prophecy was not to be fulfilled.

Edward Mundy
(Part One)

Editor's Note:

The following article was written by Edward Mundy about his experiences in World War I while serving under the 77th Battalion of Ottawa, Ont.

Mr. Mundy lived in Trumbull, Conn. in 1987, when he turned 90 years old. He was sent congratulatory letters from then New York State Governor Mario Cuomo, as well as from then Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

The letter from the Prime Minister follows:

Ottawa, K1A 0A2
May 7, 1987

Mr. Edward Mundy,

Mila and I would like to send to you our warmest congratulations on the occasion of your 90th birthday.

Along the years, you have witnessed our nation's evolution; your experiences and knowledge are appreciated by all Canadians.

Our two nations will remain forever indebted to the men and women who joined in the fight for freedom in the First World War. As you know, this past month, Canadians commemorated the seventieth anniversary of the day when brave Canadian soldiers fought and overtook the bastion of German military might, Vimy Ridge. For many, it was a time of greattragedy and self-sacrifice. The courage and valour people such as yourself demonstrated has served to define our nationhood and, on behalf of all Canadians, I would like to thank you for your enduring efforts.

I hope this occasion will bring back many fond memories and we join with your family and friends in wishing you health and happiness in the years ahead.

With every good wish,
Brian Mulroney

Mr. Mundy's life recollections were very extensive. His memories from the war are printed in this edition of the *Quarterly*, and his memories after returning from the war will follow in the next edition.

These memoirs are the property of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association.

Courtesy SLCHA

Edward Mundy

February 7, 1982

Preceding pages of this book show memories of "mom," regarding things she wanted to remember. When I look them over I can see why, as I remember them all myself. They all bring back "happy remembrances."

Dad

At the request of my children I will try and write some remembrances that I have from my birth.

Edward Mundy

MEMOIRS OF AN ORPHAN

I was born in 1897 on May 7th in a house on Moray Road, Finsbury Park, London N.E., England. From here on all events were recited to me by my brother Samuel George as much as he could remember.

I do not remember my father's death, who George said died when I was almost four. I have one memory of standing beside the skirts of a lady at a place George claims was an "Office of Dr. Barnardo Homes for Orphan Children." He said that he, being ten years of age, was sent to another place from the rest of us. I had three brothers: George age ten, Harry eight, Reginald six, and myself. Harry, Reg and myself were inducted in another home. This is George's memory. For myself, everything is a complete blur. The first memory I have is standing beside a railroad train in the city of Montreal, Que., Canada. After years George said he always wondered why I did not remember crossing the Atlantic as he says I was very seasick.

I was put on the train with my two brothers, Harry and Reg, and got off at a station called "Inkerman" where I was presented to an aged farmer, a Mr. George Marshall. I remember quite plainly the ride in a horse-drawn buggy and it being quite interesting as I was so young. We drove to his farm and I remember how surprised his family (Alexander his son and Aunt Maria his sister) was that I was so small.

I very soon was adapted to farm life as the second day I went back to the lane to get the cows to the barn for milking. From then on I became a Canadian boy going to school in the fall and winter and working all summer. The ordinary life of a farm boy got a public school education and working farm work until I was fifteen years old. Then I became my own boss; and was hired out to Alec for the big sum of ten dollars per month and board. I continued on until I was seventeen years old. World War I had broken out, and Canada sent two divisions overseas. I had a pal Charlie Harvey, another "home boy," and we both got the notion to enlist. My brother Harry, four years older than I, had finished his time on the farm long before me and had gone out west in Canada.

Reg, two years older than I, had also gone away on his affairs and lived fifteen miles from me. I did not say anything to him, but in the fall of 1915, Charlie Harvey and I went into Ottawa and enlisted in the 77th Battalion of Ottawa on the eleventh day of November 1915. We went through the preliminaries of enlistment required by the army, including vaccinations, inoculations, etc., and that winter, having quite a fall of snow, we could only drill in the big armory in Ottawa and most of our drill was marching. Several days were a fifteen-mile march. In April, we went on the rifle range target practice with the rifle.

The month of May included a lot of marching, and come June when entrained for Halifax, Nova Scotia, we marched from the train right onto the steamer Missanabie. With a compliment of 2,000 troops aboard, we set sail for England on June 2, 1916. On June 6, 1916, four days later, we landed in England. My memory of that ship was after twelve hours out at sea I took sick. The next day I refused to answer roll call and my platoon officer came down to D deck where we slept, and when he saw my condition, let me stay in my bunk until the following morning when I was well enough to answer bugle call.

The Olympic, sister ship to the Titanic was ahead of us, and we followed in her wake. Two days out from Halifax we were joined by a British Cruiser that was sent to escort us because the subs were running everywhere. The reports were that they had sunk several ships in the Straits of Dover.

About twelve hours distant from England we suddenly felt our ship start to throb more violently, and soon we were going at top speed. Then we saw that the British Cruiser was lying still about a half-mile to the side of us and we passed the Cruiser with everybody thinking it was "subs" but soon got notice that an Old Dutch Freighter did not answer the Cruiser's signals and the Cruiser was taking no chances.

On June 6, 1916 we landed in Southampton, and entrained at once to Bramshott Camp about 50 miles north of London. From then on we went into training and how! Trench warfare and rifle range. The Mills bombs were a very efficient weapon if used right.

The bomb sergeant's words to me when I threw my first real bomb was, "When you pull that pin, hold it tight and heave it over head as hard as you can and get down immediately." There was a six-foot bank in front of me and my being small, I could not get too much distance, and it seemed as if the bomb exploded right in my ear. The Sarge looked at me grinning, so I grinned back. Then came the gas chamber with real gas enough to kill. We put on our "smoke helmets," as we called them, and marched after each other through the "gas chamber." The air looked very blue to me and the smoke helmets were supposed to protect. They did, but having them tied around our neck under the collar too long soon gave one a very sore neck.

I forgot to mention that my brother Reg had joined our outfit four months after I did so he was in the same company as myself. With us both being in England we decided to go and see my sister, Annie, whom I know only by information from my brother. She was born blind, the oldest one in the family, with her four younger brothers: George, Harry, Reg, and Ted, as my brothers all called me. We applied for leave and did we get a rebuff. "There's a war on and no leaves allowed." Then we told them the situation. Col. Edwards of Ottawa was a real guy. He said under the circumstances they should give us leave but they would only allow us three days. So we went via London, then east to South End on Sea where my sister dwelt in a home for the blind. Then I got a shock. My sister was almost as tall as myself and when she took my hand and looked straight at me, I saw two eyes as natural as they could be but the pupils in the eyes were completely sightless. I can't explain the shock I received as I looked at her. I was holding her hand when she spoke and said, "Oh Ted," which my brother told me was the name they all gave me when I was little. I kissed her and we visited a little. Then I wanted to see her not only write the Braille but read it also. She did so and I was amazed. There were twenty-one blind ladies there and Annie was their "reader" from the Braille. They had books but would also write their letters they wished to send to their relatives who could get a blind person to read it for them.

Reg and I got permission to take Annie out to eat lunch, then we got a ride in a small boat that took passengers out on the Channel. Only one day going, one day with Annie, and one day back to Bramshott and again we were in training.

Extensive and intense training, once a "sham battle" then came orders "embark for France." We left Southampton Seaport and crossed the Channel to Le Havre, France and landed there Aug. 2, 1916. We formed ranks and marched through part of La Havre to the outside of the city where there was a large camp. We were assigned to "huts" by platoons. We slept that night and did we get a real awakening. Other troops had used those "huts" and were they lousy. After getting eats at the camp mobile kitchens, the men, one to each platoon, started to holler and our officials took notice and after investigating, it was decided we could march through part of the two to the beach shore, which was a beauty, with a big "Esplanade" overlooking the water. We marched onto the beach and we noticed there were no people on the shore. We sat down near the water as we could, and the "Esplanade" wall was back of us 100 feet and there was a considerable number of people there looking. We were ordered to undress and stay sitting down until the officer gave the word and we were to run straight to the Channel. And when he shouted we took off. I was right up on the front and did not stop until I got half-way back to England almost, and was that good. That channel water raised you up and down on waves like a rocking chair. When we got through, we dashed back and dressed quickly and marched back to camp.

That evening we were marched to the train, a very long freight. The cars were marked "Quarante Homme" and "Huit Cheveux." Forty men or eight horses. That's where the forty and eight originated in our parades we have over here. The train would go about two hours, and then stop anywhere, maybe an hour or more. We were told it was because of heavy traffic on the railroad line. About one night and part of the next we arrived at some small station, got off, and lined up for marching. After sleeping on those fright cars - heads to the side and our feet kicking each other - we were glad to get out. Then we were split up into platoons. Then in single file, and about 3 p.m. we filed into a communicating trench. From there we were split up as we went and we were in the front line.

Nobody knew where we were and before dark our sergeant said it was Kemmel Hill. We found out later it was near Ypres. The trenches were quite dry, buckboard on the bottom, the funk holes in sides of the trench, quite dry, and lots of dry sand bags. Then I was on one section of the trench with a pal behind me. One hour on look-out with the periscope and the other guy up and down in our section to keep touch. It sure was a funny sensation to look through the scope over "No Mans Land" and wonder if there were any Germans.

New arrivals had to learn the hard way. One of our fellows got eager and used his rifle on a shot at something. It started a sort of volley from other guys and for about fifteen minutes quite a racket went on. I was looking hard through the scope and the other guy was up beside with his rifle at ready. I kept saying, "I don't see anything." Then it happened. With a scream that seemed to curdle your blood, a shell hit close enough to part of our platoon, not too close to me. Everything in our trench went quiet. A few more shells came over not too close to us in "No Mans Land." So we watched through the night and after a while, the sergeant came along and gave us the news that one of our guys, a Frenchman named Kerioue, had been hit in the leg by part of that shell. It became light at 4 a.m. and they carried Kerioue out. He had his leg bandaged and he was grinning at us and saying "Blighty." All we said was lucky guy, but he could have been killed. So was my first experience in the trenches.

We were there three weeks. Three days in front line, two days in supports, which was slightly a little safer, and five days in reserve; quite a ways back from the front line. Every night there was a working party or "A listening party in No Mans Land." An officer and five men, or a working party digging another trench in "No Mans Land," and everybody got so they dreaded that. Other parties were going back and bringing up rations, and that was rotten carrying rations and you were sure to fall eight or ten times in the slippery ground and darkness.

About three weeks at Kemmel and orders came for everybody to get ready for marching orders. We filed out quietly and marched back a good way from the front, then in regular marching order by companies, we started for "who knows where." It turned out nobody knew. I had a rifle (seven and one-half pounds), bayonet (one and one-half pounds), knapsack with my belongings (five pounds), webbing equipment with pouches that held five pockets on each side, each pocket holding a clip of bullets making fifty rounds of ammo beside the bayonet at my side when march-

ing, and I figured it was a total of seventy pounds altogether.

They filed our battalion onto a field which was entirely green. Tarpaulins were issued, and by stretching the Tarpaulin over a rope to two stakes we had a shelter about twelve feet long, and soldiers could sleep on two sides with their feet coming together. It was raining. There were over 500 men and horse lines with 100 men, and the way it kept raining, and us having to go back and forth, in two days that grass was completely gone and the field was muddy all over and slippery.

The first night there, I was called on ration party. As soon as it was dark we filed by picking up the first article, could be a sand bag full of bread, or canned goods, or a bottle of water, or any article that could be construed as rations. Then in single file, started on the shortest way to the trenches. Our own front line was at least three miles. Walking in the dark in file, you can't see your footing, never a straight line but winding in and out, step on a slight rise in the ground and down you would go. Dump the rations where you were told and then back, same deal all over. Get back around 4, 5, or 6 a.m. and so tired we'd flop down in our bivouac and sleep until the bugle called cookhouse. After a week of that, we fell in line for front line duty, only went straight to communicating trenches, which led straight to the front line.

As I said, Somme was my worst experience with mud. The front line was a mess. It was wet everywhere, the sides of the trench were slippery, the bottom of the trench had water more or less. The trench mats would sink and get buried in the mud. A man would try and make a funk hold inside of the trench and the top of it would collapse and fall in. Several times I helped to dig a guy out of the cave in.

Three days in the front line and Jamaica Rum was issued a tablespoonful at a time each morning. And when the officer came to me, I refused it. He looked at me and said, "You're supposed to take it." "No sir," I said, "I do not drink at all." "OK," said he, and looked at me as if he thought I saw dumb, or was I? Then we moved out of the front line back to ration parties, then a terrific bombardment up the line started and the word was that the Germans were attacking. But it actually turned out they were retreating a matter of twenty or so miles back. We lost a large number of men in the barrage they threw over. The stove pipe was about 450 strong, where we started with 700, although it turned out later we had about 200 wounded.

Then we started to move north again marching. I had developed septic sores in my legs between my knees and ankles due to the mud. I reported sick and was told they did not know where the battalion doctor was situated. But the next day we came to a camp and he was there. As soon as he saw my legs he said, "septic sores." and asked me why I did not report. But when I said, "I was in the front line for three days," he shook his head and said, "I'll send you down to a first aid station." The doctor there looked at me, and told his med. sergeant to send me down to the hospital. I was put on a Red Cross train and rode half a day and got off at a place called Etaples, which was a large field of Margreels, each one holding twenty beds on each side of a tent. Now here is where I got wise as to how young I really was. The tent hospital was an entirely Canadian outfit with quite a number of Americans. The doctors and all the nurses were Canadian.

The head nurse looked at me and said right away, "How old are you?" I said eighteen. "I don't believe it," she said, and when I grinned she hustled me over to a bed and told me to get into it. As soon as I did, a nurse came over with hot chocolate and while I drank it, she dressed my legs with plasters with a lot of white stuff on it. Then I laid back, and you can imagine the feeling of a real bed in over five months. I don't even remember hitting the pillow.

It was a complete unit of Canadian nurses in that part of the base hospital which covered a very large territory, and contrived a very unique situation for my benefit. I was the youngest man in that "tent ward." I know that when the doctor came in each morning, I would be standing at the end, placed there by Miss Johnston, head nurse of that ward. The doctor looked at my legs, looked at Miss Johnston, and said, "Keep up the same treatment," and he would go on to the next patient while Miss Johnston gave my arm a jerk and nodded her head for me to get out, which I did Toute Suite, (which means quick as possible).

Under that medicine, those sores healed very quickly, but each morning was the same deal. The medical unit was Canadian, but the entire hospital was big and run by the British at that time. Cost was a vital thing, and

the British colonel running the entire camp was very stingy with his expenses. A cold spell came and everybody felt it, and the nurses complained they had small huts to live in with small grates that burned wood. But they kept yelling they had no wood. There were large piles of flooring for another tent, but no tent. I hooked a couple of boards, broke them by jumping on them. They were small enough to go into their stoves and boy did those nurses take care of me for that. I would sneak it to their hut at night, and the nurses would tell me to go to the Canteen and stay there as much as possible.

For three weeks they kept me there, and my legs had dried up with the medicine in a week. So for three weeks I had a real rest and no danger. But someone noticed that quite a number of boards were gone, and one night two military police stepped in while I was taking it. Next morning I was up for orders at the colonel's office. He heard the accusation and said, "Is that true?" I said, "Yes sir." He did not ask why I did it for he looked at my legs, said briefly that they were better, and said, "Discharge this man from the hospital in the morning."

In the morning, two of the nurses were crying, and Miss Johnston was sending the whole British Official Force to "some place." But they gave me my uniform and I put it on, and Miss Johnston and three nurses were almost in tears. One of them gave me a wristwatch and I was off. I went to the office and then on a truck load of soldiers enroute for the front. The 38th Ottawa Regiment in the 4th Division was then up to Vimy.

Soon I got there and met up with Reg my brother and he grinned when I told him the story, though most of our Platoon said the colonel at the hospital should be shot.

So now I'm at Vimy Ridge. Quite a high ridge with "No Mans Land" at the top about 900 yards wide between the two front lines. Close enough to stop too many big shells dropping on "No Mans Land," but enough small ones. The most we feared were trench mortars. The Germans had one called "Minnewafer," and while going through the air at night you could see the fuse burning, but when it lit it was like thunder. It was slow in the air though, but when it hit, that portion of the trench was demolished. Then there were bigger guns with the screaming shells. If they missed, the top of the ridge went right into the next valley, as there was a bit smaller ridge back of us. That made the valley behind us a regular death trap. I saw one explode on the communicating trench, disappear, and someone was in it.

The British Engineers bored a regular tunnel under the valley and under Vimy Ridge itself, which held a lot of troops and hospital units.

So on and on through January, February and March, and we knew by preparations that something big was cooking.

One day through the tunnel I was on a working party carrying Ammonal, a high explosive, and they used a whole company of men to carry them. I was with them and we filed from the valley when a sergeant lifted quite a size box onto my shoulders, saying as he did, "Don't drop it or you'll go up so high you'll never come down." It wasn't heavy, about sixty pounds, and we filed through the tunnel and they storied it in a portion of the trench that looked pretty empty to me.

Then came the 8th of April 1917. Everybody was equipped with three Mills bombs to carry in a sack along with his regular equipment. Then they pulled every man out of the front line, except two sentries every five feet of the front line. The rest of us went back into the tunnel and were told to rest until 3 a.m. About midnight, Reg found me and told me the signal platoon was being held back to establish communications after the attack. He said, "Take care of yourself," and then I gave him the wristwatch saying I won't need it. So he said, "Take care."

I slept about two hours and at 3:30 a.m., we were awakened and filed out into our own front line. A gloomy cloudy morning with rain threatening. At exactly 4 a.m., the engineers blew a mine placed in a tunnel they had dug over and under a portion of the German front line. It was the most terrific explosion I had seen. It sent up earth so high I thought they had moved the whole ridge. The ground under me seemed to lift up about a foot high, then the Brigade machine guns, which were almost wheel-to-wheel. The second right, enfilading the territory a mile behind the German positions to prevention troops coming up, then the 4.2 Howitzers behind our second ridge and their range was ten miles back. You couldn't hear anything, only terrific noise as bad as a thunderstorm, only this was continuous.

That was our signal to go over the top. The engineers had cut lanes in our barbed wire and the five of us in our part of the trench walked up steps we had dug, filed behind each other through the cut wire, and on our way to the German line.

I was fifth man in line going straight ahead, going slow around slippery shell holes and I looked to my right and saw our officer standing and waving his arms down for us to get down as we were walking straight into our own barrage. There was a bank of dirt going up fifty feet and so thick we would all have been killed in our barrage. I remember kneeling for about half a minute. The barrage lifted, and you could see the bank of dirt move away from us. So we went forward, and as I can figure about 500 yards from our own line, something hit me in the middle of the back, like a sledgehammer swung in my back. I remember my head going back so I was looked up to the sky. I remember saying to myself that it must be a chunk of hard mud from an explosion of a shell from our own guns. Then my training came back, my mind said, "get in a hole or you'll be killed with the German return fire." At that moment I had stood still, but now I saw a fresh hole in front of me and actually fell into it twisting myself upright and felt something warm in my mouth and spit up blood, wondering why I couldn't use my left arm. So with my right hand, I tried to get out of the equipment, but the brass buckle stuck. Then I saw my left hand all blood, so putting on my gas helmet, to know it was there, I tried my buckle.

I don't know just how long, but along came a fellow holding his left arm with his right hand. He also was wounded in his left arm and couldn't use his right hand. He saw me and I yelled, "Can you get my buckle off?" and he did and went to slide my equipment off my left shoulder, and then I knew I really was hit. My left hand was useless, but the pain in my shoulder made me yell. I told him that I would slide it off, which I did, and he said for me to hang onto his gas helmet, and I said, "Can you make it?" and he said he could. So I told him to go and I would follow him. As of right then, I did not know what direction our old front line was in. So he scrambled up and away and I knew that I must not lose him, as my direction was screwy. How I walked back I don't know, but I saw him disappear and knew he had found our old front line. I kept on until I slid into our old line and went along it to where I knew the Blue Bull Tunnel and came to the communicating trench, and standing there were two soldiers from the third division, and I was in the fourth division. I said to them that the tunnel was just a few traverses along and it will be safe. So they started and I followed.

I don't know what happened, it was as if I had dived underwater and got that peculiar humming sound under water. I could not see anything, then I put my hand up and pushed my steel helmet off my eyes. I was kneeling in front of a mound of dirt six feet high, and under my knees in the mud and blood, I saw a man's shoulder, no head in sight. I dug my good hand into the mount and climbed over it on my knees and slid down the other side and there was the other guy, on his knees, and I saw blood coming out of his neck on the side of his neck. I said, "Come on fella," and he said, "I can't," and went flat on his face. I saw the blood spurting out of his neck. Then I head the scream of the shell that was coming right at me and I heard myself moan, "Oh God, I don't want to die."

Up to this moment, I have always wondered how that scream stopped. Then I staggered round the next traverse and there was the opening of the tunnel (I figure that it was two hours before I had come out of it). I staggered in and there was a medic giving a guy on the floor a drink. Suddenly I was thirsty and the medic handed me the water bottle, which was full of half rum and water, and boy did it taste good. I gurgled it down till the medic grabbed it from me. I told him I could make it to the dressing station and went on and saw a man from the signal platoon. I told him to tell my brother I was all right. He got his officer, who must have been close, and they both got me to the doctor's room: a place with tables, one doctor and two medic sergeants. I got a shot of T.N.T. and it made me groan. The sergeant said to the doctor, "His coat is stuck to his back," and the doctor said, "Cut if off." My left hand was a shapeless thing and the doctor examined me and felt a ring I had on and said that it had to come off. Then he cut it off and I stuffed it in my pocket, and then they carried me through the tunnel to the back part of the ridge. He detailed four persons to carry my stretcher across the valley with a medic to watch. A shell came over in the valley and they all started to jog the best they could in the mud, and on that stretcher I got every bounce, but the shelling had me scared too. So I didn't say a word, just gritted my teeth.

In the trench on the far side of the valley, we were safe and they carried me away further to a narrow track railroad, and they laid me on it. A small steam engine drew about twenty small trucks, which held four stretchers on each truck, and before they got them filled, it was evening. I can still remember the moon shining on us before we got out of there.

The railroad ran about five miles back where they had a casualty clearing stations, and I was laid on a cement floor until they got a "hospital train" up and I was taken on it and put in an upper bunk. The doctor came by looking at each chart, and when he saw mine he told the sergeant, "No food for this fellow yet." Boy did that make me sick. I was starved and the fellow who was carrying a tray of bread looked at me and said, "Not you fella." But after another went by with another tray, I put my right hand over and lifted a slice off the tray, though it hurt like everything, but I was hungry.

I don't remember much more on that train as things got blurred until I came to. It was morning and next to me was a Scottish soldier, and when I looked at him he said, "Boy, have you had a time. You choked in the night and the nurses got the doctor and three of them worked over you until 4 a.m." He heard the doctor say I had contracted pneumonia, and between that and the wound, I had a pretty close call. Still they gave me no eats, only a glass of wine around 9 a.m. At 10 a.m., the doctor came by and looked at me and said, "Boy, we'll get you to Blighty yet." All I remember of him is that he was tall and had very white hair. Also from his accent, I could tell he was a British doctor. To this day I thank that doctor.

About two days later, up comes a guy with a stretcher on wheels and says, "Come on man, you're going over to Blighty." A truly wonderful statement but I have omitted something. Being wounded in my left shoulder, I could not bear to sleep on my left side. I must give you the doctor's diagnosis: the bullet had penetrated the left shoulder on the ball of the arm joint which deflect it down so it went on through the top of the lung and out the lower part of my shoulder blade. Of my left hand the doctor said, "Boy, you were lucky." It split the membrane between the thumb and forefinger, went through the membrane of the hand and outside of the hand. The doctor said that if it had hit a bone, I would have lost the hand. I have thanked the Lord ever since for that fact.

The English Channel was thick with German subs and there had been quite a few sinkings, and I'm sure the hospital boat I was on made it in the proverbial hour-and-a-half. On the Dover siding, I was put on a stretcher and carried up quite a hill and halfway up was a place where V.A.D. were stationed with chocolate, cigarettes, and milk, and boy when I saw that I said to her, "Is that real milk?" and she said, "Sure," and boy did it taste good. That was the first milk I had tasted in eight months.

Next move was on a hospital train, and they took me past London to Chatham, a large hospital fifty miles north. So to bed and sleep, real sleep, and after three days the nurse said, "Boy, your legs are good and it will be better if you sit up and try and walk," which I did, and enjoyed it though I was very wobbly on my legs.

Now comes the hard part, I'll never forget it. The head nurse, when she saw me up, thought it was time to tell me. She came up and said, "I've got bad news for you." At once I thought Reg was wounded and I blurted out, "He's lucky to be wounded." But she just shook her head and I knew. I am writing this sixty-five years later and still, thinking of that moment, it still is very, very keen. I did not know when my mother went, as George was not sure either, but I had no memory or any kind of her except standing beside that "lady's skirt." What a memory for one whom you feel was your mother. My wife was the most wonderful mother that I know of and both my daughters ran as beautiful seconds to her. So the knowledge that Reg was gone brought back a lot of my history and anyone can imagine how I felt.

I know I went back to bed and for two days the staff of the ward went overboard to get me up. One young nurse said the second day, "I have to go on an errand uptown in a real limousine. Won't you come for a ride with me?" I shook my head. The next exam the doctor used a little authority and said it would do me good to walk if I wanted to use my legs, and that woke me up. So I walked around the next day and I was put in an army vehicle with several others and taken to a place called Sevenoaks, a real lovely village in Kent Shire. It really was a lovely place. The ride was fifty miles and we were put to bed on arrival at Sevenoaks hospital about 6 p.m. that night and I sure fell sound asleep.

All I remember was the next morning a nurse was taking off the bandage on my left hand and changing it, and I was so sleepy I kept right on snoozing. I remember she seemed to get through with the dressing of the wound very quickly, and I dropped back to sleep. About one hour later, the doctor came around inspecting everybody, and when he saw my hand he just said O.K. and started away. Two nurses were with him and I spoke up that my shoulder was sore. He turned quick and pulled the cover off my shoulder, then looked up at the nurse with him and said, "This wound has not been dressed." The head nurse called the one that did the hand, and I still remember how scared she looked as she said, "He was sleeping and his shoulder was covered," but while they were looking at it, I sure felt sorry for that nurse. I remember saying that ride yesterday tired me out and I slept right through, but I know from the way that the doctor looked, "poor l'il nursie" got H— over it as I remember seeing another nurse pat her on the back. No use talking to that doctor. He was the busiest man in that hospital.

Two days later I felt fine and wanted to get up, and they said, "No." I said that my hand felt fine, and the nurse looked at me and said that my shoulder wasn't, and it had to be taken care of. So I shrugged my shoulder and to show off my French I said, "San fail rien." The nurse asked what that meant, and I said it matters nothing, and the nurse came back, "Oh maybe, but you'll find out." I sure did and it was the sorriest thing, along with all the exercises for about a month. "Yours truly" lived and learned.

We were in Sevenoaks six weeks and in two weeks they let me up and everyday a big limo would take us driving around the country. There was an estate owned by some earl who had been killed earlier in the war, but the pitiful part was his wife who had a mask over half her face. She was wonderful when we were having lunch, and I mean lunch. She would come over and speak to us, and when we all saw her we all just jumped to our feet because we though it was a mark of respect to a wonderful woman. Just think, they were very rich people and he was killed in the war, and she with her face disfigured, and her estate was used only for wounded soldiers. That was the place where I saw the largest bank of rhododendrons that I ever saw. At least fifty feet wide and 100 feet long, and completely covered with blossoms.

We were back to the hospital at 6 p.m. I was in the hospital a good three weeks, then in "hospital blue" sent back to convalescent camp. No inspection, only classified B4. That camp was on the south of England coast near Dover. It was a beautiful place, only we were now under army rules. Very light drill one hour every morning, and then free for the day for about one week. Then B3 with a little more duty, then B2 which was the same deal only more drill, then B1 and lots of drilling, only no weapons. Then I was classified A1 and sent down to Seaford Camp, which was a regular training camp with a drill, and shooting range, then we were inspected by the doctor and in one week were classified for overseas. I paraded to the doctor and complained about my shoulder. I had found out that when I slung my rifle over my left shoulder and kept it there the time we used it in training that I had a perpetual ache, and I told the doctor that on a march I would have to drop out. But he said, "I'm sorry, but orders are for every man available must be sent back." So who am I to disagree with "army big stuff."

So eventually I landed back in France on the 9th of April, one year exactly after I was wounded. Then I joined the 38th again and the 38th were slated for Passhendale. We were camped one day on that march, and I had a slight cold and as a good soldier should, I reported sick. Mostly I saw Dr. Halford, who had been our doctor in Ottawa. He had sent me to a hospital at Ottawa with a bad cold that was cured in four days, and this was the first time I had seen him for a long time. He seemed glad to see me and asked me a lot about my wound. He looked me all over and then said, "I'm going to send you down the line for a while. You won't be there long as this will clear up soon." This is where he did me a good turn. By the way, he was as small as I, and used to joke we would make a good pair of dependable troops. He said to me now, "There is a big dealing coming up to take Passhendale and it's going to be tough." So on the Red Cross ambulance I was sent and was dumped at a camp at Amiens, France, and I was there a walking case for a week. Boy, what a break. That week the Canadians got it right in the neck at Passhendale. The 38th Ottawa lost over 170 and a lot of wounded. That was the place where they claimed more soldiers were drowned in mud than were killed otherwise. Imagine being wounded and can't move and sliding into mud.

When we got the news, I realized what that doctor had done for me. Reports after showed my company got a lambasting. I felt sorry for the guys that had got it, but when I thought of what I had escaped I felt as if I had to do something desperate.

Amiens at that time was a deserted city. Large but now paroled by Gendarmes. Our camp was on the edge of the city, which was out of bounds to us. One day I took through the field till I got out of sight, then slid down a lane into a street. I had heard about the Amiens Cathedral that was saved from damage of heavy shell fire, so I headed for it. I could see the spire a way up above the buildings. A good walk, and I found it, and was I impressed. A beautiful building, large and elaborate when built, and to save it the French had sand bagged it three bags deep up to the tops of the beautiful stained glass windows on all sides, with results of hardly any damage. I studied one window and it was almost three stories high covered with bags. I got too interested and paid no attention, then I turned away to go to our camp, I ran into a Gendarme. I thought quick. Got to face it, so I marched up toward him, said "Bon jour comrade," and grinned. Sure enough he got a grin on and said, "Bon Jour," and seeing I was O.K. to get by I grinned some more and said, "Pour vieux" and motioned my hand to the cathedral and he immediately shook his head, then shrugged his shoulders soldier fashion. I had said for seeing in and French fashion a shrug like that meant "Can't be done but it's not my fault. I would let you if I could." So I grinned and with a jaunty air started off as if I really owned the works. On the way back, I went through the street and about every other house had a shell hole in it. I read afterward that Amiens rebuilt their city good as their cathedral and the cathedral became famous.

Back to camp and in rolls an ambulance with sitting cases, and who should be on it but Lt. Kirby of our platoon. And when I saw him he said, "Hi Mundy, how's things?" And I saw his leg was bandaged and I asked him how it was and he shook his head and said it's a good job you were out of it. Then they went on to the hospital. So again I thanked the good Lord. Again as soon as I was back someone said, "Mundy, you're up on the orderly board." I got up there fast and on the board, "Mundy, report for N.C.O. training." I got ready and went to the colonel's office and the Batt. Sergeant Major says report for training school immediately, which I did. About ten of us, all corporals started off to be made into sergeants. To me another break, although our Batt was pretty badly smashed and would be out for a while. There was retraining and also getting new recruits.

Sergeants training was a cinch. Away 30 miles from line of battle, sleeping peacefully under dog tents. But it broke up quickly about two weeks and suddenly we were marching to trucks which took us all back to our battalion.

We couldn't figure it out, but the Germans were retreating on the whole front line and I remember going over fields in a long line and coming up to the line of troops with the red badge on their shoulders, and we knew we were going through our own troops. There were no Germans in sight, which seemed like a general retreat on the party of the enemy. Then while we camped, it suddenly dawned on my company that I had not finished sergeant training and orders were for me and others to do so. A truck picked up a bunch of us and took us back to another training course. It was O.K. by me. As fall was coming up and tents would be better than marching over the country.

We got to a camp quite a ways back with huts to sleep in, for which we were very thankful. And for about two weeks went through sergeant training. Then came the morning. All of a sudden the camp came alive and everybody started yelling. You could not get any definite, but the word went out, "Armistice has been signed with the Germans." I know I was dazed and couldn't believe it until it was announced officially from the head office. Although there was lots of yelling, I felt like a lot of others, that it was a rumor. But gradually the row got noisier and everybody meandered around still hardly believing it until near evening and the boys got excited.

A bunch of about 100 got together wanting to celebrate and coaxed a corporal to parade up to the colonel's hut, who by the way was a British colonel not in charge of our training class, but colonel was in charge of the whole camp. The boys wanted permission to celebrate with beer in the camp. "No sir," says the colonel. But the occasion was too much to hold that bunch and they contrived to place a cask of beer right in front of the colonel's office, and I think some of them stayed up all night. I know I tried to sleep, but the noise went on way into the night. The next day

we just laid around until noon, then orders came, everyone back to his own battalion. About noon, I loaded on a truck and started off for the 4th Division territory. Funny though it was, I still had a feeling that we were still going to fight.

I joined my battalion and everything was at a sort of stand still. Funny though, I never heard anything more about sergeant's stripes. So I wasn't made a sergeant because of the Armistice. My answer? God bless the Armistice. No more screaming shells, just plain beautiful silence.

Then we started marching again, only back the other way, and on until we got into Belgium, till the 38th reached a place called Bourgeous Belgium. There we stopped and they detailed the men in groups of two or three or four in each place that had a room and outhouse, or back room as the lady called in her house that she used to store things. When she saw we just had rubbed sheets to sleep on, she got us some straw and with the sheet on it and two good blankets, to us that was as good as the best hotel.

Now comes a matter that should be mentioned. We got the news that the fourth division, being the last one mobilized in Canada, was going to be the last division to sail back because of shortage of steamers. Our Colonel Edwards had been sent home, and a Colonel Cameron of some Horse Regiment (that was as useful as a sore thumb in that war) was sent over to relieve him, and of course he brought his horse with him on parade, which we had every morning.

He said to maintain discipline, we must keep up the parade in the morning and a certain amount of marching, all brass must be shined and certain other orders that had the right effect. It made the battalion boiling mad, if you will pardon the expression, and all through the rest of the day the troops blew their top.

Next day on parade, the adjutant called us to attention when Cameron came on his horse. Instead he got nothing but boos from about 350 men lined up in front. For fifteen minutes there was no order of any kind until the adjutant held up his arms and the men quieted down. He said, "Send a spokesman, and we will listen," also saying it will have to be reported to division headquarters.

Our spokesman had been picked, an old corporal who had a lot of service. We were willing to report on parade for numbering, no drill, no shining brass, and easy orders on how we dressed. The colonel shouted "No," and got boos again. Then we broke away on our own and went to our Bivouacs. Before noon, runners were sent out to all soldiers to report for duty the next morning for new orders. We did. No colonel, but the adjutant spoke to us and said our demands were O.K. to the division commander, only we were to act like gentlemen. The adjutant was put in charge and various other minor matters were to be observed. Did that get a yell. He also announced our battalion band would play in Town Hall every night for dances, and then you couldn't hear yourself think.

That was the real end of the war to us. Just imagine if you can, polishing brass after two years of mud and corruption, besides the blood. As far as we knew, Colonel Cameron disappeared, and we all believe he had never seen active service. It gives me pleasure to just write about it.

Then we all had to get used to life in Belgium, with no war on. What a relief. Up at 7 a.m., we were so used to that, we couldn't sleep later, report at company kitchen, get breakfast, and go where we liked to eat it. At that time, Belgium was still under that rule set by the Germans, and the bread the Belgians got looked almost black and tasted punk.

At the cottage where I was bunking there was a lady and three children. Her husband was in the Belgian army. She had three kids: Angelo, nine years; Juliet, seven years; and George, five years. The first time I came in with my big slice of lovely white bread, the kids just looked and went, "Ah." I had tasted their bread and was fully in sympathy with them. I at once cut the slice into four small pieces, and to make them take it, I traded for the black bread, only I told the kids just a very teeny piece from each, and to make the deal good, I pretended to gag over each piece I tasted, and they got the biggest kick out of it.

Little Juliet soon became my pet and sat on my lap each night before she went to bed. Also the kids started to teach me French and I would teach them English, and between us all, we usually had a howling time before they went to sleep.

Then came our first flu scare. A fellow took sick in our platoon,

then another in the other platoon. Soon we had about six that were sick. We got word from other companies that they were the same, when next day ambulances dashed up and took all the sick away. Then we got a throat spray all over the Batt and it evidently worked because our outfit got O.K., but reports coming in were bad.

All day to buzz around, no drill, keep our uniforms clean and neat. Our band got in trim, and almost every night they played for a dance in the Town Hall. That's when our boys shone with the waltz, foxtrot, and one-step. The old Belgian circling dance sure went bye-bye, and some of the Belgian boys did not like it too much. On the other hand, they were few, as the Belgians took a lot of punishment from the German occupation. So we made friends everywhere, and I liked a pretty girl named Madeline. It's a good job we were there two months after, as she was nice with beautiful long hair, which by the way, she carried it loose and hanging down every Sunday.

Then a guy named Thompson and I got together about our brothers who had been killed on Vimy. We went to the colonel, and requested leave to go to Vimy and try and find their graves. The colonel said, "What? Travel across 1/3 of France to Vimy? How would you manage?" And I said, "I can speak a little French, enough to get by." "Okay," he said, "but you are on your own and the army will not be responsible." So we went. Quite a trip, short way on train, then across country, grabbing army trucks, and at the last, the same old walk from Villers Au Bois up to the Ridge, about four miles. The whole trip took about two days and we were on the Ridge about 11 a.m. We had markers to go by. The Crater Ersatz was there when the drive started, so we went from there.

By the way, I had come across the fellow who was with Reg, in fact they were carrying a roll of telephone wire on a stick when they were hit. He said he never heard a thing, just found himself on the ground wounded by the shell. He said he looked at my brother and he was hit in the front of his helmet. This was on the afternoon of the attack. He said he also hardly knew how he got back to help. So we had Ersatz Crater to start from, and I looked all around and among white crosses everywhere, all marked "unknown soldier."

The biggest crater ever caused by mines was the Montreal Quaker, which was the crater that lifted me up about a foot when our attack started. So Thompson and I looked and looked and saw no names. This was in March 1919 almost a year later. So we left and came back to the Batt.

Shortly after, the excitement came. We heard that the steamer S.S. Olympic was getting ready at Le Havre, and the fourth division of Canadians were going to start back to Canada. We marched onto the Olympic and kept straight on down flight after flight until we hit a huge room with tables in it, and we were instructed to sling hammocks from the hooks, and were told that was our sleeping quarters. All I needed to do was lay in my hammock and look down on the tables where we were supposed to eat, and ugh, I thought about sea sickness. But we got started O.K. and I made up my mind. I had a fight on, so started walking that part of the ship. Then something happened that helped. We could go from D deck, where we slept, up to A deck, and lo and behold, all the stairs to the first class deck and higher were marked "out of bounds." I know it made me mad, and the same with all the fellows. Soon there were bunches of men talking together and the subject ran like this. All kinds of crap like this, and still with the war over they give us "out of bounds" the same. Soon the feeling tore over the ship among 5,000 of us troops (think of it), and the word went around, "Wait till we're out at sea twelve hours and then let's go." It was 5,000 unanimous.

About noon the boys started every place that had a ticket, was passed, and on we went. My ambition was to really see A deck which was full of civilian passengers. Soon we heard the loud speakers. "This is the Captain. Because these boys have had a hard life in France, we are allowing them the run of the boat." And do you know, the first class passengers cheered and we were welcomed on A deck, and in a day's time, a lot of boys were acquainted with girls from A deck. Hurray for the "god Eros."

I was lucky that this big steamer seemed to ride the waves easy and my sea sickness only lasted a few hours, and besides that they had medicine that helped. Some of the boys said, "Take a stiff drink, Mundy," and I said, "I'm a teetotaler," and they said, "You sure are."

We got over in four-and-a-half days and docked at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and they marched

us right onto the train on the docks, then enroute to Ottawa. For the life of me, I can't remember how long that took, guess I must have blacked out as I only remember coming into Ottawa's main station. We had to wait on the platforms right by the train until they got the streets open enough so that we could march through and down to Ottawa Fair Grounds. We stacked our rifles in a room there, went through another room and got our discharge, etc. Anyone with relatives could stay in the barracks there. I knew several friends in Ottawa, and stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds who were the parents of Morgan Reynolds, who was beside me in Ottawa hospital, sick a short time after we both enlisted. Morgan was just under 18 years when he enlisted.

Editor's Note:
Here ends the portion of Edward Mundy's memoirs while serving in World War I.

In the summer 2000 edition of the *Quarterly*, Mr. Mundy's memoirs upon returning to civilian life will be continued.

Behind Enemy Lines in the Philippines: The Recollections of Sidney Rexford

By Mary Jane Watson

To General Douglas MacArthur, the recapture of the Philippines, the scene of an American debacle in the early days of the war, became an obsession. We have all seen the famous picture of MacArthur wading ashore at Leyte Gulf announcing to the world that he had returned. Sidney Rexford, of Colton, was one of the soldiers in the Pacific Theater who helped make this possible. In fact, Sid, with a detachment of 28 men under his command, had secretly landed in the Philippines, over six months before MacArthur. His group landed on the island of Negros, occupied by some 10,000 Japanese, and worked behind enemy lines during that period of time.

Sid said, "I went into the Army kicking and screaming and I came out the same way." In between, he had made the Army his life-long career which took him all over the world before he returned to the Colton area. Born in Selleck's Corners, he lived in Canton and graduated from Canton High School and from the Agricultural and Technical Institute (now SUNY College of Technology) at Canton in 1939. As a graduate of the institute's first electrical department, he worked for a year in the meter department of Niagara Hudson (now Niagara Mohawk) before being drafted into the Army in 1941 during the second or third draft round. Needless to say, he was not very happy about the turn of events.

After a week in Camp Upton, Long Island, Sid was shipped to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where he was assigned to the 101st Signal Battalion, a National Guard unit. Sid, with his electrical experience, was already an avid ham radio operator. Since Canada was already involved in the war before he was drafted, all ham radio contact with Canada had been cut off. After Pearl Harbor, the United States would also cut off the communication of ham radio operators.

Sid, assigned to the Signal Battalion in order to build up the units of TOE (Table of Organization and Equipment), worked as a "yard bird" teaching radio operators. The ranking system was not the same as now and he became a pfc. with a specialist class rating. He was soon promoted to tech sergeant and moved to Camp Beauregard in Louisiana.

In 1941, the battalion was ordered to box up their equipment and to report to San Francisco where they were to board the troop ship, President Garfield. The designation was "Plum," the code name for the Philippines. The ship left San Francisco with no escort and was unarmed. About 300 miles out, word was received that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by the Japanese. Sid laughed about the orders received by the ship which were to issue every soldier on board a 45 pistol and five rounds of ammunition. With pistol in hand they were to walk the decks of the ship "guard style." Sid said, "I don't know what that accomplished, perhaps to repel boarders!" The President Garfield immediately turned back to San Francisco at top speed, causing the ship to overdraft and burn out the bearings. Upon return, the ship had to go into dry dock for repairs.

The Army converted the flagship of the Matson Line, the Matsonia, in five days, filling the luxury liner with cots. The Monterey and the Mariposa were also quickly converted. The ships were capable of reaching Hawaii within three days. Leland Collins, also of Colton, was on one of the other ships. Now, under destroyer escort, the three ships, filled with troops, took off for Pearl Harbor and arrived within a week of the attack. Things were still burning when they arrived.

Sid worked for a year in Honolulu in the communications center at WTJ, a war department radio station. He sat next to the guy who received the last message from Corregidor. WTA in the Philippines, WTJ in Honolulu and WAR in Washington, D.C. handled Army messages, weather reports, lists for government insurance, etc., sent from command to command. All the messages were encoded and transmitted at the rate of 200-300 words per minute with the aid of

the high-speed automatic equipment of the day. After recording, the messages were read back by four to five people working on different parts. The messages were on half-inch tape with the operator sitting on a typewriter trying to decode it. Diamond Head was the receiving center for Honolulu but Sid worked in another underground site. Alaska, Australia and the Hawaiian chain used low speed transmission equipment which was copied directly.

After a year in Honolulu, Sid was sent to the States to attend OCS (Officer Candidate School) at Fort Monmouth Signal School in New Jersey. Returning on the President Johnson in a convoy with a couple of destroyers and a battleship, which was to undergo repairs stateside, a Japanese submarine launched torpedoes at the battleship. The destroyers were immediately upon the sub with depth charges, etc. Sid saw the sub surface and then sink. Two days after graduation from OCS as a second lieutenant in 1943, he married Iris. Together, they went to his next assignment in Orlando, Florida where he was assigned to AFFSAT (the Armed Forces School of Applied Tactics). This involved working in air warning by tracking all airplane traffic by the use of radar stations and observer stations calling in air traffic and plotting it on a big board. They were using local U.S. air traffic with which to train. "I didn't care for plotting or observing," Sid said. "Today, one person covers what fifty people did at that time." After a short time at Drew Field in Tampa, where they lived in a tourist cabin in Clearwater, Sid was transferred back to the Pacific via the transport ship, USAT Sea Fiddler.

"Oro Bay, in New Guinea, near Finch Haven was the end of the world. It was a boring place with nothing to do," Sid said. The Japanese sent one plane a day which dropped the obligatory daily bomb. "We called him Bedtime Charlie. One time he hit a mess hall and another time, the officers' latrine," Sid laughed. "No one paid much attention to Bedtime Charlie."

A call came for volunteers who were of short stature enabling them to fit in with the Filipinos. "Not knowing any better, I volunteered," Sid said. He was sent to a staging area about seventy miles from Brisbane, Australia to be briefed. The heat and humidity in New Guinea had covered his uniform with mildew and the gold bars on his uniform had turned green. In this uniform, Sid reported for duty climbing into an elevator with General MacArthur, who fortunately took no notice. "My uniform was a mess."

Sid was assigned a detachment of twenty-eight men, who with equipment were loaded on the submarine Nautilus, for transport to Negros, in the Philippines. The Nautilus and the Narwhal were the two largest U.S. submarines before the development of the atomic ones. The torpedo room of the Nautilus had been stripped and it was here that Sid and his men lived, sleeping on top of their gear. The only torpedoes on board the sub were in the torpedo tubes. For the next thirty days, they surfaced at night to charge the batteries and traveled submerged during the day. Upon arrival, they unloaded the men and gear into dugout canoes. Sid had to split the men into three or four groups to go with the Filipino guerillas to work with them on other islands. Their job was to set up air traffic reporting stations for MacArthur's return. Sid had been briefed as to the proposed date. Sid was aware of only one other crew which was on Mindanao doing the same type of work, but there were probably others.

The Nautilus had dropped another crew on Negros along with Sid's crew. That crew carried a large volume of TNT blocks with them since their mission was to proceed to the large Japanese base, Bacolod airdrome, on the island and to blow up the planes stationed there. Sid assumed they were taken off the island after they had accomplished their mission.

Sid's detachment set up a communication center and were in touch with Australia and New Guinea. For a while they lived off the land, and "the food was not too good." Tired of eating this way, Sid asked Cpl. Rubinstein to see what he could do regarding mess supplies. They had landed with a large supply of cloth and medical items for trading with the natives. Cpl. Rubinstein proceeded to swap the things they didn't need for the much-better caliber of food. Even today, Sid will not eat rice although he did acknowledge the Philippine rice wasn't that bad but it was entirely different from what we have in the States today.

The soldiers took daily atabrine pills to prevent malaria. The pills contained a yellow dye which caused the men to turn yellow. Of these pills, Sid recalled, "They worked fantastic. One day a Filipino was sick, took one of our pills, and the next day he was out whacking sugar cane.

One pill would bring a chicken in swap!"

After MacArthur was back, Sid continued his efforts on Negros. Because of the U.S. bombing raids over Manila, a large number of American pilots had to ditch their planes near Negros. The Filipinos brought the American crewmen to Sid who fed them. When he had collected a sufficient number, he radioed their names to Leyte, MacArthur's headquarters and a PBY, a flying boat, would be sent to pick them up.

During this time, Iris, his wife, did not know where Sid was since he was not allowed to inform her of his whereabouts. One of the airmen whom Sid had rescued sent the following letter to Iris:

> I am glad to be able to give you a hint as to your husband's whereabouts. Take it from me, he is perfectly safe and sound, while doing a wonderful job, on a little island in the Philippines. He and his men were largely responsible for my safe return to the States. You see, I was shot down near his area, and through him the necessary contacts were made to complete my rescue.
>
> But don't get me wrong, his duties are far more important than aiding downed aviators. He is doing a job that should make your pride in him even greater.
>
> Ens. J.W. Brex, USNR

This was the first word that Iris had received about Sid in almost a year. During that time their son, Dale, was born. Dale was almost a year old before pictures taken at four months of age would catch up to Sid.

While Sid and his crew were on Negros, there were also approximately 10,000 Japanese stationed there. The Filipinos, forced to work for the Japanese during the day, worked as guerillas during the night. Sid's radio batteries needed to be charged periodically. Without the knowledge of the Japanese, the Filipinos carried the batteries to the Japanese chargers, charged them, and returned them to Sid. Through the activities of the guerillas, Sid and his crew always knew where the Japanese were. "It was a crazy war in the Philippines." The Japanese could never find the American crew.

Sid worked with a Presbyterian missionary who has kept in touch with him. Another American on the island was a twelve-year-old boy, Bobby Parham, who was working for the Japanese. He had been left behind when his mother with two to three other children had escaped during the Japanese invasion. His father had been part of the Silliman University crowd in Dumaguete. Since no word was ever received from the father after the Japanese invasion, it was thought that he had died on the Bataan Death March. Bobby was in charge of planting gardens for the Japanese. He routinely destroyed the gardens and said that the pigs had done it. Ultimately, Sid was able to get him on a transport off Negros and Bobby was reunited with his mother in California.

In all the time in the Philippines, although a lot of bullets were fired at Sid, none were Japanese. "They were American bullets fired by the Marines! I hate the Marines and want nothing to do with them!" It was necessary to pack generators, equipment, etc., around and the Filipinos were able to secure a couple of trucks. A good Filipino mechanic was able to get the carburetor to work on alcohol distilled from coconut oil. "We had a fairly secure area, running the truck up and down. I sent a message to Leyte describing where we were in order to protect the truck." His crew had painted the star and bars on it. Marine Corsairs came over and shot up the truck, making it necessary to pack the gear around on their backs after that.

Later, a battle flotilla was going up the coast of Negros on the way to Mindoro, where it was attacked by the Japanese. Many of the ships carried LCMs (Landing Craft Vessels) on their decks. "They held about fifty men and were the same type as used in Normandy." The mechanic who had worked on the truck was able to get the diesel engine to run on coconut oil. The crew had transportation once again. Sid then sent a message to Leyte to advise them of the location, only to have it shot up with 50 caliber bullets. "I was mad! I told Leyte that I was going to stop telling them where we were and make them find me!"

On the other side of the island was the Baias Sugar Central (refinery) where sugar pulp was used to make paper. Knowing the Army's paper consumption rate, periodically a ship would be sent over to pick up the paper. The refinery had its own large airstrip which the Japanese had used. Apparently, the Japanese had neglected to inform all their pilots that the airstrip was in

American hands since a Japanese pilot, experiencing mechanical difficulties, landed his Zeke there. The pilot motioned to the Filipinos nearby to give him a hand. They did. They killed him! Sid sent a message to Leyte that they had captured a Zeke, for which the U.S. had no prototype. Leyte sent a C47 to drop off a pilot and mechanic to repair the plane which just had a bad spark-plug. Sid's crew painted it with the star and strips and he was informed that P38s would be sent to escort it back to Leyte. Along came two Marine Corsairs who completely destroyed the plane. Sid said, "I bet heads rolled over that one!"

By this time, things were winding up and their usefulness on Negros was over. Sid and his crew were taken to Leyte where they stayed in a rest camp. Sid received a Bronze Star and was very proud that his detachment had suffered no casualties during its ordeal. Staging had started for the invasion of Japan when news of the dropping of the atomic bomb was received. "I don't know if it was a sigh of relief or not knowing whether to believe it."

Sid was then transferred to a large air base outside Tokyo. The Japanese were scared stiff of Americans but Sid had little interaction with them. One day, upon learning of a brewery near Tokyo, a captain decided to drive a truck there to pick up some beer and Sid went with him. The captain decided to stay at the brewery and Sid drove the truck full of beer back to the base. The truck had a flat tire and there was no spare. Sid saw Japanese on the street who would be very areeable when asked directions bck to the base, but no information was forthcoming. Sid finally got the truck back to the base with the flat tire. "I don't even drink beer!"

Finally, in 1945, Sid had enough points to be sent back to the States. In the meantime, Iris had purchased a home in Colton. Once out of the service, Sid attended St. Lawrence University for a year, but, "I was getting nothing out of it. It was too theoretical." Letters were constantly coming from the Army asking him to return to active duty, which he did. When I asked him when he had decided to make the military his career, he said, "In 1949, I decided that I had too much time in not to."

In 1962 Sid retired as a major. During that time he was an instructor at Fort Monmouth Signal School for a total of 7 ½ years, radio office for the Austrian Command for 3 years, and radio officer for the Korean Command for 1 ½ years. His last assignment was 2 years at the Pentagon as Chief of Army MARS (Military Affiliate Radio System) which had some 5,000 members worldwide. Because of his age and length of service he was forced to retire, exiting the Army as he had entered, "kicking and screaming!"

Living in South Colton During World War II: The Recollections of Edna Murray

Mary Jane Watson

As we sit on Edna's porch, we have a first-hand view of everyday life in the hamlet of South Colton. We see the comings and goings from Boyce's Store - people picking up milk, reading their daily paper or filling their vehicles with gas. We watch the walkers who make exercise a part of their daily routine, or the people who make exercise a part of their dog's daily routine. We hear the dog barking up the street who lacks such caring owners.

We discuss the changes that have occurred in town. There used to be three grocery stores, Leon Selleck's, which also housed the Post Office, Dodge & Savoid (now Boyce's), which sells gas, and Swift's (now Southwoods). Swift's had, until the mid-1950s, sold fresh milk with real cream on top from their dairy of Guernsey cows located just outside the hamlet. Now, no dairy cows graze on the outskirts of town and there are two grocery stores. The Post Office is now located on the former site of the Racquette Valley Fish and Game Club building.

Edna moved to South Colton in March 1941 and has spent all her married life here. She was from Fort Jackson originally and graduated from Potsdam High School. Employed by Potsdam Hospital for twenty-six years in the medical records department, after her children were in high school she was director of medical records for thirteen years. On Election Day in South Colton, Edna assists the town's voters in her position as election inspector.

During World War II, her husband, Hollis, worked for Sisson and White Lumber Company driving a supply truck to the various lumber camps throughout the North Woods. He had to keep detailed records of the supplies delivered to each camp to insure that all the camps were treated equally. The major portion of the supplies had to be purchased in Tupper Lake. Hollis was deferred twice from service during the war because he had children at home and family commitments. His employer also assisted him in obtaining a deferral for most of the war. In early 1945 he received his draft notice but just before he was to report, the war ended.

South Colton became a tightly knit community during the war. Everyone wanted to know about the men in the service and all news from them was shared throughout the town. John Sullivan was wounded and his family got word that he had been killed. Then they got word that he was in critical condition in the hospital with a plate in his head. The town really pulled together with the Sullivan family. John returned home, married Marge, and became a neighbor to Edna and Hollis.

Ration coupon books were obtained from the stores. Sugar and coffee were especially hard to obtain. Although most fruits weren't scarce, this was not true of bananas. Many housewives would request Leon Selleck to save them some from the next shipment. Sometimes he could but at other times he had promised them to someone else in town. Everyone made their own baked goods. Even in summer, the wood cookstove was going all day so the baking could be done. Hot water was heated in a tank on the side of the stove. The compartments above the stove were used to keep things warm. The popular large gardens were a ready source of produce to be canned for later use. Meat, especially venison, was also canned. My grandmother showed Edna how to make mincemeat. Very few people had freezers. Edna recalls that she had a refrigerator and an electric washing machine. Many people used the old iceboxes which required ice and sawdust for cooling during warm weather. There were few private telephone lines, mostly party lines of six to eight families.

In the home, most people did not have carpeting since few vacuum cleaners were available. Hardwood floors and linoleum were common and easily cleaned with a broom and mop. If some repairs needed to be done around the house, there was often a long

wait for the materials, such as roofing tin, to become available since the emphasis was on the war effort.

An example of community cooperation regarded the purchase of silk stockings. Although stockings came in various colors, everyone in town got the same color so that if one stocking got a run it was possible to borrow a matching stocking from someone else if an individual had to go some place special. Since nail polish was not used to stop runs, it was necessary to sew them up by hand. Clothing was passed down to younger children as the older children outgrew them. A lot of the clothes were made on a treadle sewing machine.

Edna's sister, Eleanor, worked at Alcoa in the finance department for a time during the war. A bus originating in St. Regis Falls or Hopkinton picked up the Alcoa employees and took them to Massena. Because of gas rationing not everyone could drive their own vehicles to work. Eleanor was laid off after the war as the men came back to their jobs. The last hired was the first to go. Lawrence, Edna's brother, was one of two polio victims hired by Alcoa during the war. He worked at a desk job at Alcoa and, unlike Eleanor, retained his job until he retired.

In a world without television, entertainment consisted of church suppers, card parties and reading. Edna's mother-in-law, Leila, shared her magazines. Once in a great while there may ave been a trip to Potsdam to the movies. When someone died, the wake for the deceased was held in the family home with the women in the community preparing large meals. Someone would stay with the family of the deceased all night. The entire community came together making the wake a social event.

The radio was the major source of news about the war and it was kept on all day. News was shared throughout the community. No one had any idea where any of the men were stationed except, perhaps, that they were in Europe or Africa. All mail was sent to one address, possibly New York City for distribution by the military. Mail to and from the servicemen was censored for security reasons.

Edna's son, Roger, served in Vietnam and she knew where he was stationed. His letters were not censored and he was allowed to take pictures to send home. There was much more openness of communications during Vietnam than during World War II. The nightly television broadcasts from Vietnam brought the war into every living room. Roger wrote of going on R&R during the Vietnam War but during World War II no one wrote of doing that.

In World War II there was a much clearer picture of who was the enemy - Hitler. Everyone was willing to go to do his duty and, in fact, there was a sense of honor of being able to do so. The men, although they hated to leave their home and family, went willingly. In Vietnam there was a sense, in a way, that there was an enemy but not as clear cut as with Hitler.

It was with relief that the community welcomed its servicemen home. World War II made South Colton a tightly knit community supporting the war effort. Everyone worked together sharing news of the servicemen in battle. News of a death was a blow to the whole community making everyone realize that the daily sacrifices at home were small in comparison.

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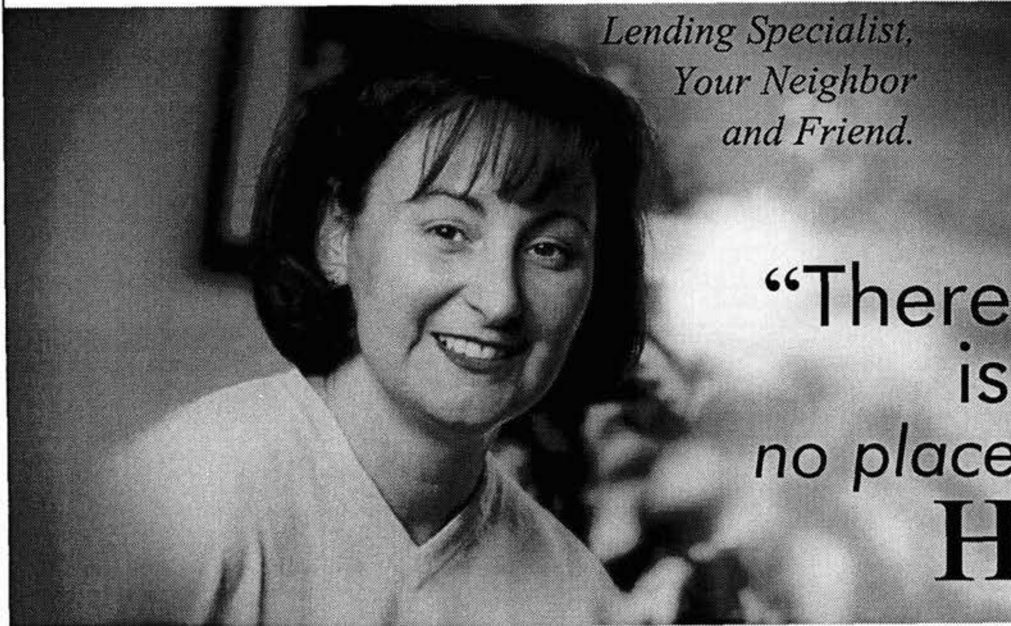

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