I was born on April 6, 1899, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. My father was born in 1832 on the old family homestead which is now a part of the city of Hamilton, Ontario. My dad’s ancestors had immigrated to the New England colonies to that part of the country of which the governor was William Penn. Later, following the American Revolution, it became Pennsylvania. His ancestors were royalists and following the revolution they were no longer welcome in that part of the country so they left and ended up on land covered by virgin forest, Southern Ontario.

They planted wheat between the tree stumps where they had cut down the trees. They cut the wheat with scythes, threshed it by hand, then took it to a nearby grist mill run by a water wheel for power. In payment for this service the miller would retain a percentage of the flour. Their clothing was made from hand-carded wool obtained from the sheep which they kept. When they killed one of their cattle to provide them with a supply of fresh meat they could immerse the hide in water in which oak bark had been added. The hide remained in this mixture for about a year and when the year was up the hide was considered to be tanned and ready to be used. Once a year a travelling shoemaker would come around and from the cow-hide make shoes for the whole family. The shoemaker would take farm produce for his payment.

When any part of their land was cleared the huge amounts of trees would be piled and burned. Any ashes obtained from the burning would be kept, put into barrels and shipped to the “old country” to be used in the making of soap. Money received from this process was usually the only cash income the land owners received. For sweetening they used maple syrup obtained from the abundance of sugar maple trees in the area. They gathered honey from the wild bees to supplement their sweet stock. The only thing they put out money for was some salt.

My mother, then Jenny Purvis, and her widowed sister, Annie Symond, with Annie’s two children, came from London, England, to Montreal in the 1890’s. Aunt Annie got a job there on a telephone switchboard as an operator. They did not remain in Montreal long, soon moved west to Winnipeg. Here Jenny and my father met and before long they were married. So it was that I was born in Winnipeg in 1899.

In 1901 our family plus Aunt Annie’s family moved further west to what was then Strathcona, now South Edmonton. My dad operated a freighting business. He took people and any freight that he could get and moved it to the end of Edmonton, Athabasca Landing on the Athabasca River. The freighting was done by horse and wagon, each trip took several weeks to complete.

Dad wasn’t too fond of hauling freight so, in 1902, he filed on a homestead and he, my mother, a recently acquired brother and myself moved to east of High River in the southern part of what was before long the province of Alberta. At that time Alberta was a part of the Northwest Territories. Aunt Annie and her two children stayed in Edmonton on the north side of the river.

In 1903 my mother passed away and so my brother Thomas and myself went to live with our Aunt Annie in Edmonton. Her home, now ours, was at the corner of 7th Street, later 107 Street and Jasper. At the time 7th Street was the outskirts of Edmonton.

Not too long after we had gone to live with my aunt, in 1904, my father came on the scene driving a democrat with a team of horses. He had come all the way from his farm at High River, 240 miles by dirt road, and he had come to pay us all a visit. One day he told my aunt that he was taking my brother and me for a little buggy ride. However, instead of just going for a short ride he headed out for High River. I remember quite well riding along in the democrat. There were no bridges at the time so we had to ford any of the many streams or rivers that we came to and I remember several times the water would come up over the floor boards of the democrat.

We got as far as about where Leduc is now, some forty miles south of Edmonton, and here we were overtaken by an RCMP constable. He hustled us all back to Edmonton. The next day we were in court deciding in front of a judge who had legal jurisdiction over we two boys, my father or our Aunt Annie. Our father won. In no time at all we were again headed for High River.

At High River my dad used to go to town about once a month for supplies and when there he would attend the local auction sale of horses. He would buy a couple of what would be wild horses and he would hitch them to the back of the wagon and take them home. He would then break them into using harness and also a saddle, then bring them back to the sale sometime later and sell them for twice as much money as he had paid in the first place.

On one of these occasions when I went with him, the auctioneer in town asked me to go to the printer’s and get a sale announcement printed on it. He gave me a bell to ring, then told me to walk through the town advertising the auction. The first time I did it he gave me ten cents, the first money that I had ever earned.

Once when I was big enough to go to town by myself, on the way back home I had to cross the railway tracks. On one of the sidings I saw a long string of cattle cars loaded with animals I had never seen before. To me they looked like strange cattle. I told my dad about them and he said, “Those aren’t cattle, they’re buffalo.”

It seems that a Mexican, living in Montana, had rounded up what was then pretty well the last herd of wild buffalo around and had offered them for sale to the U.S. government. The U.S. had refused the offer and so the Canadian Government bought them and they were moved to Banff National Park. Later many of the buffalo were moved to the then Wainwright National Park and some to the Wood National Park in Northern Alberta.

In 1905 our dad took us boys to Edmonton to witness the official program for Alberta becoming a province. I remember seeing the sham battle put on by members of the Royal Alberta Dragoons. Their Commanding Officer was then Captain W. Griesbach, later to command the 49th, the Regiment that I spent some time with in WWI.

Next to our farm at High River, Pat Burns had a ranch where he fed and fattened cattle. Once Burns took a group of cowboys with him down to Texas where he purchased a large herd of Texas longhorn cattle and brought them back to his ranch to fatten up over the winter. The winter of 1906 and 07 was extremely cold and long and the majority of the longhorns did not survive. This was the last of this type of cattle he kept and they were soon replaced by Herefords and Shorthorns. At one time there was a stuffed head of one of these Longhorns on the wall of the Ranchman’s Club in Medicine Hat. The horns measured over seven feet from tip to tip.

Dad passed away in 1907. I was only eight years old at the time and my brother Thomas was only six and a half. Once again we went to live with our Aunt Annie in Edmonton. She had two children of her own, a boy and a girl, and they were just a bit older than we were.

My aunt kept things going financially by giving music lessons and taking in the odd boarder. At the time we were living at 7th Street, still, and I went to the McKay Avenue School. Later we moved to what was then Kirkness Street, later 95th Street. My brother and I enrolled at the Norwood School.

My Aunt Annie was a deeply religious person, a Baptist, and consequently we had our share of religious training. On Sundays we had to attend church three times. Alberta’s first Lieutenant Governor, Bulyea, attended the same church as we did. His pew, however, was furnished with red carpet and red cushions. Our pew was right behind his, we had only wooden seats, no cushions.

Since my aunt was also a music teacher, she taught me to play the piano. The only music I heard or learned to play was either religious or classical. The knowledge of classical music that I received gave me an appetite in later life for this type of music and even now I still enjoy it.

The musical training that I did receive led me to join Mike’s Newsboys Band where I played a B-flat brass horn. Our bandmaster at the time was a Mr. Bullock, a veteran of the Boer War. We got to be very good for a boys band. The businessmen of Edmonton supplied us with uniforms and the band made tours of Europe and the U.S.A. Family finances didn’t allow me to go along.

When I was eleven years old I got a paper route. Each morning I made myself a route for the Edmonton Journal as well. I delivered the Bulletin in the morning and some 120 Journals after school. At the time the papers used to cost each customer ten cents a week. Four cents of this amount went to the delivery boy so I used to make myself about $30.00 each month. The newspapers used to come out with “extras” every once in awhile, special editions when something “big” came up like the sinking of the Titanic or the outbreak of WWI. The “extras” sold for a nickel and out of that I got two cents. All the money I made went into the family pot and I guess that ever since then, at age 12, I have been earning my own living.

In those days some of the schools used to have a cadet corps and the school that I attended, Norwood, had one. A Mr. Flint commanded the cadets and I met up with him some years later when he was Lieut Flint, enlisted in the 49th. I was alongside him when we were attacking the Germans at Canal du Nord, in September, 1918, where Lieut Flint lost his life.

Our cadet corps was supplied with equipment left over from the South African Boer War and we had Snider carbines that fit into leather holsters which ordinarily would be attached to a saddle on a horse. So we drilled as cavalry but we never had any horses. Instead of form fours, it was “form right” or “sections left.”

I can also recall the first car to “roll” down Jasper Avenue, it was a little red auto. There was the first street car to run out to Swift’s packing plant — another big celebration. I was there when they had to load the Low Level bridge with railway gravel cars filled with gravel, so that the bridge wouldn’t float away in the “big flood.” Then we used to go and watch when the native Indians gathered at Fort Edmonton for their treaty money and and they would celebrate with many of their native dances. Each summer we would be able to go camping at Cooking Lake, a really good way for a young lad to spend part of his summer. Boyhood only lasts for a little while!

In 1915 I was taking drafting lessons at the Edmonton Technical School, there was also a war going on. On February 7, 1916, I decided to enlist in the Canadian Army. Another one of those who joined up at the age of 16. I had no trouble getting through the medical part of joining up since our family doctor was the army medical examiner.

We trained all summer long at the military camp at Sarcee Indian Reserve, then a few miles out of Calgary. Come fall we were shipped off to England. The 49th had suffered many casualties on the Somme during the summer so it wasn’t very long before I found myself on the way to France to join the 49th as a very young reinforcement.

During the winter of 1916–17 we did front line service which all seemed to be fairly routine. Two weeks in the front line and then two weeks in support. Following this we were supposed to have a two week rest period but this very seldom ever happened.

I remember one rest period we were enjoying, they had us burying telephone cable. We were spread out about six feet between each soldier from the proximity of the front line and back towards the artillery some two miles back of us. We had to dig a trench six feet deep, put the cable in and have the trench covered before daylight arrived. The cable was for our communication between the front line and the artillery, a far cry from the radio and telephones that the army enjoys today.

Sometimes during the daylight hours large balloons, observation balloons, were sent up from the back close to heavy duty trucks, well back from the general hundred feet in the air. There would be an observer in a large basket under the balloon and he would be in telephone communication with the ground observers. This way they could watch what was going on in the enemy trenches and report back to the people on the ground. Once in awhile a German fighter plane would appear on the scene and he would shoot the balloon down.

One time when we were watching the action in the air we saw Billy Bishop, noted Canadian war ace, chase after one of those German planes and shoot it down. It was quite exciting at the time.

The night previous to Easter Monday all our troops were dispatched to the front lines and on Easter Monday, April 9, 1917, the 49th took part in the battle for Vimy Ridge. During this battle a break had occurred in the line between the 3rd and 4th Divisions. The Captain commanding our “C” Company led about 80 of us into this break. At the time the position was being heavily shelled by the German artillery.

Two of us, myself and another soldier whose name I have now forgotten, were assigned to a shell hole and told to start digging in opposite directions, in order to establish a new “Front line”. We hadn’t been digging very long before a shell dropped in on us, into the hole which we were occupying. I was blown many feet into the air and I found myself “floating” around in a very brilliant light. A great feeling of peace and tranquility came over me. I felt as though I could look down into the the shell hole where my body lay. I saw my platoon sergeant, Al Cantin, jump down into the shell hole, turn the body over and then ask one of the other soldiers where whether he thought I was alive or dead. I could see and hear them talking very distinctly but I could not reply to them. At the time of this shelling I was the ripe old age of 18, as a matter of fact Sgt Cantin was also only 18, three weeks older than I was.

After a short while I regained consciousness and looking around found my officer, who had led us into the area, lying beside me with a shrapnel hole through his foot. On the other side of the officer was the soldier who had been doing the digging with me, he was apparently dead.

The captain finally spoke up and said to me, “We aren’t of much use here, we might as well try to get back to a first aid station if we can.”

So, to avoid being hit again by any stray shells, we crawled on our stomach as best we could towards the rear and away from the action. Having gone several hundred yards back we came to a German dugout that had been taken over by us only that morning. Here we rested and it wasn’t all that long before one of our company runners found us and he passed a message to the Captain. The Captain replied to the message giving it back to the runner, at the same time he told the runner to go down into the dugout to see if he could find anything that would be of use to us for the time being. Lo and behold the runner came up with a bottle of whiskey and a box of cigars. I was too sick to partake of any of these “extras”.

We told the runner to look for any Red Cross personnel on his way back and to let them know where we were. He apparently did locate some members since it was not long before we were in an ambulance and on our way to a field hospital.

It took me some six months to recover from this adventure and in February, 1918, I was back with the Regiment. I managed to get a gunshot wound in my left arm after I had been back with the unit for about a month, and in a couple of weeks I was back with the unit again.

It wasn’t long after these hospital trips that our troops broke through the Hindenburg Line, it was late summer, 1918. Before we knew it the Germans had begun to retreat.

On our way to Mons we came upon an abandoned artillery gun of a British artillery unit. The six horses used to haul the gun lay in the middle of the road — dead. No artillery personnel were to be found. It was a mystery to us as to how the gun got there, here it was ahead of our troops so the only thing we could come up with was that during the night they must have got lost and passed through us. A German night patrol had probably found them and taken the personnel prisoners.

Belgium women, who had probably all been in hiding, when they saw us approaching they came out with dishpans and carving knives and immediately began to cut large chunks of meat off the dead horses. They had been limited to only what the Germans would give them for rations and so were on the verge of starvation.

On the morning of November 11, 1918, our Regiment entered the city of Mons, Belgium. Having entered it and reaching the main square in the centre of the city, we were all lined up and given the command to unload our rifles. We were advised that at 1100 hours an armistice had been signed. Finally the war had come to an end.

On November 15 I was assigned to an honor guard that was to meet King Albert of Belgium in the main square. Here the Canadian Military authorities turned the keys to the City of Mons over to the King and he, in turn, gave the keys to the Mayor of Mons. Belgium was now once again under civil law and all military law was suspended.

The war had begun in August, 1914, with the retreat of the British Army from Mons. Now some four years and three months later an Armistice was being signed with the Germans retreating from Mons.

With the war having come to an end for us the next thing was getting back home. The story went around that during the war the Germans had sunk many of our ships and thus there were not many boats available to take the troops back home. The story also made the rounds that even tho’ the Americans got into the battle as late as they did, when troops were being sent home the Americans grabbed all the boats and shipped their own people back first. There was much disappointment among us since there didn’t seem to be any hurry to get us back home. Sometimes governments work quite slowly.

The large part of our 49th made it home in March of 1919, it wasn’t until June 25, 1919, that I was able to get home and get my discharge. There were no ticker tape parades left by then.

Having returned home it was now “civvy street” for me. My brother, Thomas, who had enlisted in the Canadian Air Force, got his discharge and returned to his former occupation as a school teacher. My cousin, Lindsay, now also discharged from the Army, thought we would make good farmers so we decided to take some land under the Veterans Land Act. We each filed on a half section of land next to each other and it cost each of us ten dollars. The land was at Dapp, some 60 miles or so north of Edmonton.

We got ourselves a wagon, a team of horses and a few supplies and headed there, a journey which took us about three days. Dapp was then a spot on the railway, The Edmonton Dunvegan and British Columbia (Ever Dilapidated and Badly Constructed we called it) Railway. The place itself consisted of an old railway boxcar set on a siding and it had the traditional pot-bellied stove sitting in the middle of it. This was the railway station. There was a log cabin where the postmaster and his wife lived and it served as the post office. There were no other buildings.

When we had located the land on which we had filed we set to work to build our living quarters. It was a log house, about twenty by thirty feet, one and a half stories high and we built it on my cousin Lindsay’s half section. We managed to complete the house before fall so we sent for the rest of our family, Aunt Annie Symon and Lindsay’s sister. At the ripe old age of twenty years I was now a homesteader with my own half section of land.

The telephone system in Alberta was owned by the Provincial Government and that fall I got a contract from them to supply 300 tamerac poles for their telephone lines. They required the tops of the poles to be five inches in diameter so quite often when there was a long pole that needed to be shortened some ten or twelve feet of log would be left over on the butt end. With these pieces I constructed another small log house for myself. The contract with the Government paid 25¢ for each pole, peeled and delivered to the Dapp railway siding.

Other people had filed on the farmland available in the area so it wasn’t long before we were able to hold a community meeting. We decided to build a school house and my brother Thomas became the first teacher there. During the winter months we would hold a community dance occasionally in the school. One of our neighbors was quite good playing a fiddle. His specialty was quadrilles and calling square dances so most times he was the musician for the evening. Winter nights in those days were very cold. We heated rocks, wrapped them in blankets and put them in our sleigh to provide warmth and comfort for any of our neighbors who were picked up on the way to the dance. We would dance all night until the “cows came home.”

Some ten miles north of Dapp there was a sawmill that had started up and they had decided to have a logging road built several miles long into a large stand of timber. Two Danes and I took the contract to clear a mile of this road. We had to clear the trees out, then blast all the stumps to a width of a little better than thirty feet. Next we had to dig two trenches eight feet apart and about a foot deep along this clearing that we had made. The trenches would fill up with water and when it got cold freeze solid and thus a smooth roadway. Logging sleighs had runners on them eight feet apart so with these frozen pathways they could haul large loads of logs along them with using only one team of horses.

One of the Danes, Chris was his first name, did all the blasting with dynamite and at noon his brother would light a fire and boil water for our tea. For water he would use snow, he would scoop it up from anywhere nearby into an empty lard pail. There were many rabbits in the area so many times when he gathered the snow it would contain rabbit droppings so he would just brush them off before he made the tea, he probably missed occasionally.

Since dynamite doesn’t explode all that well when it is cold, Chris would place the dynamite sticks on old apple boxes near the fire to warm up. Between rabbit droppings and warming up the dynamite I never did enjoy my lunchtime very much.

When fastening a fuse cap to a string of fuses for the dynamite usually it would be clinched by using pliers. Not so Chris, he couldn’t be bothered with using pliers, he would clinch the fuse with his teeth. There was enough explosion in one of those caps to blow his head off with no trouble.

Once when we needed some kerosene for our lanterns we had to go to the company warehouse for our supply. There were barrels of kerosene and gasoline stored their on their sides with spigots attached to them so you just turned on the spigot and filled your container. It was dark in the warehouse so Chris would light a match to see which was kerosene and which was gas. I was getting ready to run when he finally decided on the right barrel.

One winter I got a job hauling railway ties on the Athabasca River. For hauling they gave me a mule and a stallion and they were shod with sharp shoes so that they could work on the ice of the river. It was some six or seven miles that the ties had to be hauled down river from the tie camp to Smith’s Landing and here the ties were loaded into railway boxcars. The loggers would fell the trees, flatten two sides with a broad axe and then cut the trees into eight foot lengths. The ties were then left along the trails where we would pick them up and load them onto sleighs. The ties being “green wood” they probably weighed around a hundred pounds each and so it was tough work. Sometimes the temperature would go down around the sixty below (Fahrenheit) mark so we had to cover ourselves completely with warm clothing, only our eyes would show. The mule and the horse that I had worked out well except when the wind blew the snow off the river ice. The ice would be crystal clear and you could see the bottom of the river no trouble at all. The mule didn’t like clear ice and would refuse to walk on it. Anytime I had clear ice I had to walk ahead and cover it over with snow.

Once during the winter, a neighbor, who lived about a mile from us, came to our house about one in the morning and told us his wife was about to have a baby and could I please go and fetch the doctor. The nearest doctor lived in Westlock fourteen miles to the south by direct route, thirty miles by dirt road. If you went the direct route six miles of it was frozen muskeg so I saddled up a horse and took off. Since the night was clear and the moon was shining I went the muskeg route. It was real cold and occasionally I had to get off the horse and run alongside until I got warmed up. I made it to Westlock about seven in the morning, got the doctor and since he had a cutter he had to go the long way by road. It was late that evening before he arrived at the neighbors and everything turned out well. Oftentimes I have wondered what happened to that little baby girl, how life might have treated her over these many years.

Another day a couple of men called at our door and they turned out to be of Finnish descent. They were driving a Ford and were headed for the Peace River country. They wanted to know how the road to the Peace country was. I told them that they were now at the end of the road, if they wanted to go any further it would have to be via the railway. They decided to file for a homestead in this locality and they stayed with us until they could get settled.

One of them bought himself a shotgun for hunting partridge. He came back one day with a couple of birds, unloaded his gun, pulled the trigger to make sure it was on safe and boom! a big hole in the floor where I hadn’t planned on there being one. It was a sixteen gauge pump gun, he figured he had emptied it of all the shells but I guess he hadn’t.

The two of them got some land, set up a small camp and went ahead and built themselves a log house. They hewed the logs flat on four sides and dovetailed the corners, much different than when we built our house. We just “chinked” with wet clay to make our house more air tight. The logs in their house fit real well so they didn’t have to use any wet clay and I guess you could say that it was the best house in the community.

Come springtime they needed a license for their car so they went to a town some thirty miles away. When they went to get the license for the car the police there found the car had been stolen in North Dakota. They were arrested right then and there and it was also found that the two had jumped their Finnish sailing vessel while it was in New York harbor. Not only where they arrested but they eventually were probably deported as well.

After they had gone, a French-Canadian settler in need of a house for himself dismantled this Finnish one and re-erected it on his own farm. He now had the best log house in the community.

During 1922 I got tired of the farming bit so I left Dapp and headed for the south part of the province.

I got a job on a farm in the High River area, it wasn’t too far from where I had cousins that were also farmers. Since I was only a couple of miles from where they lived I used to get a horse from where I was working and go and visit with them, usually on Sundays.

I hadn’t had any trouble with this one horse until one Sunday I got off it to open the gate to the farm and I must have accidently touched the horse on the rump with my toe. His rear end went up in the air and I landed in the dirt. The horse went along the road grazing with the reins dangling between his front legs. When I caught up to him I reached for the reins and at that time he gave me both of his back feet on my left shoulder. This blow squashed a nerve in my shoulder so my left arm and hand became useless. After this I wasn’t able to work at my job on the other farm so my cousins took me in with the hope that my hand and arm would get better before too long.

My cousins had a section of land that they used for pasturing a bunch of cattle and some work horses. They gave me the job of going down to the pasture every morning to bring back the horses that were to be used that day. They gave me a good pony to ride and since my arm was still in rough shape, the horse did most of the work.

One day, however, I didn’t notice the cattle herd bull and when I opened the gate he made a run for it and got out onto the road. I had a whip with me, we called it a black snake, so I was able to hang the bridle reins on the saddle horn, guide the pony with my knees and use the whip on the bull with my good arm. However, I couldn’t get the bull turned around back into the pasture and of course I had to be careful he didn’t take after us. Eventually we got down the road to the farm where I had originally been working and the bull ran in there. The farmer was milking his cows at the time so in nothing flat there were milk pails and cows scattering in all directions. Then the bull got in the chicken coop and chickens and feathers were soon flying everywhere. Finally I managed to get him turned around and back down the road to where he originally came from.

It took about three months for my arm and hand to get better and when I was improved I went into Calgary to look for something to do. Work was very scarce at the time but I got word of a vacancy in the Lord Strathcona Horse Unit and so before long I had enlisted in the cavalry.

We trained at Sarcee Camp, the same camp that I had been at in WWI. It wasn’t long before I was able to do “tent pegging”, this was where they put tent pegs in the ground and you rode by on your horse at full speed ahead and tried to pick up a peg with your sword. Then there were the “jumps”. They stuffed a gunny sack with hay, attached it to the side of a horse jump and as you went over the jump with your horse you had to stab the sack with your sword. We even trained for a musical ride held at the Calgary Stampede.

Our dress uniforms were blue with yellow stripes down the leg. Every Saturday night we would go to the dance at the Legion and we thought we were the “cat’s meow”. When we entered the hall the orchestra would play the “Parade of the Wooden Soldiers”.

After I had been in the cavalry for several months one of the officers wanted me to act as his groom. This meant looking after his horse but it was also good for a few dollars extra. With money in mind, I took it on.

The officers used to play polo every Saturday and one of them wanted a more “spirited” horse for his own use. I volunteered to get him one. The officer and I went to the “remount” stable, the horses here hadn’t been fully broken in as yet and the chances of being thrown off any one of them was good.

The officer picked out a nice black horse and after some difficulty I managed to get a saddle on him and I climbed into the saddle intending to ride him over to the Armoury for the officer. However, as soon as I got into the saddle and gave him a small jab with my spurs, up on his hind legs he went and losing his balance he fell backwards on top of me. Part of the saddle landed on my ankle and so away I went to the Colonel Belcher Military hospital with badly bruised ligaments.

By now I had myself a girlfriend and so after a couple of weeks in the hospital I wasn’t yet ready to leave but I wanted permission to go and visit her. I asked the matron in charge for a pair of crutches so I could go out but being a “mean old matron”, she refused.

In the same ward as me there was a man whose last name was Grey, he had been a 49er overseas. The last time I had seen him was at the battle of Amiens, August, 1918, WWI. He was near me when he got a bullet through his spine and he became paralysed from the waist down. He had crutches for mobility so I borrowed them and out the window I went, down the fire escape and from then on caught a street car to my girlfriend’s place. Coming back I couldn’t make it in the same way since the fire escape was too high up off the ground. I had to have my “scouts” give me the necessary signs so that I could get in the front door. I managed to get as far as to my bed when the matron appeared. After a few harsh words on her part it was only a matter of minutes before I was back in bed and they took all my street clothes from me so that I wouldn’t be tempted to go out again.

From then on I had a little disagreement with one of the officers in the cavalry unit. We decided that I had no further use for the cavalry and I was given my honorable discharge.

There was no work to be had in Calgary so I went down to Lethbridge where I became a civil servant, federal, getting employment as a lay inspector for the Health of Animals Branch of the Department of Agriculture. Things looked pretty good so my girlfriend and I got married, bought a house and we were quite content. But then the depression came along and in the fall of 1933, with R. B. Bennett as Prime Minister, they started laying off civil servants right and left. I lost my job and joined the ranks of the unemployed.

The two of us decided then that it might be a good idea to buy some land somewhere and live off it for a while. I had around Lethbridge read in an issue of McLeans magazine I had read of good land available in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island. Lots of fresh water, good weather, etc., etc., and this was where my wife and I thought would be a good place to go.

In the spring of 1934 we sold our house, got hold of a Model A Ford panel truck, loaded what furniture we could onto the truck and took off. There were no proper roads through the mountains at that time so we had to detour down through Idaho, through the State of Washington to Seattle, then to Vancouver and across to the island.

We found some twenty acres of land up Island, about two acres of it cleared, and a small cottage that had been built in 1921. Some of the cottage was getting a bit old but I was able to repair it and we settled down there. We bought a couple of milk cows, raised a few chickens and had a good vegetable garden. Occasionally I would take some eggs and butter down to the wharf and trade it for some salmon which we smoke cured and used as we needed it. There were many wild deer in the area, occasionally I would shoot one and we had fresh meat. We always had plenty to eat but what cash we had amounted to only a few dollars a month and it came from farm produce that we were able to sell. We thought we lived quite well.

When we first arrived in the community and got settled I found there were no libraries except for a few donated books. I wrote to the Carnegie Foundation in Chicago, U.S.A., for assistance in forming a library. They wrote back to say that the request would have to come from a public body. I went to a school board meeting with this information and it wasn’t long before we had a good public library courtesy of the Carnegie Foundation.

In 1937 I got a part time job at the local golf course at 35¢ an hour.

Later on the job was made a permanent one and so I was on a salary.

During WWII and after the Japanese had raided Pearl Harbour we were told that their were enemy forces on Kiska Island. This seemed to be a big threat to Vancouver Island so it wasn’t long before we had our windows all blacked out plus other little defences that would stop the enemy from getting an advantage.

There were a number of freighters moving along the coast which had been torpedoed and sunk by the Jap submarines, we were told. Shipyards at Victoria were busy building freighters for the British Government and as each one was finished it went to Port Alberni where it was loaded with lumber. I remember one of these loaded freighters had no sooner got outside the Port when it was torpedoed. Since it was loaded with lumber it didn’t sink and the navy escorted it back to Victoria where it was patched up and sent on its way.

The lighthouse at Estevan Point, on the west coast of the Island, and only some fifty miles from our home, had been apparently shelled. I said to my wife, “Those Japs are getting too close, I’m going down to Victoria to enlist.”

Which I did. They put me in the 31st Company, Veterans Guards.

A large freighter loaded with medical supplies and destined for our Hong Kong garrison got only half way there when it was learned that the garrison had fallen to the Japs. The boat turned around and came back and they unloaded the medical supplies at Osborn Point. The first job our Vets Guard had was to stand guard on this cargo until they could think of what to do with it.

About a month later we were sent to New York to bring a load of prisoners of war back to the newly built POW camp at Medicine Hat. We continued to do this job until there were roughly ten thousand prisoners at Medicine Hat and another ten thousand at Lethbridge. From then on we remained in Southern Alberta guarding the prisoners until the end of the war.

When the war finally came to an end and I went back to the golf course and remained working there until I reached the golden age of sixty five and was then able to collect my Old Age Pension.

In 1968 we sold our piece of land and house at Comox and bought a lot south of Courtenay, still on the Island. I cleared the lot of trees, etc. and then built our present home.

The 60th anniversary of Vimy Ridge was held in 1977 and I was one of the Vimy Veterans invited to attend the ceremony. It was a great honor for me to be able to represent our 49th on such a memorable occasion.

For a number of years I have been a member of the World Federalists, an organization dedicated to there being one government for the world. Through this organization I have been able to travel to many different countries, India, Belgium, U.S.A., etc. to attend meetings. They made me an honorary life member of the Canadian organization and I am very proud of that.

My wife passed away in 1979. I have continued living here in our house and so far have managed. I’m probably a fixture in this area. And quite content to do such things as gathering together a bit of my life and putting it on paper — as I have done here.

...Then there was the time.... when our rum ration used to come up with a ration party. In the evening several platoon members would be “delegated” to go and pick up our next day rations in gunny sacks. On one occasion a German artillery shell made a direct hit on the party on its way back. Their were no rations the next day and that included the shot of rum. We were so conditioned to war and the rum ration that we thought little of our departed comrades. The rum was 90° OP and from Jamaica. Hair raising!