

Aandal, Ralph Bernard

Private

Calgary Highlanders, R.C.I.C.

H/18844



Private Ralph Bernard of Winnipeg died 16 December 1944 at the age of 19 and is commemorated at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery in Holland. He was the son of the Lutheran Reverend Martin and Clara S. Aandal of St. Vital. His father came from Oslo, Norway, his mother from North Dakota USA. Ralph was a café proprietor.

These are some excerpts from a few of his letters home:

I had a nice trip out here. We rode on the train for quite a ways. Then we got off and rode on camel for miles and miles. The sand is about 40 feet deep. In other words, I am at Shilo (18 April 1944).

Well, I am in Debart, for how long I don't know. Talk about rain and fog – you've got to blow a whistle when you walk around so you don't bump into someone. The training is tough here but I don't know if we will take any of it or not. One of the two pips got killed Friday. A mortar bomb fell short; he was in the way. It makes a neat job. Say hello to pop and all the kids. Tell pop to brush up on his cribbage. So long, Ralph (17 September 1944).

I really froze this morning. The Governor General of Canada came to camp to inspect us. He would come on a day like this, it's the coldest day yet. We stood at attention for three hours; my hands were a deep blue. His wife was with him too. She talked to a few of us. When she spoke to me I nearly asked her to get me a discharge. At 12 o'clock it was all over and we got the greatest surprise of our lives. The Governor ordered our Brigadier to dismiss the troops for the day to catch up on our

sleep. We really cheered the old boy. I ran in the hut and held my blankets by the stove until they nearly caught on fire. Then I went to bed and slept until 5, had supper and did a job I really love – I washed all my dirty clothes. Both my feet have gone to sleep. I am sitting on the flooring writing on my Bren box. I carry the Bren in our section. My address is still the same except I am in D Coy. Good Night. Love Ralph (2 October 1944).

Well, I am overseas at last. I had a nice trip and saw a lot of things which I can't write and tell you about. We are reinforcements over here, so we don't know when we will be going in action. I lost that little diary Vernon gave me. I felt bad about that, but tell him I will try to get another one and if I can't, I will remember everything that happens and tell him all about it. [Vernon, his little brother, had given him a diary for him to keep a journal of everything that happened so he could read it when he came back]. Well that's about all I can think of writing that wouldn't be censored. By the way, tell Lil to say hello to Mai Page and tell her I still love her like the seven year itch. Well, So Long for Now. Ralph (24 October 1944).

Well, I've left England and am now in Belgium. I had quite a bit of fun in England. I saw all the big art galleries and the wax museum. It really was worthwhile seeing. By the way, how about sending me some cigarettes? I am not broke but I hate the cigs they hand us. Make it Players Mild if you can. The meals are lovely – hard tack mutton or Bully beef – lovely! So long. Love Ralph. I am in a new place now. A. Coy. Calgary Highlanders (13 November 1944).

This last letter was postmarked the day he died:

I got a letter from Ruby. She told me Art's brother had been killed over here. I was sorry to hear that as I was hoping I would meet him someplace, but I guess that's out now. I just hope Art keeps his head down. I know mine is always pretty close to the ground. It's pretty grim here at times. We catch all the counter attacks. We have had 18 so far. We have been resting a few miles behind the lines for a couple of days. We are going in again in a couple of days. Right now I am sitting in a nice warm kitchen. We are living in their barn, but I got in good with the old lady, even if she can't speak English. We are still on the German border. How does the war look from a distance? When do you think it will crack? I haven't been sick at all out here. It's funny we all haven't gone to the hospital. We are laying in water day and night. I've seen me dive in up to my chest. Say hello to the rest of the family. By the way Pop, don't let them chase you around too much. Give a woman an inch and she'll take a mile. Love Ralph (14 December 1944).

Ralph Bernard Aandal was first buried at the Jonkerbos cemetery in Nijmegen. He was reburied to the Canadian War Cemetery Groesbeek, grave reference **V. C. 4.**

Source: 'A Place of Honour' Manitoba War Dead Commemorated in its Geography. Provided by: Manitoba Geographical Names Program, Provincial Toponymist – Des Kappel, Manitoba Sustainable Development, Province of Manitoba.



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