



Private William Herbert BELLAMY 04-C-01

In 1922 on May 2nd, in a small village in Herefordshire England, a surprise awaited the Bellamy family. Instead of one baby to join 13 year old brother, Kelly and 7 year old Mary, two babies arrived! They were baptized William Herbert and Joan Ethel at How Caple Chapel. But the economy in England at that time was not prospering and Father Percy wanted to farm his own land. Since his older brother, Herbert, was farming Fawley Court with his father, Percy was left farming for another local land owner, who was not interested in selling. So plans were being made to emigrate. Percy would have liked to go to South Africa where he had been during the Boer War, but his wife, Frances, would not agree to that plan at all. And with another baby, Lorna, joining the family, it was decided to try for Canada. As a veteran of the Boer War and WW I, he would be granted land and a farm for a reasonable sum. The application was made for a farm in the Western provinces. How lives would have been different if that had happened! Instead they were granted land and a farm in what they thought was MIDGIE, New Brunswick. On May 20th, 1927, the family left for Canada. They landed in Montreal on the ship, Montcalm after a trip of about 8 days. It was not a good voyage for most of the family due to seasickness, but Father Percy and 2 year old Lorna never missed a meal. One evening they were the only ones at a table for 14. Imagine Mother Frances being sick with a 2 year old and 5 year old twins to look after! A train trip from Montreal to - what they now discovered was Midgic, not Midgie, took 2 days. When they arrived in Midgic, a horse and buggy, for the luggage, and 2 motorized vehicles (a Model T and

an Overland) were there to take them thru miles of forest to their farm in Jolicure! Percy wondered what he had gotten himself into and I imagine young Billy thought it looked like a great place to explore. Neighbours were at the house to greet them and had a meal ready. Among these were Laura & Rufus Hicks, their nearest neighbours, and their son Arnold who was the same age as Billy and would become his close friend. Also the Brenton Reids, the Bert Reids and the Rayworth families from Lucifer Road. Soon more families came from across the pond - including the Coates's, the Kinnears. The school; was a long walk - about 3 miles, and he was usually accompanied by his next door neighbour and best friend, Arnold Hicks. Of course his sisters were there also, but they were usually far ahead of the two boys. Long after the bell rang for school, the 2 boys would be seen sauntering along the road, Arnold's hands going and talking non-stop while he had a captive audience in Billy. The teacher would say "Here they come - the two slow-pokes!". Just imagine all the distractions for two young boys on a 3 mile walk. It is nothing short of a miracle that they actually made it during school hours. In the spring when the road flooded, they would go across what was the causeway, by boat. Arnold & Billy of course were the captain and first mate with the girls their passengers. Billy was not all that interested in book learning. He would much sooner be looking around the farm for pieces of wood or machine parts that he could use to make something. His sister Lorna remembers helping him make this Chinese checker board, using boards he found, a hammer and a hand drill. Imagine the work involved with no electric tools! Of course there was no electricity at the farm while Billy lived there. They did get a battery operated radio and certain programs were of great interest to Billy

- such as the Lone Ranger and NHL hockey games. But the main playground was the farm, the lake and the friends who lived nearby. Parcels arrived regularly from England and the grandparents and other relatives they left behind. These were eagerly opened and always contained special items for the children. It should also mention that the 5 children who emigrated to Canada were the only grandchildren for the Bellamy grandparents. So many pictures were taken and mailed over to them. In those days pictures were not easily gotten, so many of the pictures we have today are ones that the relatives in England have given back to us. During the teen years, Bill worked around the farm, tending animals, cut wood for the winter and especially enjoyed skating on the lakes. He even bought a new pair of skates, an unusual thing in the 30's. He left those skates with sister Lorna when he went in the army and she still has them today. He also did a bit of hunting with Arnold and one time they even shot a deer, a welcome thing in those days of the depression. Sister Lorna used to go snaring rabbits with him but if there was a rabbit in the snare, Billy had the job of taking it home to his mother who would skin it and make rabbit pie or stew for supper. A favourite pastime was playing ball with a rubber ball and bat made out of a board. The Kinnear children - Josie, George & Caissie - would often play with the 3 Bellamy children and Arnold of course, after school. Bill was a very quiet lad - not outgoing and talkative like his big brother Kelly. In 1939 everything changed. War broke out and the Bellamy boys, having been brought up to believe that their responsibility was to help their country and their homeland of Britain, both went to join up. Kelly was accepted in the Eighth Canadian Hussars out of Sussex, NB and Bill hoped to get in with them also. But when it was found out that he

was not yet 18, he was sent home. Undeterred, on May 2nd, 1940 - his 18th birthday, he left once again to join the fight. But his hope of joining the Hussars was not to be. He was sent to an infantry division in Aldershot, NS to the West Nova Scotia Highlanders Regiment. After taking his Basic Training, he decided to try for a transfer to Kelly's regiment again. But instead he was transferred to the North Nova Scotia Highlanders - known as the North Novas - which at least had their base closer to home in Debert and Amherst. But soon the regiment left for overseas. While in England, Bill was able to spend a leave in Ross, Herefordshire, with Kelly and was able to visit some of his aunts and uncles and cousins. Also he remembered some of the places that he has last seen as a boy of 5. On another leave, he visited his Uncle John, Aunt Emily and 13 year old cousin Talbot Griffiths further north in Orleton. Talbot clearly remembers this visit and told Bill's sister Lorna about the visit. *"I remember Bill's visit like it was yesterday. Dad & I met Bill at the train station with the pony and trap. Since Dad was busy working on the farm, I spent most of the weekend with him. We became good friends and when he left, he gave me his battle tunic. I wore this until I out grew it and always remembered that visit. Little did I think that would be the last time any of his relatives would see Bill."*

For soon after this visit, The North Novas were sent to France as part of the 9th Brigade's D-Day invasion of June 6th, 1944. They did not realize this at the time, but they had run smack into the first major German counter offensive, spearheaded by the 12th S.S. Pantzer Division. Its ranks contained crack troops of the Hitler Youth military-fitness camps in Germany and were full of Nazi ideology. The Novas suffered 241 casualties, 84 of them fatal. And many were taken prisoner.

Twenty-two year old William Hebert Bellamy was one of them. His parents, however, knew nothing of this. It wasn't until Thanksgiving weekend, 4 months later, that this telegram was received.

Ottawa, Ontario - October 6th, 1944

Percy Thomas Bellamy

Report Delivery Midgic Station

Minister of National Defence wishes to inform you that information has been received through indirect channels that F41006 Private William Hebert Bellamy previously reported missing is now a prisoner of war at Camp Stalag 12A Germany STOP This information subject to official confirmation STOP further information becomes available, it will be forwarded as soon as received.

Director of Records

Later his parents received a few brief postcards from Bill while he was a prisoner of war. The first, dated August 16th, 1944, was a form type where information was filled in stating that he was in good health with his name, rank and detachment. The next went as follows:

Sept. 10th, 1944

Dear Mom: How are you all at home now? Hope to be home soon anyway. I am still kickin' and doing much better now. Hope you guys got the other cards. I had quite a drive around the place over here. Hope you get the card. So Long, Bill.

Notice the dates on the cards - both long before the October 6th date when they first received word that he had been taken prisoner. A few other letters were received with certain words blacked out by the censors. One we remember reading had the words "I hope, I hope, I hope" on them. One can well imagine what he was hoping! Once again there was a silence of several months. After the war ended in May, 1945, Pte. Bellamy's father heard that some members of the North

Nova Scotia Highlanders Regiment had returned from overseas. He immediately went to see them, hoping that someone could give him some word about his son. The following letter contains the information that Pte Smith told Mr Bellamy and which he sent along to Ottawa:

July 20th, 1945

Dear Sir:

*Received your telegram this morning and was sorry to hear that Pte. Bellamy hasn't turned up. I last saw Pte Bellamy last January in a working camp in Germany. We were working in a coal mine there and he was seriously injured. They took him to a hospital in Hindenburg, Germany. The last I heard about him was that they were giving him blood transfusions and he wasn't expected to live. I left the coal mine the 23rd of January when the Russians were making their big advance and they were shelling the town that Pte. Bellamy was in. It is no doubt that he was killed then. That's about all I know about him, so I will close.
Yours truly, Pte. Smith, P.H.*

A telegram was received on August 11th stating that Pte Bellamy was missing and then the final official news on August 21st.

Deeply regret to inform you that F41006 Private William Hebert Bellamy previously reported missing now officially reported died whilst a prisoner of war 28th of January, 1945. Buried the 6th of February, 1945 in Municipal Cemetery, TEUPITZ, Telton District, Germany. When further information becomes available it will be forwarded as soon as received.

Director of Records

