

Westman Oral History Collection

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Narrator:	Clarence B.G. Spurr
Interviewer:	Delbert Spurr
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Beginning of Tape/Side A

Question: When did you start decide to enlist dad? Like...

Answer: I did not enlist at the opening of the war on account of waiting to get started working on the CPR. At which time my seniority it would carry on during... my... stay in the army. [Interviewer says, "Right"] After enlisting we were in Camp Hughes for the... for the summer until harvest time. At which time... uhh... we went out and and helped farmers in the Saskatchewan in the Rocanville...District... uhh... did all the stripping and the helping with the thrashing uhh while our our harvest leave continued. After which we stayed in camp until November, expecting to go overseas at fall, but instead we were moved to Regina where we stayed in the winter fair building uhh from November until around until March. In March we started East by train uhh around the North Route uhh arriving in Ottawa early in the morning and marched up the main street to the parliament buildings and they then back

to our train. We left the Ottawa... across the border into uhh Quebec where our train was sidetracked for a short time due to the mumps having had broken out on the train. At this time our trip was cancelled and they instead of going to Halifax to get on the boat we were... sidetracked into Saint John, New Brunswick where we spent seven and a half weeks waiting on the mumps clearing up. During that time uhh we met a lot of lovely people through the... through the... Oddfellows Lodge, which was a something that was a worth remembering. Seven and a half weeks went by very quickly. When we left for Halifax... we boarded the Olympic...ship the big ship Olympic and... had a beautiful sailing all the way across to Liverpool.

Q: What time of the year was this dad?

A: That was in the uhh... uhhhhh early spring. And uhh possibly April when we left uh Saint John, New Brunswick.

Q: And the year?

A: We landed in in England on the boat, then went by train from Liverpool to Camp uhm dear...uh forgotten the name. Where they where they took all the trainees before they were ready to go to France to fight the front line.

Q: So you were there for almost a year, it would be almost 1916 then would it be?

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: Training for a year?

A: Yes uhh arriving at a camp, we were put in a segregation camp where we could not even mail a letter out advising any of our people at home where we were, what we were doing and as soon as that let in segregation was our period was over uhh we were granted our landing leave... uhh chose the trip from camp to London, London to Edinburgh Scotland, Edinburgh Scotland to Liverpool, Liverpool to the Island of Miam?, the Island of Miam? back to Liverpool, Liverpool to London, London to camp and back to work. At the... but in 18 weeks on what they call 'the Square' doing uhh physical training, then to the uhh musketry camp there are the rifle ranges. From the rifle ranges to the bombing school, from the bombing school to the uhh to the hand grenade section where we took all instructions on handling the dangerous uhh hand grenades... uhh also uhh heavy training in driving the bayonet on our rifle through a bunch of small sticks tied together. Then releasing our, our rifle with one move which was a very difficult thing to do. After finishing that I was sent to the signal school, where I worked very hard in... in in in learning the different ways of signalling and I was fortunate enough to get a first class certificate in seven different methods of sending messages [while saying this narrator's voice becomes excited]. By the help of the Sergeant Major Garrett in the uhh signal school who I became quite acquainted with. He was a big help to me and when the time come that I had finished my course, I was put on draft for France. Sergeant Major

Garrett was, was ready to take off his... take down his stripes and go with me to France to a... help to... to do our part in the war.

Q: So he became a private then did he?

A: He became a private then. That was a big move on his part and one that I appreciated very much because he was uhh a man that is well remembering. We arrived in France and had our marching orders, in fact there was three of us in this bunch that went alone and all we our guide was the sound of big big big guns on the front lines.

Q: And this would be around November 1916?

A: Around November of 1916 yes. We arrived at a... at a small town uhh about ten miles from our destination where we were supposed to go that day. We stopped there because the full steamers? were were building there out of the line and that is where my brother was. After visiting with him my feet became so tired with the new shoes I was wearing that I was unable to travel further that night. I went to the burgomaster in that town and got permission to have a a bed for the night and also breakfast. The other two men that that was with me and a Mr. Black had gone on they carried our marching orders and we were left with nothing and we were classed as deserters because we did not arrive at the designated time. However, after a short explanation and a pair of new shoes for a change with blistered wheels blistered heels uhh we were forgiven for being late and... were asked to

prepare ourselves to go up the front line with the action party that night on the narigades? steel. This was a wonderful experience in the world in actual war because we were bombed plenty that night before we reached the front line trenches. After a short rest in the in the evening there were there were betted? down in a deep... white chalk...mine and uhh... uhh we were our benetoir? underneath like underneath a shelf, quite comfortable quite warm uhh... I went on gas duty that night from three o'clock until six A.M. and the only music that was to be heard in the in the district was in the streets and in the stream of the thousands of rats that were running around in the bottom of that big mine that big quarry.

00:10:48

Q: Did they come close to you at all?

A: They crawled all over us our right over our faces during the night. Early the next day... uhh it was impossible to keep free from them.

Q: Is this fairly close to Fatigue, Vimy Ridge?

A: This was, this was no quite a long ways from Vimy Ridge alright it is miles? At six o'clock in the morning I had to waken up all the officers, all the men to stand to in case of a... a quick surprise by the... enemy...to take over the property. This worked out very... very satisfactory and uhh after wakening the men and getting them all making sure that they are all up and ready to go to work... and do what we had to do. Then I was permitted to go

to my billet and prepare breakfast with the other boys and in that same billet and in count of taking the first rum ration in my life... uhh I felt rather good after in spite of the fact I lost the night's sleep and they I persistently...kept myself from letting the other boys do the work of getting breakfast. And uhh we enjoyed our bacon, we made toast, put a slab of butter on a stick and held it over the fire dripped to draw the nice butter into the toast, and then I would prepare for a short of sleep on account of having no sleep throughout the night. They passed quickly and I had another turn of duty on guard just in case of an outbreak of the German army. And uhh I heard more squealing and cries from the thousands arrested around that uhh neck of the woods. Uhm, the next morning uhh... early uhh an English officer come to my office where I was on duty and wanted to use my phone to report his uhh transfer... uhh by another imperial officer and eh after giving that officer instructions on what he must say what he must not say and all he could say eh I permitted him to talk on the phone. During his talk he started to say that 'their relief was complete', I pressed a button on my machine to stop all sound of his voice going through the air, which at that time would have been picked up by an earth circuit and... in less than the time that you can stop to think about it the Germans put over a [incoherent words from narrator] barrage of 18 pound shells uhh because they had heard the message that this imperial officer had given. After fighting with the just in words with this uhh imperial officer he was really angry with me

for talking to him as a as I did and I... I requested another officer of my own company to to come to my assistance and uhh put me right. At which time imperial officer that had... that had usually had the phone incorrectly was taken away and...later... uhh [Interviewer: court marshalled?...]... court marshalled [Interviewer: hmm hmm] so that ended a... a that battle but before the day was over we found that we had lost quite a number of our men just through the earth circuit that the Germans had got about the relief work the uhh exchange of two companies or two battalions. This was a bad morning... however... all in all it worked very good and when nightfall came we were able to crawl into the... the dugout and uhh... warm up some more rats as they crawl around our our bedding and over our faces [Interviewer giggles]. Going down the a... the hill at the back of Vimy Ridge, we went down to the valley and took up positions underneath the railroad track which crossed the highway. Uhh this gave us considerable uhh protection from... from shell fire or or heavy machine gun fire and allowed us to uhh to uphold a a payday, which uhh was not too necessary at that particular time but just an opportunity. And apparently the German uhh got their eye on some movement around that area and undertook to shell that area with 18 pound shells. I was working under the railroad track as previously stated and when those shells would burst... when they hit the ground on the bank the a railroad track, they would put my candles out with the concussion. This happened seven times that afternoon. [Interviewer snickers and says,

"right"] So I eh I was still able to have a match left to light up the candle again and carry on my strenuous duty of ehh keeping the wires... uhh the messages going on the wires. Uhh we lost a few men in that eh set up. Uhh and then we were facing that big city of Lille...uhh where the Germans had an advantage point over us...and we had to be very careful. Uhh they could wipe out a whole company of... of men...so quickly...it would order

[Interviewer interrupts and says: Very particular]. However we got relieved that night...we went up the bank up the highway to the...towards Neuville-Saint-Vaast where we would take up ehh an immediate support to the frontline troops. As we started up the highway...through among the big trees, the Germans...would, fire one gun. We could hear the gun pump...we could listen to the sound of the squeal of the eh of the...shell passing through the air...and we knew about where it would land. So we cleared the highway for that moment, and then we would carry on. In two minutes the next [shot] one, they [the Germans] would raise their sites to another spot...and they drop another shell. This kept on all evening was why we marched up that seven mile road to the top of... of uh Vimy Ridge and the little city of Neuville-Saint-Vaast. Uh nearing the top of the hill...uh we kept counting the number of shells the Germans had had shot at us that night...and we could hear this big one coming and some of us in a joking way said, "here's our turn", get a big tree to hide behind and take care. So I got behind a big tree and the shell passed the edge of the big tree, cutting off one heavy limb [of

the tree]...and the limb dropped down and uh covered me up pretty good...gave me a few scratches and just memories of the day. And eh...

Q: But there was no shrapnel?

A: Beg, beg your pardon?

00:20:02

Q: The shrapnel didn't hit you eh?

A: The shrapnel uh didn't uh didn't hit me. [Interviewer: Good] I missed that. We went on to the top of the hill where we took up billets for the night...that is the balance of the night. We were well into the night at this time...and we we took up positions in the gravel pit...uh our our a huts were covered with corrugated uh tin...grooved and positioned just to predict the rain and the snow what have you office and we slept on on wire eh bottom bunk, center bunk, third bunk up...uhh two men to a bunk. And they we weren't long in getting into into our beds, boots and all, [Interviewer: why?] because we don't take our boots off.

Q: What kind of mattresses did you have?

A: We didn't have a mattress at all we had a ground sheet to put over the, over the wire and that eh... left the impression of wire in our hips every morning. [Interviewer chuckles?] They uhh...when we are about ready to go to sleep, at this particular time, we heard one of the heavy [Narrator's voice

gets an excited tone] guns of the Germans...pump...and we knew there was a big shell coming our way, and it wasn't long until we could hear the whistling of that shell in the air...but we couldn't guess where it was coming down, but knowing by the sound it was going to be somewhere very close to our neighbourhood. The shell dropped just outside our...of our tents or our whatever you call them [Interviewer: said something unclear but in a suggestive tone.] our uhh...protection...and uhh but the shell did not explode...it just went many feet into the ground, leaving a round hole of about seven inches wide. Uh we just pulled up the covers and went back to sleep.

Q: Did it shake the ground when it hit?

A: It had shook the ground like everything just like an earthquake [Interviewer: hmm] when it hit the ground [Interviewer: yes]. Uh next morning we uh got up and... it was a nice sun shiny morning and after breakfast I decided it was a good time to pick a few... cooties off my shirt, and I peeled my shirt off and walked a little ways in the sand pit to get up to the uh...to get up to the uh...uhh the the bank for more protection.

[Interviewer: yes] And uh...uh at the same time...one of our balloons, that is our observation balloons, was up in the air watching what the Germans were doing...and one of the German fighter planes...dropped out of a cloud above 'em [knock on a door] and come down and fired shells [click, possibly the door opening] but at the same time the balloon was directly between myself

and the...the German fighter. The shots come down and missed the, missed the observation balloon with that first blast of firing...but coming down and and I was carrying my belt... a a a leather belt... in my hand... because I was picking cooties off my shirt and this one shot...cut my belt right in two... in my hand but never touched my hand. [Interviewer: uhh that was lucky] That was lucky I was very lucky there. However the the German plane did put a bullet through the...the the observation balloon and the the...the party in the balloon jumped to safety uh their parachutes worked and they come down safe. But the balloon was burned up. Uh that just about ended that particular uhh spot there. We were already an immediate support, we were moved from immediate support back...further back of the line supposedly to be... uh a two weeks rest. However, after after being out only...less than one day...we got quick orders to start marching south. And eh... we marched for quite a ways through we come to the railroad track...there was a train standing there with a string of...slanted...cars for, cattle cars actually...that's what we had to ride in. We set on the with our butt on the floor...with our legs astride, and the next man would sit in between our legs and our our kits would be piles up on top of us... and that's the way we had to ride until two o'clock in the morning. When we detrained in the black dark of the night...and started to walk to a certain spot where we were to have...uhh a part of a night's rest. However, the this ordeal had been more than I could take, I felt that I couldn't go any further, I went off the side of the road,

and...and eh I started to arrange some dried grass and stuff to make a little bed for myself where I slept until daylight; and then followed the direction we were still headed in when I left the party through the night. Uh I arrived in time to get breakfast. After breakfast, eh we were called for master roll call, which was held in an open field and the bright sun was very hot that particular time, that particular day. Uh my name started with 'S', I was a long way down the line before my name would be called and as it would happen I had the flu... uh and I also had a blackout. I was loaded up in the ambulance and taken to the...the hospital, which consisted of an old barn with metal shingles, and each time a shell would be put over and burst in the neighbourhood of that barn...those shingles, would crumble, and fall down all over me. So I had to protect myself got my rubber sheet that would be cut with all the falling broken shingles.

Q: What kind of a fancy ambulance did they bring you in dad?

A: Uh fancy ambulance was a... most likely a...a rough truck of some kind...with a solid rubber tires and of course the cobble road stone, cobble stone uh roads [Interviewer and Narrator say roads simultaneously] were very rough...many holes from the shells and uh and the wear and tear of uh so many vehicles passing...uh it was a very rough ride. [Interviewer: right] Uh I was put in the detention there for a while and uh my temperature went down and it went back to, back to supposedly start work...uh again. However, uh it didn't work out that way because my temperature did not fail

to to disappear completely and I was held back for two days. The rest of the battalion went up the line without me...they had to get another operator to take my place. Uh and I was in the pig sty for... for a... for a bed, that was our hospital in that particular spot...and ehh after the third day of being in this pig sty, the doctor come along and checked me, he found that my temperature was down to normal and he said, "okay, you go with the ration numbers tonight, up to the front line and join your company." Uh I mentioned to the doctor that I was still not in condition to travel but if he if he insisted on it I wouldn't fight with him...over it. So he told me to, "go ahead and funnel that limber that night." There was seven of us, in the in the group that were being taken up to join our company...and... as arranged we started out. I walked behind the...the...the ration limbers which were drawn by horses... that just walked, but walked quite quickly...and it wasn't 'til long 'til they were quite a ways ahead of me and finally they went round the corner of the road...uh out of my sight and I just waved good-bye to them, went off the side of the road, got my entrenching tool, dug a hole in the road in the in the uh dirt deep enough that I was down level of the surface, then I got some dry hay and stuff and...and made a bed. Uh then... I got into my pack and a can of a bully beef and I had a...my mess tin... and I had what they called a 'Tommy Heater'. I put this can of bully beef into my mess tin, put the mess tin on top of the Tommy Heater and brought it to a

boil, then I had a lovely meal all by my[self].

END OF TAPE/SIDE A.

START OF TAPE/SIDE B.

00:30:42

[Narrator] I...I lay down for a sleep. I had slept right through until sunrise the next morning. At which time I continued walking in the direction that the ration limbers had gone in the night before...arriving at the...at the headquarters uhh my battalion...around 10 o'clock in the morning... uh to be greeted with the word that I was a deserter... that I had not shown up the night before as I was supposed to be... doing...and what have I to say for myself uhh about this. I I explained to the officers exactly what took place, what I did, and when I finished they said, "Well done, uh you will have to go as a runner this time in the front line because uhh due to your absence we had to put another operator on your job to carry on while you were not gone."

Q: Was the flu bug sort of subsiding now, you felt a little better?

A: Uhh yes I was I was feeling better. But the minute that I did a little, exertion, my temperature would go up again. [Interviewer: yeah, that's right.] However, I they advised me that I would be a runner that... that turned into the front line trenches and they showed me to my billet which there was a hole in the side of the trench where I would lay down and would

remain there until I was called for a run...deliver a message maybe someplace. Uh after midnight we got the call to deliver a message, to one of our officers out in no man's land in a very roughed rugged piece of the country.

Q: And this dad would be around in August of 1918?

A: Uhh [Interviewer: Around there would it be?] I I think this would be in August yes.

Q: So it's almost the start of the end of the war then? [Narrator: yes] So they called you after midnight for a runner?

A: Yes I was a runner. We we got our first call after midnight eh out to take a message to an officer, which was very important...eh in no man's land. Two of us have to travel alone if that's possible. If one of 'em gets killed or injured, and one has to go alone, it's not satisfactory. Two of us went, we had to report at every...every open station, as we went along and this was quite a distance I suppose it'd be a mile and a half to two miles... that we had to walk to get our officer. Uhh we reported at each uhh... each stopping uhh centre, as ordered, and finally we reached the...the man that we had after and delivered the message, got his signature, and...it was it was asked to repeated it to return to our billets uhh quickly as possible. This we did, and we had a little rest after we got back to our...to our quarters when we got a message to go the opposite direction with another message. This time

it was eh... it was eh a a a bad spot...right in the face of the enemy with eh uhh... uhh better ground it was eh hard to find shelter and uhh...we we got to railroad track and had to lay down and rest and hide behind the bank of the... of the railroad track until we got enough eh...wind stored up for the to make a quick dash across the railroad track in in open view of the enemy...with many shots fired at us but none of them hit us. We found our man, delivered our message and returned, to our, billets. On the way back to our billets... we we checked the conditions of the road, or the highway whichever you call it, from where we had been right up uh nearly past our billets and it was strewn with the mules, ration limbers, soldiers, you name it it was there. They were all dead on the road.

Q: What happened to them dad?

A: Uhh they got caught in a barrage of of of of fire that night. And uhh it was a very difficult spot. It was open, open ground, with no protection eh except for darkness. [Interviewer: yes] And uhh...we got back to our billets. We remained in our billets there until sometime in the afternoon...uhh when we were relieved and again went out of the line into immediate support, uhh ready for a call. Uh during the time we stayed there, uh they issues us with...uhh knee length uhh...uhh shorts for the summer months cuz it was quite warm and we were bare leg from the knees down. Uhh in the afternoon on the first day back out of line wel...we went out on a quite a long parade to eh to have a bath. Uhh... I say a bath I mean a soap on soap off

and get out of the road for the next fella. [Interviewer chuckles faintly in the background] That was about the size of it because uh there was so many to go through, that it had to be uhh a quick bath and get out of the road for the man behind ya. Uhh however, again my name being started with 'S', it started with 'S', I was delayed for quite some time to let the rest of the battalion get eh get through first. During which time, I had another blackout with the flu and had to be put in the ambulance and taken back to the billet without a bath. Uhh I cant remember now how long I did go without a bath. However, I was put in a tent, which was called the hospital, uhh we were visited once in a while with a nurse, a doctor or somebody...see what they could do for us. The fact that I lay around for quietly, my temperature would right on down, the officer would check me and say "you're on duty tomorrow morning as usual"...uhh which I did, instead of arguing I went on duty, my temperature bounces right up again. And uh after a couple of days of this, I went to my Sergeant and told him that it was no good I wasn't getting anywhere uh...health wise uhh that I was I have a billet fixed up telling him where it was and said "that's where I will be if you wanted" uhh...but uh Im Im not going on duty, you can count me on leave without absence you can count me anything you like, just don't bother me I got to get...have a have a change. So that eh a he said, "okay" and I said I crawled into this place I had fixed up...and it was nice and comfortable, it was nice and cool, there was shade trees around, there was a cold spring...very cold water just below

me a little bit, but we were not allowed to drink it. But I used to go down and stick my feet in that... in that cold water just for...just for a moment to eh wash them off and uh cool down.

00:39:04 – TAPE STOP, SIDE B

00:39:06 – TAPE START, SIDE B

Narrator: uhh...we stayed in Bourslon Wood uhh for one day and up until the second evening. Uhh just about dusk when they moved us forward to...toward the front line for uhh... to take up a position in a shallow trench in which we had to lay down to keep out of eh to keep to the level of the ground. And...this...meant no smoking, no lighting matches, un-until the alarm went to get out and get over the top in the morning. During during all that night, there was just there was just no end to 18 pound guns coming along and being part woo-ta-woo ready for the...ready for the shoot off time in the morning at four fifteen. [Interviewer: faintly says, "right"] It was eh not too much trouble uhh...lay in the trench uhh we weren't cold it wasn't cold weather. Ehh... we had a lot in our minds about the... eh all the dangers of going over the top and getting through the barbed wire and the deep shell holes. Uhh we had to visualize in our own mind what we had to do to get our objective; that was the main thing. There was seven of us signaleers, plus our officer that eh...were the uh first to eh jump off and go to the top. Now the signal was given at four fifteen...one gun...fired one shot...in two minutes...fired a second shot. In two minutes, the third shot was fired and

simultaneously from wheel to wheel and 100 guns at the same time...uh all fired.

Q: Those were your guns this time?

A: All our guns [Interviewer: yeah] yes. That eh...covered the entire a... a little city of Hangard, the little town of Hangard eh...which one day would have been a beautiful spot in the valley. Uhh we cut the Germans uhh...off guard that morning. Uhh...they were making the uh a relief, they were bringing in a new bunch and taking a bunch away for to a have a rest. They they hadn't had a clue...evidently...that we had such a big army of men behind us in that section...and...when they uh when the thing [battle] was over we found that we had caught the German officers all ready to sit in to a nice breakfast with boiled eggs, nice toast and butter, jam and what have you, coffee or tea, and...we not only captured the...the officers we captured their cars. Some of them got as far as their car, aye with an attempt to get away and...their car was disabled by gunfire. Now we jumped over the top up to the...up to the front line trench, which was our objective as signaleers...and when I got there I was alone, none of the other signaleers were uh... in sight uhh...which gave me uh big chill up the back. However, I walked up and down this trench, from north to south, for just a little bit of time uhh... keeping my ears open to the...to the big shells that were passing they my hat so close they turned my steel hat half way round my head [Interviewer: hmm]. The coal buckets, that's what they used to call that

shell...the black smoke would a stun ya. However, I finally...met Haggart, a young man from Vancouver who who was attending university and...we hugged each other for a minute, we were both so happy to see each other and then we got down to business. Tried to find a place to set up our instruments, so that we would be ready to... to a... go to work with on a wire, as quick as the brigade linesmen got there with the reels of wire. However, it was still too dark to see where we could set up and it was suggested that we go back to that machine gun post that had been shooting uhh using the machine gun all night long sweeping the whole country between us. I said "maybe our men are up there wounded". It was the two of us went up there and there's where we found...Honorable C.C. Williams, who was badly wounded in the back and uh from what we could tell from his eh actions from his breathing n' what not, that his days were numbered. However we straightened him out, there was nothing else we could do but just...talk to him for a minute and uh...and uh try and calm him down. Uhh while doing that, we heard the groan of another...soldier...not knowing who it was we...investigated...here was our officer, laying there near that machine gun post with...a...his left leg broken in three places between the hip and the ankle. Uhh we got uh him straightened out, in the dark, I grabbed around in the grass and I found a German rifle. I took my big knife and I cut strips of...of cloth from his from his trouser legs, and I bound that rifle onto the onto his leg straight out, so that he could be loaded onto a stretcher

and...tha that much would be ready [footsteps in the background]. Uhh as quickly as we got that done, we also said goodbye to our to our officer, and how much we had appreciated his eh being with us and eh his kind words...and uhh we went back to the...front line trench, but this time a slight streak of daylight was starting to show; and we noticed some white chalk... on the edge of the hill, which indicated that they [the Germans] might be digging a dugout, there might be a hole there, there might be men in that hole there. So Mr. Haggart and I walked up there, with our bayonets on our guns... and the machine that they...the machine loaded with the with shells...and we pointed our guns down into the opening of that hole and called for anybody to walk out with their hands high in the air, if there was anybody there. Six Germans, walked up, with their hands as high as they can reach and stood perfectly still at our command. I more or less was in charge, I didn't have a stripe but I wouldn't take a stripe because my uh education was not good enough. They put me in charge anyhow, so I asked Mr. Haggart for him to hold his gun on them men and if any one of them moved to shoot 'em down. I went round behind them [the six German soldiers], I unbuckled their belts, dropped their guns, their ammunition, their knives, all their war equipment that could be reached, and I said "quick, run over to say that we got 'em all". Then the two of us marched the six of them back to the machine gun post where our wounded men lay; and at that time we met the brigade stretcher bearers, we loaded the two men

on and the stretcher bear the they uh the prisoners, carried the two men on stretchers down the hill to the, to the uh first aid uhh tent. Uh we did know, we did not know where those men went for...for treatment, some place in France but we did not know when; not until sometime in October uhh...when I learned that the Honourable C.C. Williams was in hospital so and so in such a town, I had forgotten the name [of the town]. I sat down and wrote him a letter uhh wishing him well, telling him how well we had gotten along and uh...uh he was very happy to get the letter, he answered the letter and I got his reply. He [Honourable C.C. Williams] kept the letter I wrote, and gave it back to me many years later. And... from there on we marched toward Mons, Belgium

00:50:00

Narrator: ...practically without a uh...uhh a stop for reinforcing our our troops, because we had our enemy uh...push so fast that we did not have time to do much fighting. However they did put up a bit of a fight uhh to try and hold Mons. But just before day break, we marched into the city of Mons and...took up our positions on the square. At which time we were notified, that the Armistice had been signed. Uhh as we passed through, Valenciennes, that's a sheep city? that possibly that you've probably heard because it's so well-known, for the...Valenciennes Lace. The ladies are all very fond of that ladies lace. Now we stayed in Mons, that was the 11th of November, 1918; we stayed there until the 22nd of December. Each one of us had, more or

less, uh found a home for ourselves to put in time. We were very uh, much disappointed when they notified us that we would be leaving Mons before Christmas, and that the big Christmas day that we had planned with the Belgium people that we had met uhh...was all gone. However, we we were starting to march toward the Rhine [river] and eh... this was being done while they were deciding which division, would be the first division to be returned home. However, we were the third division, and the third division received the nod to go home first. We stopped within five miles of...of eh a Waterloo, Waterloo well-known place in history, one that I didn't know much about but eh I learned quite a bit in the... we uh stopped there for a day's rest. And that night I told my Sergeant, that if they couldn't find me in the morning, that they could mark me absence or anywhere he liked, that I was going to walk to Waterloo, I wanted to see Waterloo. I wanted to see uhh Brussels, Belgium. I wanted to see Edith Cavell's Monument, it was, it was lovely to see... and brought back memories. Uhh...so, early that morning, I walked, I took a shortcut and I never been there but I-I knew the direction. At about 10 o'clock I arrived at Waterloo, wet to the hips I say from the long grass that I'd walked through the dew [footsteps in the background]. I sat down and had breakfast. After breakfast I went into the, into the uh panorama of Waterloo, which is something that is worth anybody's uh...to to see. It's a beautiful scene, Napoleon there with his white horse, killed of course...and uh I had to tear myself away there because I wanted to see

some of Brussels. I caught the bus right there at Waterloo, went into Brussels and eh...having me walk to a good dis-distance that morning ay...my legs were a bit weary, so I sat down on a nice bench that, on the street and uh...uh I was not there very long, when a gentleman walked by and I said "good morning" to him and he spoke in nice English "good morning". So ...We were the we were the same in language so I said "that sounds good, sit down and I'll have a talk with ya". This gentleman was a commercial traveller who was in Brussels, Belgium when the war broke out and, he was still there. He wouldn't get home until God knows when. So we had a lovely visit there and he told me quite a bit about Brussels. He told me we were in, in plain view of the monuments that were there, Edith Cavell, the Manel Kipuus [unclear?] and... all those things I said I was glad to see them. Uhh...we spent the whole day. The next man to walk along was a man from our own company, he had been like myself and walked away from the...from the battalion and took a chance on being absent without leave and he was up in Brussels. We visited, we stick together, we uh went to the to the roller skating rink that night and they...when I got my ticket to win, they wanted to pick my ticket up from me as I went through the doors and into the...and I said "souvenir" and they laughed and said "yes". Now I have that yet, I have that ticket yet. Uh... we enjoyed a roller skate for a while, then we got a room in the hotel, we went to bed and had a good night's sleep. Got up next morning, walked back to where we uh left the battalion, and

just got back in time to pick up our equipment and found out that we were heading for home. That the third division had won the, the first place for returning home.

[Distortion] **00:56:19-00:56:20**

Q: Dad there's just a couple points I sorta remembered you talking about earlier and one of them was this Sergeant Major Garrett that was your uh, teacher in the signals in uh, England and he renounced his stripes and went to a Private to and he followed you all through the war and he met his end somewhere around Lamont, is that correct?

A: [Distorted] Yes. [Clearer] Yes. Uhh Sergeant Major Garrett followed me as a Private all the way through the, to the near the end of the war. And, after being relieved one night we were put in immediate support uhh... where we took up our position uhh to be ready for anything. And while sitting on the parapet, with my arm hooked through Sergeant Garrett's arm, talking, and...uh about what it would come through and would have to come through when a shell was thrown by the Germans at the, at the balloon and the the shell burst in the air and a piece of the shrapnel flew and hit Sergeant eh G-Garrett over the center of the nose and went right deep into his head. Uhh... and... at the same moment, I had realized what had happened and I looked and Sergeant Garrett was not in sight. He had been with the force of the bursting of that shell, had forced him to...had thrown him over the corner of the bank and into a ditch. And uh we had found him

and found him that he was dead. Uhh a few of us boys picked him up and run down the hill with him and caught the ambulance as it was on its way to the dressing station, and he was taken away quickly. He breathed for a few hours, but that was all. So that eh uhh...a good friend of mine had gone with me and... was now gone for good. The we did appreciate his, his eh effort to keep up the good will of the Canadian soldiers. [Narrator chokes up and is sad reminiscing the loss of his fallen friend].

Q: Hmm yes, also dad I was thinking the, you mentioned C.C. Williams and this C.C. Williams became the Honorable Williams, uh Minister of Labour and uh Telephones to BC, or uh what the Saskatchewan Government and around 1943 and he's kept in touch with you and is he still here today or... you know?

A: Uhh as far as I know he's still living. [Interviewer: uh-huh] Though I haven't heard from him in quite some time now.

Interviewer: Yes. Well thanks very much for the interview dad, I guess that's about all.

Narrator: That's eh, [coughing in the background] come around to the end of the war. Yeah and uh...uh from there on it probably really doesn't matter, uhh... it's not war anymore. [Interviewer: yeah] You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah

Narrator: Yeah returning from what happened.

Interviewer: Yes. Well thanks very much dad.

Narrator: oh [Distortion]

END OF INTERVIEW