

# The Achievements of Trooper Mulloy

**Jack Schecter**

“How fine he was: how he lavished himself on great causes”  
*Iroquois Post and Matilda Advocate Memorial Supplement, February 1932*

In the summer of 1900 Lorne Mulloy, a wounded Canadian soldier serving with the second Canadian contingent in South Africa, wrote from a military hospital in Johannesburg to his family about serious wounds to his eyes received in battle: “I have not experienced even the faintest sensation of light since that shot was fired. My left eye is totally destroyed and my right one is so badly injured that it is like a man halting between life and death undecided to advance or retreat.”<sup>1</sup> Although totally blind because of these wounds Mulloy went on to obtain three university degrees, and became a respected professor and speaker on political issues in Canada and Britain and a prominent figure in his local community. His life is a remarkable story of achievement in the face of adversity.

Lorne Winfield Redmond Mulloy was born on a farm on 14 April 1876 near Winchester, Dundas County, Ontario, the son of George Mulloy and Mary Redmond. His mother was a teacher before her marriage while his father, known as “Squire” Mulloy, was for many years a magistrate, justice of the peace and reeve of the township. Dundas County is United Empire Loyalist country, having been settled by members of the King’s Royal Regiment of New York after the American Revolution. This unit was a provincial regiment from the Mohawk Valley led by Sir William Johnson that supported the Crown during the American Revolution. During the War of 1812 a bloody battle was fought between British regulars and Canadian militia against invading Americans at Chrysler’s Farm. In 1837 local militia battled rebels at the Battle of the Windmill near Prescott, and in 1866 and 1870 the Dundas County Militia stood guard against the Fenian threat. There is a strong

tradition of military service and loyalty to the Crown in this area, a tradition that would be evident in Mulloy’s strong support for the British Empire during his life.

After attending Winchester School and Morrisburg High School, Mulloy worked as a teacher at a school at Navan, a village just east of Ottawa, and became a popular local figure. One newspaper described him as “a man of splendid physique and soldierly bearing. He stood over six feet in height and came of fighting stock, his father and grandfather having been on active service of Canada, one at Windmill Point and the other at Chrysler’s Farm. He was a fearless rider and a crack shot.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1899 war broke out between Britain and the Boers in South Africa. There was a great deal of agitation in English Canada for the Canadian government to provide military assistance to support British forces, and eventually the government agreed to send Canadian volunteers to serve with the British army. Mulloy was deeply disturbed by a series of British military defeats called Black Week and believed it was his patriotic duty to volunteer for Imperial service. “There was no denying the unspoken call from the mother country,” he declared. “War is of course deplored by all sensible people as a great evil. It is admitted, however, that greater evils are possible, such as the destruction of any of those principles of equity, justice and liberty, which underlie civilization as we see it to-day. There are times when it is as much a man’s duty to go to war as it would be his duty to protect his family in case they should be attacked. When therefore reverses threatened the continuance of an empire of which I proudly claimed citizenship, and whose influence I knew to be





Lorne Mulloy

courtesy of author

always for the extension of civil liberty and higher civilization, I concluded that my duty was to offer myself.”<sup>3</sup> Mulloy sent a telegram to the Militia Department briefly stating his qualifications and, after an interview with a recruiting officer, was accepted on 28 December 1899. He joined a contingent of eleven Ottawans (including Eddie Holland, a merchant, who was later awarded the Victoria Cross at the engagement at Leliefontein) who were sent to Halifax for training. On 21 February 1900 Mulloy, who had transferred from the Princess Louise Dragoon Guards to the 1st Battalion Canadian Mounted Rifles, left Halifax on the *Milwaukee*. Thirty-one days later he arrived at Cape Town.<sup>4</sup>

Mulloy proceeded with his regiment to Bloemfontein and was involved in the fighting at Kronstadt, Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Diamond Hill.<sup>5</sup> After Diamond Hill his brigade joined the flying columns in pursuit of the enemy. On 12 July 1900 British and colonial troops carried out a general advance against the Boers over a range of hills called Witpoort, Koffyspruit, and Oliphantsfontein. The Canadians established a camp for the brigade at Rietvlei and were to hold a ridge immediately to the south. The troops were sent to support a series of outposts against the enemy. On 16 July the Boers made a determined attack against the outposts at Witpoort, Dortsfontein, Koffyspruit and Oliphantsfontein. Two kopjes on either side of Witpoort Pass were held by a detachment of

the Irish Fusiliers and New Zealand Mounted Rifles. The New Zealanders were overrun by the enemy, leaving the hard-pressed Fusiliers to maintain their position. In the late afternoon A, B and D Squadrons of the RCD were sent to the ridge to the right of Witpoort to support the defenders. In command was Lieutenant Harold L. Borden of the Dragoons, a graduate of Mount Allison College and a medical student at McGill University. Known as an excellent horseman and skilled athlete, Borden was a former member of the King's Hussars in Nova Scotia who had already distinguished himself during the campaign, particularly in one incident where he swam the Sand River at the head of a small detachment and displaced the Boers on the other side. When he was put in command of the Witpoort relief force, he had only just rejoined his unit after two weeks in hospital at Pretoria, and still was not in the best of health.

The Canadians were ordered to mount and, riding at full gallop, headed for a ridge while shells and bullets flew through the air around them. The troops arrived at the ridge, dismounted and swarmed up the steep slope, reaching the summit as the enemy took cover among various boulders. The Canadians attacked under heavy fire, and rushed forward to secure the top of the ridge. Lieutenant J.E. Burch of the 2nd RCD, whose father was in the same unit, and four soldiers including Mulloy found themselves cut off from their comrades and heavily outnumbered by the enemy. Sergeant A.E. Rose described the engagement: “The part of the kopje which Lieut. Borden went over was about 12 feet high, with front almost perpendicular. Before reaching the steepest part of the hill Trooper Brown fell, shot through the lung. Lieut. Borden and the remainder of his troop climbed the steep hill and found themselves face to face with the Boers. Lieut. Burch and his men were advancing along the side and near the foot of the kopje. The Boers and Canadians now held peculiar positions. Some of the Boers managed to get behind part of the Canadians placing the last named in a critical position. Soon after mounting the kopje poor Borden fell, a Mauser bullet piercing his heart. Lieut. Burch and four troopers found themselves in advance of the other Canadians with the Boers in front and behind them. The Boers called on them to surrender, but the five plucky Canadians refused to surrender, and kept the Boers at bay. Two rifles choked, yet the

remaining three continued to keep the Boers off. Then Lieut. Burch received a wound in the left knee. He continued to fire and was in the act of raising his rifle when a Mauser bullet hit him in the side, causing a fatal wound. But the Boer who committed the deed also fired his last shot, as he was knocked over at the same time. One of the remaining four men - Mulloy of Ottawa - raised his head and immediately a bullet carried off his nose. Poor fellow! He may lose the sight of both eyes. Corp. Price was just an instant too late in firing at the Boer who caused Mulloy's wound but he prevented him from ever firing again. We turned him and his chum side by side, monuments to Canadian pluck and valor.”<sup>6</sup> Mulloy had left the cover of a boulder to take the rifle of a wounded Boer; his own weapon had jammed while Mulloy was giving his bandolier to Corporal Price, who was running short of ammunition. Two Boers fired at him from about forty feet away; one bullet grazed his forehead and the other struck him in the left eye. Mulloy dropped to his knees and did not lose consciousness but attempted to find cover. His comrades fired on the enemy who surrendered or fled. This engagement became famous in Canada, not only because of the bravery of the soldiers, but because of the deaths of the two officers, notably Lieutenant Borden, the only son of the Minister of Militia.

Later, Colonel John Reeves, commander of the 2nd Battalion of the Princess Victoria's Royal Irish Fusiliers, wrote to the Canadian commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel F.-L. Lessard, to praise the courage of the Dragoons: “In the few words I spoke to you to-night at the funeral of your two very gallant officers I am afraid I failed to convey the deep gratitude my regiment owes to the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles [RCD] for their gallantry in going so nobly and fearlessly to the succor of our beleaguered detachment at Witpoort yesterday. The counter attack your regiment made occurred at a most critical moment, and it doubtless saved many of the lives of our detachment. We deplore greatly the losses you have sustained and shall ever bear in grateful memory the gallantry and self sacrifice of the 1st C.M.R. on this occasion. I shall deem it a great favour if you will kindly convey to your officers, N.C. officers and men the purport of this letter.”<sup>7</sup>

Initial reports suggested that Mulloy had died on the battlefield of his wounds. According to a comrade, Alfred E. Ault, whose correspondence was published in an eastern Ontario newspaper, “Last Monday we lost two officers killed and two privates wounded fatally, one of the latter being a young man named Mulloy. He comes from somewhere near Bouck's Hill. At one time he attended the Morrisburg C. I. He was shot

Canadian Mounted Rifles on the way to embark on the *Milwaukee* at Halifax, February 1900.



From *The London Illustrated News*, 7 April 1900, National Library of Canada C 7993





The cover to the sheet music of the "Trooper Mulloy March," a tribute written by his wife.

On 21 September 1901 the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall visited Ottawa to unveil the statue of Queen Victoria on Parliament Hill and present medals to about one hundred veterans of the South African war. One by one the soldiers formed up to receive their medals from the royal visitors. The first in line was Eddie Holland, who was presented with his Victoria Cross, and the last soldier to receive his decoration was Lorne Mulloy, with his good friend Holland at his side. The Duke gave the medal to Mulloy, shook his hands, and conversed briefly with the trooper about the engagement which had cost him his eyesight. The scene motivated the *Matters Military* column in the *Ottawa Journal* to reflect on the fortunes of war: "Perhaps the most touching scene ever witnessed in Ottawa was that of Lieutenant Ed Holland, V.C., leading blind Trooper Mulloy before the Duke and Duchess to receive his decoration. Lieut. Holland has escaped unscathed to wear the emblem of his valor and to be recognized as a man who has won the highest distinction in the British army, while poor Mulloy, just as willing, just as brave, just as true, has been deemed to go through the world in darkness. There were few dry eyes in the multitude who witnessed that scene and few

did not feel proud of these two men. One had been more fortunate than the other, both had run equal risk. Both had shared the fortunes of war – while Trooper Mulloy had been the more unfortunate he has that feeling which gives every true man true satisfaction, he has done his duty and done it well."<sup>17</sup>

Being sightless did not deter Mulloy from his original plans of attending university. He entered Queen's University, Kingston, in 1902 and four years later received his honors degree in Philosophy and Political Economy. He was an outstanding student, as well as President of his year and critic for the Alma Mater Society, the governing organization of the student body. Principal Gordon and Sir Sanford Fleming, Chancellor of Queen's University, encouraged him to continue his education. Mulloy received the financial support of the Canadian Patriotic Fund and, assisted by a private secretary, attended Balliol College, Oxford University, England, for a post-graduate course in Political Economy. Because he was a superb athlete, Mulloy earned a position on the Freshman Rowing Team. In 1910 he graduated with distinction from Oxford University.

After leaving Oxford, Mulloy became involved in the Imperial Pioneers and the Tariff Reform movement, out of a sense of duty to support Canada and the British Empire. In 1910 colonials in Britain organized a group to promote closer Imperial ties in commerce and military defence. Mulloy was appointed a member of the organizing council and secretary of the Imperial Pioneer Association. The Imperial Pioneers held a series of meetings across England with the principal speakers being Lord Curzon, Viceroy of Egypt, and Lorne Mulloy. These meetings were often lively affairs because of fierce opposition by segments of the British public to the Unionist plans. Mulloy relished debate and the intellectual challenge of dueling with an adversary on Imperial issues. He became known for his accomplished and persuasive addresses and debating powers. One report described him as "brilliant and resourceful in debate, passionately sincere in his love of Empire, and with a background of tragedy overcome by grit or genius, or both, Mulloy, completely captured the fancy of the British electorate."<sup>18</sup> He was offered the Unionist nomination in several English constituencies but declined the offers and returned to Canada.

After his return to Canada, Mulloy was appointed a professor of Military History and Strategy at the Royal Military College, Kingston. On 4 March 1911 he married Jean Munro, the daughter of Seattle millionaire Silas Munro, at St. James Methodist Church in Waddington, New York. Jean Munro was a well-known soprano who met her husband several years earlier in London. She had studied at the Boston Conservatory of Music and spent twelve years in Italy before returning to the United States to sing with the Metropolitan Opera. She would become Mulloy's constant and enduring companion.

During the First World War Mulloy became involved in several important political issues including conscription, relations between Quebec and the rest of Canada, and fair treatment of returning and disabled soldiers. He served as a Recruiting Officer for the National Service League, once again proving to be an effective speaker; he helped to raise a battalion in a few weeks in the District of Temiskaming in northern Ontario. During this period in the war casualties and falling enlistments meant that the government faced a crisis in supplying manpower for the army. Prime Minister Robert Borden returned from the Imperial Conference in 1917 and announced his belief that conscription was necessary. Mulloy and a delegation from the National Service League recommended to the prime minister and cabinet that they adopt conscription and form a national unity government. However, the prime minister was not able to convince the Opposition, led by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, to join a coalition government. For his own part, Mulloy believed that the voluntary system was not effective and that it was the responsibility of each citizen to be available for military service: "The so-called volunteers system – it is the precise antithesis of system – it is neither British nor French; it is not reliable; it is a denial of the basic responsibilities of citizenship; it is undemocratic; it creates the maximum of industrial derangement; it is wasteful and extravagant; it results in the minimum of effectives and the maximum waste of valuable time. These things being so – and these things not to be – it seems to me that to continue on these lines is an evidence of moral weakness and insincerity on our part, and it is little bit of sheer hypocrisy on the part of our press and our public

men to proclaim to the world we are in this struggle to the last man and we ourselves know, that the first step in a sincere attempt to put even half our strength would be a classification of our industries and registration of our manpower. Some form of authoritative selection is necessary, not for the purposes of drag-netting the country for men to fight, but for the purpose of conserving our wealth-producing powers and putting into the field in the most expeditious manner the most effective force compatible with the main objective."<sup>19</sup>

Mulloy was aware of the opposition to conscription in Quebec, and was especially interested in improving relations between Ontario and Quebec. He believed that any issue between Quebec and Ontario could be resolved fairly, to the satisfaction of the majority of people. To improve relations with Quebec he became involved in the Bonne Entente Movement, which grew out of a meeting at the National Club in Toronto under the leadership of a lawyer named John Godfrey. The initial idea was to send a group of businessmen to meet with their French-Canadian counterparts and try to smooth over the differences on the conscription issue. The movement's first big event was the Win the War Unity Convention, held in Montreal from 21-25 May 1917, a national and non-partisan convention of citizens from across the country. After four days of deliberation, some seven hundred people agreed on possible policies to win the war. A leading speaker at the Win the War convention was Lorne Mulloy (he was also a member of the Executive Council of the BEM), who then traveled across the country to discuss the war with leading citizens.

After the First World War Mulloy returned to his roots, buying a house named "the Maples" by the St. Lawrence River near Iroquois, Ontario. It was time for a new challenge. He decided to study law and received special permission to take the three-year course in one year. A schoolteacher from the community served as his reader. In 1920 he articulated with barrister Arthur Flynn of Morrisburg and was called to the Bar on 22 November 1923. He practiced law with his colleague from the war John Godfrey and specialized in criminal and corporation law. One of his most famous cases was against the Iroquois Municipal Council. The local population defeated a by-law to debenture the floating debt.



The municipal council dismissed the assessor who would not support their policy and appointed a replacement. Mulloy took up the case and presented his case before the court of appeal in Toronto. Justice Sir William Mulock ruled in his favor, declaring that the original assessor was wrongfully dismissed and preventing the municipal council from implementing a new and more costly assessment. Thanks to this success, Mulloy became widely known in the legal profession throughout eastern Ontario.

He was also active in local municipal affairs and promoted various progressive projects including the development of a public park along the St. Lawrence River, pasteurization of the local milk supply, the introduction of an electric meter system, the remodeling of the high school, and the macadamization of every street and highway in Iroquois. Mulloy was ahead of his time in his opposition to hydroelectric development along the St. Lawrence River and his support for the preservation of the natural environment for future generations. He claimed that "on the St. Lawrence River the Engineers have been given a free hand to destroy or mar the beauty of the historical river with its world famed rapids, the objective being to secure the greatest possible amount of power, regardless of the consequences to the dwellers along the river. There are values that cannot be measured in terms of money... It is well to remember that what is done now will be done not alone for this generation but those of generations to come. The St. Lawrence while at the back door for the United States, is Canada's front door, and every mile of its beautiful natural contour which can be preserved now will be a worthy heritage and a lasting benefit to posterity."<sup>20</sup> There was speculation that Mulloy would run for the House of Commons (he would surely have been elected easily), and there was no doubt about his fitness for the job, as several municipal councillors later attested: "We the surviving members of the Village Council of 1926, 1927 and 1928 who had the honor of having Colonel Mulloy as an associate... know that more was done for the welfare of our Village during those years than was ever accomplished before or since: and to the great abilities of Lorne, we give the major credit for the consummation of the work."<sup>21</sup> However, he decided to avoid party politics.

Mulloy was an active individual who rode his horse regularly along country roads, sailed in the strongest of gales, played golf, and had musical evenings with his wife and friends. He had a strong interest in sports in his community, especially lacrosse and hockey, and supported young people in athletics. He was President of the St. Lawrence Senior Hockey League, Vice-President of the St. Lawrence Junior Hockey League, and Vice President of the St. Lawrence Box Lacrosse League. From 1930 to 1932 he was manager of both the Iroquois senior and junior hockey teams. He attended practices and games and was given a running account of the action at each game by his friend George Werte, assistant editor of the Iroquois *Post* newspaper, who accompanied him to all the games. Werte pointed out that "Colonel Mulloy had an uncanny faculty, moreover, for sensing details left unsaid. The following day he could repeat the details of the game, play for play, and what was more remarkable still, could show his players their faults both in policy and individual deportment. His power to maintain discipline while retaining the good will and affection of the players was almost miraculous."<sup>22</sup>

It is possible that his busy schedule had an impact on his health. On 20 February 1932 he attended a hockey game and presented the championship trophy to the Iroquois Junior Hockey Club. The next day he walked upstairs to his bed. Shortly after sending his wife downstairs to get news from the radio he suffered a heart attack and died. His death shocked his relatives, friends and the local community. His funeral, held three days later, was attended by two thousand people; schools and businesses had been closed in the area. Mulloy was buried with full military honors under the direction of the 4th Hussars. The cortege was led by the hearse carrying the flag-draped casket followed by a lone soldier leading a black cavalry horse with the boots reversed in the stirrups. There were at least seventy-five veterans of the South African and the First World War at the funeral, including Major G. H. Collins, who had served with Mulloy some 30 years earlier at the fateful engagement at Witpoort. Mulloy was buried along the banks of his beloved St. Lawrence River at the Point Iroquois United Church cemetery. His beloved wife, devastated by the loss of her husband, died two years later and was buried with her husband.

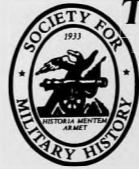
Lorne Mulloy is an inspiration to all Canadians. He is an example for the ordinary citizen, the returning veteran and the disabled soldier. Mulloy served his country on the battlefields of South Africa, the political arena in Britain and Canada, and the legal and municipal affairs of his community. Among the many tributes paid to Mulloy, none put it better than a local newspaper: "He proved himself a hero in everyday life as well as in war time... Notwithstanding the handicap of loss of sight "Trooper" Mulloy played a large part in the affairs of his country in politics and law. He passed quietly away leaving behind him a record seldom attained by man men who have the sight of both eyes."<sup>23</sup>

#### Notes

1. Scrapbook: Biographies of men (and women), (Toronto: Microfilming Services, 1973), Reel 5, p. 108.
2. *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 20 July 1900, p.1.
3. J. Smyth Carter, *The Story of Dundas, Being a History of the County of Dundas From 1784 to 1904* (Iroquois: St. Lawrence News Publishing Co., 1905), p.257.
4. National Archives of Canada, Department of Veterans Affairs, South African War records, reel T-2078, p.001798.
5. For the best account of the war from a Canadian perspective, see Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).
6. *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 4 September 1900, p.3.
7. Sessional Papers, vol. 12, 1901, p.89.
8. *Cornwall Standard*, 21 September 1900, p.3.
9. *Daily British Whig* (Kingston), 6 September 1900, p.6.
10. *Rideau Record* [Smiths Falls, ON], 20 December 1900, p.1.
11. *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 12 December 1900, p.5.
12. Carter, *The Story of Dundas*, p.256.
13. *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 12 December 1900, p.7.
14. *Cornwall Standard*, 8 March 1901, p.1.
15. *Daily British Whig*, 17 December 1900, p.4.
16. Scrapbook: Biographies of men (and women), Toronto: Microfilming Services, (1973), reel 5, p.105. Additional information on the lack of pensions for disabled Canadian servicemen before the First World War is found in Desmond Morton and Glen Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life, 1915-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).
17. *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 28 September 1901, p.14.
18. *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 4 September 1900, p.3.
19. Scrapbook, p.104. The English-Canadian response to the voluntary system in the First World War is described in R. Matthew Bray, "Fighting as an Ally: The English-Canadian Patriotic Response to the Great War," *Canadian Historical Review* 61/2 (June 1980), pp.141-168.
20. Scrapbook, p.113.
21. *Ibid*, p.113
22. *Ibid*, p.112
23. *Rideau Record*, 25 February 1932, p.4.

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