

# The young soldier returns from the war

Editor's note: This is the fourth in a series about Georgetown resident Jack Ballantine and his wife Annie who corresponded during World War I.

Today I will write down for you Mrs. Marshall's report of the "accident" in Georgetown, in the fall of 1917.

Chapel Street School had just released all its pupils for the day (the nine-year-old Dorothy Ballantine being one of them), when a plane came down over Georgetown and landed in a field of the Cleave Farm about where the Moore Park subdivision is now. All the pupils and many of the town's inhabitants raced there as fast as they could. Everybody wanted to see a plane from close up. It turned out that it was a plane from Camp Borden that had run out of gasoline and had been forced to make an emergency landing. A huge crowd assembled around the plane and some people took the pilot to where he could find the stuff he needed to fill up his tank. Eventually he was ready to leave again. The pilot climbed into his seat, started his engine and proceeded down the field at an increasingly fast clip. Suddenly one of the plane's tires got caught in a rut, the rickety plane swung around, and the whole cumbersome machine headed towards the assembled crowd. An elderly man had the presence of mind to order the kids and bystanders to throw themselves flat on the ground. The plane went over

them and there were only slight injuries. But Mrs. Cleave, the farmer's wife, was mesmerized by the onrushing plane. She froze and the plane's propeller killed her in an instant. Young Dorothy Ballantine was so upset by the ghastly sight that she ran away as fast as she could towards the highway, in order to get home to her mother. But her mother was not at home, she was visiting her relations in the Glen. Dorothy kept running all the way to Glen Williams where she finally found comfort in the arms of her mother.

In the meantime, Jack Ballantine, while these and other events happened in Georgetown, remembers his children when he writes this to his wife from England: "When I was coming into Guildford it was just twelve o'clock and the school was coming out and there must have been a thousand little tots. It sure brought back memories to see so many, all about the same age and so full of life." And he occasionally teases Annie who wonders if he is faithful to her: "A canuck is always made welcome in this country although the English boys are sore, because once a girl over here meets a Canadian, she's done with the English."

But the war dragged on and many of the young soldiers that were sent across the channel to France never returned. The ones that returned were maimed, in body or soul, often for life. He writes: "Maybe some day the



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Toronto papers will get a bit of the real truth to publish and the Canadian people will see how their money has been wasted keeping up so many officers, while our young men are shot down like dogs." "If this war is won it's America that's going to win it. The war today is just where it started." And this: "The soldier has his eyes open, but he dare not speak his mind, but when this war is finished you'll see an awful changed world, every man will want to have his say." And this: "I suppose you read all about air raids. London seems to be their favorite spot. Most of the people take shelter in the underground railways. Can you imagine stations and railways about a hundred feet below the streets, also under the Thames River? The City of Lon-

don sure cost millions, and the population is near as many as all Canada." When the war is finally over and Jack Ballantine is waiting for his turn to be shipped back to his homeland he writes to Annie, and the reader can sense the despair in his soul: "I think I will hug the stove for a while then go to my lonesome bed. I forget what it's like to be in bed with a woman."

Jack Ballantine returned home on April 25, 1919. His wife and his children and all his friends were at the station to greet him, but his proud parents were not. After all these years they still did not want to share their son with the daughter of the storekeeper from Glen Williams who voted for the hated Liberals. I can only im-

agine what the remaining years of Jack's life must have been like, after he experienced a long and prolonged war at close range, a war that did nobody any good. He started another shoe repair shop in his father's former office on King Street. Later he moved his shop to his own house on 42 Queen Street, the house his youngest daughter, Mrs. Dorothy Marshall still lives in. His wife Annie remained the great love of his life. His children grew up and went their own way. His older brother, the celebrated war hero, retired, like the war heroes of old, to his manor house in the country. Jack Ballantine died in 1932. He was blessed in that he did not have to live through another war.

## Time machines

The Bradley Museum in Mississauga, which recreates the 19th Century home of the Bradley family, will be hosting Time Machines on Sunday, June 30 between 12:00 and 4:00 p.m.

Time Machines is a special event acting as a forum for the visiting public to learn more about researching and recreating the past.

Members of the Upper Canada Living History Association are

returning for the third year to demonstrate the military drills and camp life of a 19th Century soldier and his family.

Displays, demonstrations and literature will also be provided by the Ontario Historical Society, the United Empire Loyalist Society, the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Mississauga LACAC, and the many other museums from the Greater Toronto area.

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