

TIME TRAVELLER'S DIARY: Somewhere in France

By Shawna White

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that officially ended the Great War, I take a moment to reflect back on one local soldier, Sergeant Edwin Harold Mulloy.

Harold, as he was commonly referred, was the son of Charles Wesley Mulloy and Gertrude Claflin Mulloy. The Mulloys lived on Wellington Street East, and Charles was the Public School Inspector. Harold was the manager of the Bank of Montreal in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and was visiting his parents in Aurora when the war broke out. He was well known in Town being a member of the Rising Son Lodge, and I.O.O.F., as well as having worked at the local Bank of Montreal before he went West. On March 17, 1915 he wrote a letter to his mother that was published in the Banner on April 9th:

Dear Mother,

This letter was written from the trenches, and if it sounds a little disjointed, I hope I may be pardoned as the Germans are shelling us this afternoon and our artillery is replying, so the noise is rather confusing.

I am living and in writing in a dugout, which is about 15 feet long, 4 feet wide and, (judging from the bumps on my head) about 1 inch high. It is roofed with corrugated iron and covered with earth. In the rainy weather we have to keep bailing the water out, and even in dry weather occasional bailing is necessary. In the last four minutes our guns alone have fired 37 shells, not counting the compliments return by the Germans, but I am getting inured to the noise now.

Each evening, I go down for rations to where our transports come. One is liable to be hit by a rifle bullet at any moment. The Germans with the usual sense of humour have a habit of turning a machine gun on an orchard through which we have to pass, after throwing up a star-shell to light up the surrounding ground.

The other night I was coming home in the pitch darkness (and say! It was dark) when I fell in a 4 foot deep hole, made by ?coal-box?. I had a bundle of wood under one arm and a jug of drinking water under the other so I had some difficulty in extricating myself. All I lost was my dignity, and one rubber boot, both only temporarily. However, my friends the enemy, were kind enough to send up a brilliant star-shell just then, and I was able to see my way to the trenches. The only thing I bothered to clean was my rifle which had gotten pretty muddy.

Our casualties have been pretty slight, so far, but are certainly bound to be greater when a general advance is ordered. I am connected with Headquarters Sub Staff. I do not run as much risk as some others. On the general principle that ?a man born to be hanged can never be shot?, and as I am a great believer in predestination, I think I should come out OK ?

Less than two weeks after this letter was published, Sergeant Malloy was instantly killed by a shell on the way to the trenches at St. Julien. He was Aurora's first war dead. With no known grave, his name is recorded on the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial to the Missing. In recounting the events in a letter to the Banner dated May 8, 1915, commanding officer Colonel R. Rennie writes:

The engagement itself was a most trying experience. With death and destruction surrounding us continually, with wounded and mangled men looking for aid, and the dressing stations crowded with helpless and, in many instances, mortally wounded men of my own and other battalions, I assure you for hours my heart ached for the suffering, and it required all one's self possession to keep control and give encouragement.

Sergeant Malloy will be in my thoughts on the evening of Saturday, November 10th as I stand vigil with the Queen's York Rangers 2799 Army Cadet Corps to remember the brave men and women who serve in our armed forces. As we reflect back 100 years, I invite you to join us.