



The Overy Papers

**Number 3 - Remembrance Day
12 November 2013**

Fraternal Greetings Brethren

After being told by our Master he would like a November 11th talk at our next Lodge meeting we went into Ionic Lodge for their November meeting. How could I match a batch of 40 stories from the floor and produce it within a week and only talk for 5 minutes. Anyway this is my effort that relates three true stories. The First dedicated to those wives who were left behind, the Second to those who came home changed in body or mind and Third one to those who stayed behind having given their all. I hope you approve.

On the 11th hour of the 11th day of November 1918 the guns fell silent. The armistice was signed, not the surrender, that did not occur for another seven months on the 26 June 1919 with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles that actually ended the "the war to end all wars," with a peace treaty that, in truth, set the stage for World War II.

By the end of the war, an estimated 10 million soldiers were dead. That averages to about 6,500 deaths every day of the war and made World War I one of the bloodiest wars in history.

Canada contribution to the war effort was nearly 630,000 men and women of whom, over 66,000 were killed, about 1% of the population in 1918.

Of course there were also 140,000 wounded who returned and were never the same again. That is about the size of the population of Abbotsford today, just to put it into perspective.

I find these numbers are just too large to imagine and because of that they start to diminish in our understanding.

But remember that the death of each one of those 66,000 Canadians caused an individual family to grieve and no one suffered more from the death of a Canadian Forces Member than his close friends and family.

This of course is also the same for the 140,000 wounded who returned to their families who had the problem of living with a person who is not the same as when he or she left.

So to try and put it in perspective I will relate two of my own experiences and one that come from many sources.

I was born in 1939 just before the 2nd World War and I thought the war a great time and when peace arrived wondered what it was all about I had never known a life without war.

My first story is about my mother who decided with all the intuition of the female members of our family that living near the beaches of Kent was a bit dodgy in 1940 and we moved to a small town just outside Coventry.

Now Coventry was not the safest place as 1940 drew to a close especially as she worked the night shift at the Armstrong Siddley Aircraft works that was in Coventry.

She went to work on November the tenth just before an air raid. She arrived at the factory to find in ruins and nobody was allowed to leave the city until they were told.

She and a friend decided to help the many children who were running in the streets after getting separated from their parents, and placed them in the Crypt of the Cathedral for safety.

That night the Cathedral took many direct hits and all the children were killed.

How do you get over that? She never did and often while I was writing my family histories she would start crying for no other reason other than being back there on those three days of terror.

My father meanwhile had gone to France in early 1940 to stem any German Invasion. He had his anti tank gun with his ration of three rounds of ammunition and stood firm, Then on May 10 the 6th Panzer division under Staffenburg and the 7th Panzer division under Rommel swept through France arriving at my Dad on the 20th. By then nothing was going to stop them and by the time they reached the coast my Dad was on his way to a Forced Labour Camp in Poland where he spent the next 5 years.

In 1945 he was on the March of Freedom that stretched over a thousand miles in a brutal winter. 50% of the prisoners did not make it and either died of the cold or were shot because they could not keep up.

I did write his story but it only told about half of what happened and when my grandchildren took it to school for Remembrance Day my daughter edited the worse bits out. I do not know what he went through but I do know he

would often wake up screaming at night and this happened often until the day he died over 50 years later.

Last but not least, I bring you a story closer to home. It is about a young soldier who lived in Abbotsford. His name was James Dunbar Blacklock and had been born in Dumfriese, Scotland in 1910. His parents David and Helen Blacklock had emigrated to Canada in 1925 when he was 15 and he got a job as baker in the Abbotsford Bakery where he worked for 8 years, Then, in 1940 he enlisted in the Canadian Scottish Regiment and was stationed at Parsons Bridge Camp, Colwood, Victoria Island.

In June 1942 he went overseas to England. He was a star soccer player of the MSA area and in early 1944 he played with the Champion Canadian Team in Britain.

In the early hours of D-Day, 6 June 1944, he landed at Juno Beach, France, with the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division.

He was wounded in that operation and a message was sent to advise his parents and his brother Dick and his sisters Dolly and Heather of his serious condition.

He was on a hospital ship on route to England when on the 10 June 1944 Sergeant James Dunbar Blacklock succumbed to his wounds, he was aged 34. He was buried in the Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey UK along with approximately 2,400 other Canadian victims of the Second World War

A story, that is typical of thousands of others Except:-

On the 24 March 1942 two months before he went to England he stood in this room and he took his Entered Apprentice Degree.

Historic events then took over and he was shipped overseas two months later in June 1942.

Undaunted, on the 9 May 1944, our Lodge minutes state that he had taken his Fellowcraft and Master Mason Degrees in a lodge in England, just one month before he died.

Thank you for listening and whatever I say may we continue in peace and harmony.

Bro. Bill Overy

Member of the Education Committee of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon.

