

ARTHUR LEONARD DUNPHY

Pittsford, Vermont  
16 December, 1963

Thomas H. Roddall Esq,

Dear Sir:

The December Atlantic Roadside carries an article about you, or you already know. It states among other things that you are a son of Col Roddall, 8th Canadian 90 Winnipeg Rifles.

I served in that unit, and there are one or two things that came to my mind about your father that might be of interest. Bear in mind that I was probably the most rear rank private in the whole C.-E.-7.

① We were stationed in some small French village for some purpose that only those in authority knew, I was walking down the street probably looking for an estomac

(over)

when who should appear but Col. R.  
He fixed me with a talented eye  
and said: what army are you in?  
Meekly I replied the Canadian. What  
name - I gave it to him with rank  
and regimental number. What  
Battalion? Eyateh Sir - not my  
Battalion said your father, your  
tunic is unbuttoned - take his  
name Sgt. I can't remember if I  
was ever punished.

② Our outfit had a real tough  
time in the loop - lens area one  
winter, the trip I refer to now  
we spent four days and night  
almost in one place stuck in the  
gooey mud in the trench, one  
time around two or three men  
who appeared but Col. R. coming  
nearby, he stopped on the edge  
of the trench, we said stay  
halt a little sir, but it was  
too late. The trench gave away  
he slid down into the mud.  
He said "my god boys I am on my  
arse. He was and wet to the  
skin.

ARTHUR LEONARD DUNPHY

The only time I found him with  
out words was on the same tour.  
We had been on patrol between  
trenches with ~~us~~ was a sixteen  
year old from Montreal (how he  
got in I don't know). When we got  
back Col. L. was waiting he  
glared at the sixteen year old and  
said "What were you doing out there?"  
The boy said "The best I could do"

③ The day the Col. was killed, I  
was in the first wave, we lost as  
I recall 570 out of 750 in half  
an hour. The Col. was reported  
to have stepped out of the woods  
~~to~~ from which we had kicked off  
and against ~~and~~ ~~vice~~ ~~renewed~~  
The situation through field glasses  
(we were temporarily held up) - a  
sniper it was reported did the  
rest. a brave man your father

Compliments of the season  
A. L. Dunphy

December 27, 1963

Arthur Leonard Dunphy, Esq.,  
Pittsford, Vermont.

Dear Mr. Dunphy,

Your letter was very interesting and amusing, and it was very good of you to write. Father was a martinet, even in family life, as I found out to my own discomfort many a time; but he was also strictly fair in his judgements and -- this may seem strange to you, although a number of his old soldiers have remarked it to me over the years -- under the crust he was a kindly and even sentimental man.

Many former 8th Battalion officers and men have written to me, and some have visited me here. I last saw Father in the summer of '15, when he returned to Canada for a brief convalescent leave after recovering from wounds in the arm and head sustained at Ypres. I was just a boy then, of course. So it has interested me intensely to learn anecdotes and details of the time up to his death.

A few years ago I went over the Amiens battlefield, following the movements of 8th Battalion step by step right up to the fatal Hatchet Wood, which still rises, dark and ominous, across the shallow but wide draw in the wheat fields which the Batt. had to cross. After the battle the dead were gathered and buried on the crest of the first rise, looking across to the wood; the burial ground was made permanent and called Manitoba Cemetery. Beside the 8th Batt. officers and men (~~men~~ 67) there are graves of more than 50 men of other units, found in the wide stretch of wheatfields which were under fire from Hatchet Wood.

Former staff officers at Brigade told me that it was "one of the most heroic actions of the war", and that the loss was "unavoidable under the circumstances."

What happened was this. In the general battle plan the 8th Batt. was to march in reserve during the first day. It would then attack the German rear line, the so-called Blue Line, in the vicinity of Rosieres. This "Blue Line" was a sketchy affair, consisting partly of the old French trench line dug to defend Amiens in the fall of 1914, which was in bad shape, with very little wire, and that of course on the wrong side for present German purposes.

The success of the first day's drive (Aug.8) was so great that Army staff expected only light resistance at the Blue Line, and all units reserved for the second day's advance had firm orders

to attack "all out", without waiting for tank or artillery support.

As you know, 8th Batt. reached Caix on the late afternoon or early evening of the first day, dug in, and prepared for the next morning's attack on Rosieres, whose roofs could be seen across the fields. However, there had been a hitch on the Canadian right, where it linked with the French. As a result, the next day's order of battle was changed, with various Canadian units making a flank march to the right during the night. In the case of 8th Batt. this meant a march to Hospital Wood, near the Caix-Le Quesnel road, with the new line of advance towards Warvillers. The stiffest German resistance was expected about Le Quesnel on the right, and all of the available tanks and most of the available artillery were concentrated there.

As things turned out, the German resistance about Le Quesnel crumpled fairly easily, and 8th Batt. got the toughest nut to crack. Elements of a German reserve division had arrived in this part of the Blue Line early in the evening of Aug. 8th, and about 400 German infantry, well equipped with machine guns, had planted themselves in Hatchet Wood. Here they had a wide field of fire, not only to the front, but to both flanks.

Owing to the hasty re-arrangement of the 1st Division battle order, none of its units were properly in position to attack at daylight on August 9, as planned. In fact, the whole attack was delayed until past noon. Thus the initial advantage of surprise was lost, the Germans were given valuable hours to dig in and site their machine guns, and they were able to work up some artillery for support.

The final order from Brigade reached Father at nearly 1 p.m. Various patrols crossing the Caix-Le Quesnel road during the preceding evening had reported heavy and accurate German fire from Hatchet Wood, which commanded the whole approach beyond the road. This had been reported to Brigade; but there was no change in the order to 8th Batt.

Father said to his second-in-command (Major "Bug" Saunders), "Bug, this is going to be a bad one." Originally the Batt. was to go forward with Saunders in the third wave, while Father and Batt. H.Q. moved up from the corner of Hospital Wood. But now Father insisted that Saunders remain with Batt. H.Q., while he himself moved up with the troops attacking Hatchet Wood from the front. Saunders protested, but that was that.

One officer told me long afterwards, "Your Dad had arranged for two companies to make their way around to the flanks of the wood, while the rest attacked from the front. It was obvious that the troops attacking from the front, across that wide draw, were

going to cop it; but this movement was necessary if the flanking companies were to make a successful approach. Your Dad had never asked a man to go where he wouldn't go himself, so he elected to go with the front attack. It was no time to hesitate. The troops advancing on our right and left were wide open to fire from Hatchet Wood. We had to get in there and knock the Germans out."

Shortly after the front attack crossed over the first rise and descended into the draw, Father was hit with a bullet in the right arm. It knocked him down, and someone (his faithful batman, I believe) bandaged the wound, crouching in the wheat. Father then jumped up, and put up his field glasses, trying to see the progress of the flanking companies.

Lieut. Herbert Nowat, who was with the front attack, told me, "We were advancing by short rushes and then dropping in the wheat. The German machine<sup>gun</sup> fire was terrific. Each time we dropped, I had a notion that if I stuck so much as a finger into sight above the wheat tops it would be shot off."

Father was struck by a burst of m.g. bullets in the chest. (Three went through his map-case, which I saw afterwards.) He just had time to gasp, "Send for Major Saunders -- take command at once."

You know the rest. Once the 8th Batt. got into the wood the Germans chucked in, after a brief but bloody scuffle, and there were about 300 prisoners. Searching the wheatfields for the 8th Batt. dead and wounded, Padre Whillans and others came upon Father's body about sunset. As he wrote me some years later, "The sounds of battle had died away, and we could hear the larks singing in the sky."

The exact casualties in 8th Batt. for August 8 and 9 (nearly all on Aug. 9) were 8 officers and 59 other ranks killed; 7 officers and 309 other ranks wounded; 52 missing. The missing were mostly stragglers who turned up at Warvillers later on.

As you have observed, Father was very proud of "my regiment" if he was sharp on discipline in his officers and men, he was also sharp with Brigade in all matters pertaining to their welfare -- hence the nickname "Uncle Tom" by which many knew him in and outside of the regiment.

Sincerely,

ARTHUR LEONARD DUNPHY

14 Jan 1964  
Pittsford, VT.

Dear Mr. Raddall:

Your kind letter Dec 27 was most appreciated, and your description of action on the 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> for the most part confirms my memory of it.

Yesterday we experienced a very severe storm, days such as that are not comfortable for me. I retired from business at sixty am now 82, but and find bad winter days difficult to get through. I'm a tract salesman and a landscape painter, and many other things I can do out doors, so ~~the~~ yesterday after I re read your letter, I thought I would set down what I did remember about the two days, or at least the last day, I scribbled these recollections off and send them to you as one private participation as brought to mind after all these years.

I must remark that during my  
business career I learned that a  
successful company or organization  
is for the most part the reflection  
of its leaders, my conclusion therefore  
is that the several D.C.'s and many  
other decorations received by the 8th  
in these two days can only reflect  
on the leadership of a brave and  
good soldier, who himself set us all  
on example - Col Roddall.

Sincerely yours

G. L. Dumphy.



Jan. 19, 1964

Dear Mr. Dunphy,

Thank you for your further notes of the Amiens battle, which I have added to my file of 8th Battalion information.

Just after the Second World War I met in Toronto a man named White, a former member of the 8th, and spent an evening at his home. At Amiens he was a lieutenant commanding a rifle platoon ( I don't know which Company) and he was severely wounded not far from the spot where my father died. During the Second World War his son was with an armoured regiment chasing the Germans over the old War One battlefields after the debacle in Normandy. There was no serious fighting in this area -- the Germans were too disorganized -- and in the city of Amiens itself some light British armoured cars surprised and captured General Eberbach and most of the staff of the German Seventh Army.

Here and there a few Germans stopped long enough to do a bit of sniping, and by one of the most amazing coincidences of the two great wars young White was wounded only a short distance from the spot where his father was shot in '18.

Major "Clickety-Click" was of course Saunders, a veteran of the 8th from 1914, and known to his fellow officers as "Bug", an old nickname that originated, I suppose, in his short height. I have a photograph of him with the famous "Foghorn" Macdonald, who was Transport Officer of the 8th for many months in France, a big man standing over six feet. Father had scribbled on the back of the picture, "The long and the short of the L.B.D.'s"

Manitoba Cemetery is some distance off the Caix-Le Quesnel road, and the approach is a narrow clay cart-track through the grain fields, very sticky going in wet weather. In the visitor's book, kept in a niche in the cemetery wall as in all the war cemeteries, I found only French names, and these only few -- presumably people from the farms thereabouts.

With every good wish for 1964,

Sincerely,