

Dear Mrs. Emerson

It was a shock for us to receive your letter to-day and know that you hadn't received the letter I wrote a few days after your husband's death. I cannot tell you how difficult it was for me to write that letter. Howard's death was a very personal blow to me. He was a signaller in my observation post crew, five of us who lived and fought together with the infantry, separated from the regiment in action for a great part of the time. So it was my privilege to know him better than any of the other men and in a way few officers ever have known them. To know Howard was to know one of the bravest men I have ever known. His gallant conduct was always an inspiration and example to those who knew him. He was a very skilled signaller and an invaluable man in battle, but I knew and honored him for other qualities, his never-ending consideration for others, his constant cheerfulness and his great love for you. No matter where we were, no matter how trying the conditions might be, he always found time to write a letter to you. He loved you very much and I know what a terrible loss his death will be to you and what a shock in your present state of health.

A few days before he was killed he told me all about your illness and an application was made for leave to England on compassionate grounds, and then we went back into action. The first evening our tank was knocked out but we all escaped. The following day just before noon a shell fired by a high velocity gun at very close range landed among us. Howard was shitting shoulder to shoulder beside me. Be assured that he did not suffer, he was instantly killed. The next morning the German garrison surrendered, Howard who had come through so much missed the end only by a few hours.

For you who are left behind there are no words I can write that will ever adequately express my very deep sympathy in your tragic loss.

You have lost a beloved Husband and all of us here, a dear and never-to-be-forgotten comrade. We shall always remember him. The padre buried him in a new army plot in Gronisgen in North East Holland. The following Sunday we went down to his grave with his friends from the troop. The Irish regiment of Canada, the battalion which he had always worked was represented by the second-in command. His grave is in a lovely park on the bank of a pond with several others who also fell in the last days. On his grave that afternoon were beautiful flowers with a card "In grateful appreciation of what you did for our country". We shall always remember – a Dutch tribute. The padre held a short service and we planted our own cross. The people here are going to look after the Canadian graves over and above what we do by putting fresh flowers on the graves and looking after them.

And so he is gone from us but I like to think that we shall meet him again when our time comes, somewhere beyond.

As long as we never forget the price he paid for the freedom we now enjoy he shall not have died in vain.

If there is anything I can ever do for you now or in time to be, it will be a privilege and all of us in Easy Troop and in the Battery extend our deepest sympathy to you at this time. God bless you.

Yours sincerely

(signed) H.G. Pyper, Capt.