

Images of another time and place

It's just a little wooden desk, with a bank of drawers down each side, made from some sort of dark stained wood.

As a kid, it was my grandfather's desk, and after he died in 1960, it became my dad's desk.

And now, in keeping with the progression, it's my desk. Since 2003, I've had it stored in the basement, under a sheet, waiting for me to go through it and take stock of the papers that have called that desk home for so many years.

Many of the drawers held papers I've seen countless times. But one bottom drawer caught me off guard. It's a deep drawer made to look like two, filled with old newspapers. I've never opened it before, so I pulled them out slowly.

A cardboard box sat hiding in the bottom. It was a MotoMaster Signal Light adaptor box, a kit sold by Canadian Tire in the 1950s, to add signal lights to older vehicles. My grandfather had added them to our 1951 Chev truck.

I lifted out the blue and black box. Opening it, I almost gasped in surprise—it was filled with very old photos and negatives.

My sisters and I had already perused a suitcase of photos that had been around for ages—shots of us growing up, as well as our parents' and grandparents' early days.

But these were different—they weren't taken at home. They were images of another time and place, of nameless soldiers, their girlfriends and nurses, from almost 90 years ago.

It seems I'd unearthed my grandfather's personal pictures taken during his time overseas, as a soldier in the First World War.

There were informal pictures of his regiment, his smiling face in the front row, photos of he and his war buddies sitting on a street in (presumably) London, and one of his outfit out on an extended march, June 21, 1918, his tired, scowling face looking straight into the camera.

There were images of young ladies, taken in (what appears to be) a photo booth, a Union

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Jack draped on the wall behind them, as they don Canadian soldiers' hats, worn at a jaunty angle, with a very sexy smile—sexy for 1918.

A group of helmeted soldiers gather around a Vickers machine gun—my grandfather belonged to the CMGC (Canadian Machine Gun Corps)—and others pose with nurses, their starched white head bands and long aprons glowing in the sun. Sadly, only a few photos have notes written on the back.

All my life, I've wondered about my grandfather's role in the First World War—where he served, and how much action he saw.

I acquired his service records from the National Archives, but as a machine gunner, his outfit was often 'lent' to other regiments, so it's an onerous task to track down where he got to, and more importantly, what he did.

He always claimed he 'never really saw action' but his records still show he was there, and he was a machine gunner—so I wonder.

Looking at the photos, and seeing the fresh, smiling face of my then 21-year-old grandfather, Pte. Fred J. Brown, and his countless, nameless friends, I realize one thing.

He was an ordinary young Canadian, overseas doing his duty for 'King and Country,' to 'help his chums out through thick and thin.'

And finding yet another tiny piece to the puzzle makes me feel incredibly proud.



Ladies cook up \$20,000 in pledges

Bino Dalli, owner of the Rotary Glen Banquet Hall in Brampton, offers up a tasty dessert to Halton Hills Ladies Cook For The Cure Dinner and Silent Auction organizer Sherrie Louth of Georgetown during the recent fund-raiser held at the Rotary Hall. The annual event raised \$20,000 for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

Photo by Brendan Louth

Police blotter

Husband and wife spot naked man during bike ride in Silvercreek Valley

Halton Police report a woman and her husband, who were riding mountain bikes in the 27 Sideroad and Eighth Line area of Silvercreek Valley, saw a naked man running away from them on another trail Monday evening.

The suspect is described as white, 40 to 50 years old, with fair hair, fair skin, a "runner's build" and a tan line between his back and buttocks.

Halton Regional Police charged a Halton Hills man with impaired driving and having over 80 mg of alcohol in 100 ml of blood

after police saw a vehicle being driven erratically in the Main St. and Moore Park Cr. area Sunday night.

Charged is Stephen Kevins, 48, of 22 Sideroad.

An Acton man was charged with possession of a controlled substance and possession of a radar detector after police found a bottle of OxyContin and a radar detector in a vehicle stopped in the Hwy. 7 and Sixth Line area Tuesday morning.

Charged is Richard Choppick, 38, of MacDonald Blvd.

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