

Victor Ralston by Son
Anthony Ralston
Queen Elizabeth
September 13, 1943



Re: Victor Ralston B150308
4th Medium 2nd AGRA



This is only but one story in the many stories of people that departed and in not all cases, returned to Pier 21 during WWII. My father, Victor Ralston embarked for Britain from Pier 21 in Halifax on the 13th of September 1943 aboard the SS Queen Elizabeth. He disembarked on the 19th of September in Britain until his safe return to Canada in 1946.

During his time overseas, he was attached to the 4th Medium 2nd AGRA artillery regiment as an engineer. He spent most of his time in Holland, Belgium and France with as frequent as possible trips back to England and Scotland to visit relatives.

While serving overseas he wrote to his parents in Toronto on an almost daily basis. Although military censoring prevented him to disclose his exact locations, he wrote over 200 letters that vividly describe life in Europe for a Canadian soldier during WWII. I had no knowledge of these letters until three years ago when my uncle, William Ralston (father's brother) died and a box containing the original letters and photographs were discovered. Being that my father passed away in 1976, it seems providential that I am now able to read these letters after so many years.

My father tried for some time to locate his brother William, who was in the infantry. There is evidence of some correspondence between them and it was evident that life in the infantry for Bill was very difficult to state the obvious. Victor finally located Bill and managed to get a transfer put through for Bill out of the infantry. My father contacted the appropriate officials and convinced them that he was related to the then Minister of Defense in Canada with the same last name of Ralston. On the strength of that, the transfer went through and the brothers were reunited as seen in these photographs.



He returned to Canada aboard Queen Elizabeth, embarking from Britain for New York on the 28th of January 1946 to arrive in Canada at Pier 21

Jan. 9/46
Somewhere in England.

my Dear mom -
Just got your ordinary mail of Dec 14 and one from Dad - at last the "no leaflet" has arrived from C.P. too. Don't be so hard on Dad his letters would completely surprise you - so interesting. By the way I'm meeting Bill in Portsmouth next week-end - on the sly. He don't need passes to get there. He was doing C.B. over new year so that's why I hadn't been able to meet him. Vera was down there and she met him - that's how I heard about it. I wish Dad would straighten him up about taking little trips A.W.H. - for him there's no need for it because he gets his passes and leaves often (passes every two weeks) and regularly. I'm not talking out of turn because I've tried to talk to him - he listens for a while. It's not worth it in the long run and gets him too well known around the A.C.'s office. It's not serious by any means, just something like laziness.

I'll try to get in touch with Jan or Poppy Clarkson when I'm in London next. I don't like to miss seeing Vera when I'm up - she gets a little lonely

particularly on the week-ends.
Good to hear about the cigs - hope they are sucking gums and hot sweet legs. however it seems we beggars can't be choosers.

To save repetition I'll send my current news about my work and its progress in Dad's letter

Thanks for the wishes for the new year. God granting, I think by this time next year conditions will be more decided and it will just be a matter months until they let us leave from Halifax. If there is a train home I think I could beat it there by running

Goodbye for now,
Thanks for
clippings

Love
Vic.

mom.

on the 3rd of February 1946.

The recent discovery of these lost letters and photographs has prompted me to submit this content not only Pier 21, but also to the Veterans Affairs web site in the Letters and Diaries section.

CANADIAN LEGION
WAR SERVICES INC.

CANADIAN Y.M.C.A.
OVERSEAS

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

aug 3.

B150308
Sm. Ralston K
58th Coy
4th med. Regt.
R.C.A., C.A.O.

Dear Dad -

I've been waiting patiently for your letter so I could let you know all that's going - you're about the only one I can make understand. Further your mail always has a special flavour all its own - very pleasing.

In a strange way I'm glad I'm here. But it's just that I have a few more reasons for wanting than not wanting. I don't mind some of the stuff they're throwing our way - and it's been bad at times. We soon forget some of the boys who won't go back home, because it's not wise to dwell on that subject too long. The toughest thing of all is to see the destruction and waste made by both sides really slugging it out like a couple of bulls in a china shop. However a few more ducks like it and they'll have to pack

CIA 179(12) PLEASE WRITE ON BOTH SIDES

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OVERSEAS

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

THE SALVATION ARMY
CANADIAN
WAR SERVICES

up to Berlin. Despite what the papers say about the other fronts, and the lack of news about the Canadians, we have been assured by higher ups that this is the toughest of all - it is tough for sure until the Canadians attack then they fold. I don't care what anyone says I've got to be shown a better man either singly or in a group that can outdo our own P.M.I. A while back the limeys were with us but they couldn't stomach it and moved elsewhere.

Your remark about digging in made me burst out laughing - that's about all we do so unless we find a better 'ole.' We been lucky in the last couple of positions, as some one - yes Jerry himself had done an excellent job before us. However we don't hang them all day back here. Life carries on normally and at night while sleeping we're well stowed behind hillocks - I don't relish sleeping with

CIA 179(12) PLEASE WRITE ON BOTH SIDES

pieces of dirt intermittently falling on my face. When things get hot as they usually do at night we have plenty of cover. Tonight we had some excitement but nothing close although we could spot them overhead easily in the moonlight. We just thank our stars that we aren't on the other side facing the R.A.F. We can see them (Diplomo etc) firing rockets and dive-bombing the German lines, every day almost every ten or twenty minutes from early dawn until ten and eleven at night.

As far as the sanitary living is concerned, I haven't dropped any of the habits I was taught long ago, only the form of carrying them out. We have very chance to wash our clothes in hot water (courtesy of makeshift gasoline stoves) and we can manage a hot bath in unprivate surroundings from a large basin about the size of a preserves boiler. So to say we haven't attained inside plumbing in our latrine yet.

The food although much the same every day, is nutritious and well prepared. That's not admitting that we can do without the parcels from home by a long shot.

I haven't been troubled for keeping dry as yet as we only had one day of rain. If it ever does get wet we have ample tarpaulin equipment to keep us and the rest of the army dry. Any extra clothing such as you mention is no burden as we just pack it in the truck - my biggest loss now is a heavy leather jerkin like that one I had a few years back. While I'm on the clothing subject, I'd like to have you send a couple of pairs of summer underwear in the next parcel. I want to be going right through this Army stuff in no time.

Since I don't know at all what it was like in the last war I can't draw any comparisons, but I'm sure as far as the army is concerned we're much better off, but the fighting is much different mainly because of the numerous isolated fighting groups - like fighting in a honeycomb with no links between holes. This time however the attacker has a far better chance of coming through relatively unscathed. Some day soon I hope I can give you my impressions of the life here, as it's very difficult to do it on paper. I'll close now to save paper. All the Best

Vic

Write the address in large BLOCK letters in the panel below.
The address must NOT be typewritten.

TO:- MRS. J. RALSTON
627 RUSHTON RD
TORONTO 10 ONT.,
CANADA

509619



Write the message very plainly below this line.

Sender's Name & Address: B150808 Mrs. Ralston K.T. #2 C.A.R.U. C.A.O

My Dear Mom

at 29/44
A very nice blue form of 2th. arrived from you today telling all about the wonderful time you had at the party. I'm glad you planned it on a big scale regardless of our not being there. Show Weddings are like weddings, something to remember, better to have something especially nice to remember. Where did you manage to scrounge all the goodies - sounds like a little bit of heaven. Speaking of cats I don't think you have any trouble with my pickiness after I get home. I'm hoping to see some pictures of my two best girls soon - would see some of Rex's results. Are there any copies of Premier Baldwin's speech left for distribution to the unenlightened over here. The only wish I have is that Bill & I had been available to fill the two empty seats - and not just for the seats.

I've now got started on my driving course learning to drive all over again and it looks to be an interesting and enjoyable two weeks. We've had plenty of opportunity to explore further fields into your lovely homeland. I was up to London to see Vera and Mrs. Marchant and they were so pleased with your gifts. Bill may be getting leave with me according to a very cheerful letter I got today. I'll close now. God bless you all at home

Love
Yu

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MAKE SURE THAT THE ADDRESS IS WRITTEN IN LARGE BLOCK LETTERS IN THE PANEL ABOVE.

This space should not be used.

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Write the address in large BLOCK letters in the panel below.
The address must NOT be typewritten.

TO:- MRS. J.M. RALSTON
627 RUSHTON RD
TORONTO 10 ONT
CANADA

990687



Write the message very plainly below this line.

Dear Mrs. Ralston F.F. B150308 *2 C.P.R.V. C.A.O.
 my dear mom
 I want to tell you how I appreciate the unexpected cheque I received this morning from you, along with two letters of 24th & 25th Jan. I don't want to seem ungracious but I hope that's the last cheque you are going to send. I have surprisingly enough, cashed it and credit in my pay book right now. I feel that I can now afford easily to send an extra \$10 home - just give me a month after my cheque to get a reserve & I'll start. Don't worry about a gift for Keith on May 2 - I'm arranging that myself. I'm trying to pick up some Canadian money to send him in small amounts. While I'm on the subject, I wish there was enough I could do to show how much I appreciate all you are doing for her to keep her happy's content. I got the snap of you & Dad taken outside the house and you both look well - I hope you are both keeping that way in spirits. All the gang got a great laugh out of Ted's column - we know all about Mr. Bushmill - 'orrible stuff. Contrasting your weather, we are having balmy English Spring - marvelous. I see that Zombie Crombie is still catching that job at Long Branch - just as well - we'd still like to win over here. Good for you on the horse. I'm going on here to Tri. - taking the Edinburgh train from St. King Cross - 10 hr journey now. Will say hello to Bill & Lam on my way back - I may even see Bill up in Scotland - his due for sick leave now and should be out of hospital soon. Goodnight & much love.
 P.S. Expecting parcels in the next couple of days - bye now. Vic.