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sewellm@uwindsor.ca

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Six Degrees of Alteration: The obstacles soldier memoirs face in their quest to  
convey an experience of war

By

Mark Sewell

A Major Research Paper  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
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Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2018

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Six Degrees of Alteration: The obstacles soldier memoirs face in their quest to convey an  
experience of war

by

Mark Sewell

APPROVED BY:

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P. Way  
Department of History

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R. Nelson, Advisor  
Department of History

April 25, 2018

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## ABSTRACT

Soldier memoirs have been used as an historical source for centuries. Their factual accuracy is less than that of official reports and histories that incorporate a wide range of sources, but they have become valued as a means to gain insight into the mindset of soldiers and have some of their experience transmitted to the reader. The experience transmitted to the reader is altered vastly from what the soldier experienced directly, due to the nature of human perception, memory, and the process of writing down his or her thoughts. This paper proposes a conceptual framework to assist in tracking the amount of distortion from the original event. This model is called the six degrees of alteration, in which the reader takes an active role during the final stage.

This paper uses the memoirs written by Dieppe veterans to chart changes from the experience of battle, through the writing process, and ending with the reader. One memoir in particular, that of Clifford Sewell, provides the main vehicle for examining this process, due to the additional material accompanying it. Some of his handwritten notes, plus an interview with his daughter who transcribed it, allow for an especially in-depth analysis of the role played by the editor in shaping the final product. Although Clifford's goal of warning future generations about the horrors of war remains evident, the message is made less effective due to the editorial changes. It becomes clear that when reading military memoirs, the message is not solely due to what the soldier chose to convey.

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## Introduction

**“Every war is ironic, because every war is worse than expected.”<sup>1</sup>**

**“If there’s ever another war, don’t go.”<sup>2</sup>**

These two passages appear at first glance to be from the same book due to the message being conveyed. If one were told they were from the same paragraph even, warning readers about the horrors of war, there would be little reason for doubt. In reality, they are the thoughts from two different people, expressed 19 years apart; certain things unify them though. Both men are World War Two veterans, and both express a sense of disillusionment not found so much in war accounts from previous centuries. This disillusionment is a central theme of 20<sup>th</sup> century soldier memoirs, a fact the first man—Paul Fussell—developed into a very prominent mode of interpretation when examining memoirs written by war veterans. The second man is one of those soldiers who chose to write of his experiences; his name is Clifford Sewell, and the memoir he wrote to warn following generations against naively volunteering for war—along with the editorial changes which weakened that message—form the foundation of this paper. He volunteered for service near the beginning of World War Two and took part in the failed Raid on Dieppe. His experiences during the battle itself, his years in a prisoner of war camp, combined with the hardships of the Death March robbed him of his youthful innocence, and compelled him to try and prevent others from needlessly going through the same experiences.

Soldiers who write memoirs often want to convey the reality of war to the next generation as a warning, but several degrees of alteration separate the reader from the actual event. Much has been written by historians on the motivations for soldiers to write of their experiences, both internal and external; this material will be used in examining the Dieppe memoirs in this paper. The time period the writing occurs in shapes the memoir as well, as societal views and expectations are incorporated by the

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Clifford Sewell, conversation with author, August 1994.



author, including—interestingly enough—attitudes of society at the time of writing in addition to those the soldier grew up with. What I will be able to examine more closely in this paper though, will be the influence of the editor on the finished work. The memoir written by my grandfather was typed and edited by his daughter, and with the supporting evidence I have access to, it becomes evident that she is more responsible for the shape it took than I was originally aware of; more so, she affected the final shape more than she realizes. Through an interview with her, I have access to her statements on the creative process, and her role in it. Through interviews with his son, I have a record of war stories he was surprised did not make it into the finished product. Most importantly though, with the handwritten notes my grandfather made during the writing process, I have a record of what he intended to include in the memoir that never made it. Certain sections of the memoir would have presented an entirely different sense to the reader if the omitted material had been included, and the ending would definitely have had a different feel to it.

In this paper, I will be putting forth my model of the six levels of alteration between the actual events as they happened, and the experience which the final reader receives. In the first level, the event being experienced by the soldier is altered through human sensory organs and mental perception. Next, the perceived event is altered in the soldier's memory as time progresses. When the memoir is written, its intended purpose changes the way events are described and what may be left out of the narrative; this can be a conscious or unconscious decision. The nature of language—including its limitations and personal understanding of words and phrases—as well as the meaning imposed by narrative structure itself further alters the original event. Once the account is written, the editor further alters it, whether at a publishing house or a family member. Then, the finalized memoir is altered through the reading experience, providing each reader with a uniquely altered experience and view of the original event, which may differ greatly from another person's. For five of those steps, I will be relying heavily on what has been written by historians before, while hopefully adding some useful

insights to the discussion along the way. Where I can make the largest contribution though, is in examining what I am calling the fifth degree of alteration, the changes introduced by the editor or publishing house. This will be the longest section of the paper, involving the most use of primary sources, those being the aforementioned interviews and handwritten notes which never made it to the finalized memoir. By using this conceptual framework, it should be easier to see all these influences at work in the given example of soldier memoirs, but also in many other examples of historical materials.

## Historiography

The major theme of 20<sup>th</sup> century military memoirs is that of disillusionment. The role of the soldier has morphed from that of hero to that of the victim.<sup>3</sup> Paul Fussell looms large in the literature regarding this and may be argued to have started this entire line of thought. Although he taught English at Rutgers, he wrote the seminal work on the matter, *The Great War and Modern Memory*. It is nigh impossible to read any modern historical journal article about 20<sup>th</sup> century war memoirs that does not either build from his arguments or try to poke holes in his thesis; even those that do neither invariably end up mentioning his work in passing. He based his masterwork on the literary writings of several prominent British authors, supplemented with the writings of various lower rank soldiers in the form of letters, diaries, and other assorted documents.<sup>4</sup>

Some historians who attack his claims almost appear to be defending their turf. In one article, the authors state “Although a Professor of English, Fussell writes as an historian...historians, in his opinion only dress up the distorted, fanciful versions of official apologists.”<sup>5</sup> In the article just quoted

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<sup>3</sup> Yuval Noah Harari, “Martial Illusions: War and Disillusionment in Twentieth-Century and Renaissance Military Memoirs,” *The Journal of Military History* 69.1 (2005): 43.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 363, 367-368.

<sup>5</sup> Robin Prior, and Trevor Wilson, “Paul Fussell at War,” *War in History* 1.1 (1994): 63.

the authors do go on to make salient points--such as British pre-war life not being nearly so idyllic as Fussell portrays, and his casualty figures being exaggerated to the point of complete inaccuracy—but the tone somehow never manages to escape the feeling that Fussell is seen as an intruder into a realm not his own.<sup>6</sup>

A far more compelling refutation of Fussell's arguments comes from the writings of historian Yuval Noah Harari. He sees the prominence of disillusionment in 20<sup>th</sup> century war memoirs but comes up with a different explanation for why that is. In one article, he starts by quoting Fussell's famous line that "Every War is ironic because every war is worse than expected. Every war constitutes an irony of situation because its means are so melodramatically disproportionate to its presumed ends."<sup>7</sup> He then elucidates the argument of Fussell and scholars that agree with him such as Tobey Herzog that veterans, having seen war's "true face" become disillusioned with the romantic image of war, and set themselves the task of destroying that image to prevent future generations from experiencing the same horrors as them.<sup>8</sup> He notes that veterans have been remarkably successful in this, to the point that modern language has changed since the World Wars, so much so that narratives supporting war are now seen as ironic or just bad literature.<sup>9</sup> Fussell himself has been quite active in this process, as he is himself a veteran of World War Two.

Harari lists a number of historians who have taken issue with the type of sources Fussell mainly relied upon, and the fact that his work is centered only on the Western front; in addition, these historians claim that widespread disillusionment did not enter the mainstream beyond elite thinkers until the 1960s with the widely unpopular Vietnam War.<sup>10</sup> Harari, having made these caveats, does not

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<sup>6</sup> Prior and Wilson, "Paul Fussell at War," 64, 67.

<sup>7</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Harari, "Martial Illusions," 43-45.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Harari, "Martial Illusions," 45-46.

find that the disillusionment model is necessarily flawed; the date of disillusionment is merely moved from 1916 to the 1960s, and Fussell becomes transformed “from a distant reporter on the death of this romantic image, into one of its main executioners.”<sup>11</sup> Fussell still looms large, larger even in this re-conception. After having said all this though, Harari goes on to ask a troubling question; if the romantic image of war was so groundless, why did it remain for so long?<sup>12</sup> One possibility is that the nature of war suddenly changed in the industrial age, and that writers such as Owen who Fussell relied upon were reacting to a moment in history rather than unmasking war’s true face.<sup>13</sup> Harari says that most disillusionment scholars reject that hypothesis, claiming that the nature of war has always been disillusioning, but that simply brings up the question again of why it took so long for people to write disillusioned things about it.<sup>14</sup> It is here that Harari really begins to show his own theories, theories which stem from his work looking at war memoirs from further back, in the late-medieval and Renaissance, where the “old lie” of heroic memoirs was formulated.<sup>15</sup>

Harari chose this period due to it being the time of greatest advancement in military technology prior to World War One, involving the introduction of firearms; if there is a link between technological change in war and the sense of disillusionment by soldiers, it should show up in this time period as well.<sup>16</sup> This turns out not to be the case at all, and in fact, most soldiers wrote memoirs intended to encourage involvement in war rather than avoid it.<sup>17</sup> He finds many reasons why this is so, involving the following; life outside of war was almost as horrid as war itself for many people; desertion was easier, so those who stayed in the wars wanted to be there; the worldview of the time was such that external

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<sup>11</sup> Harari, “Martial Illusions,” 47.

<sup>12</sup> Harari, “Martial Illusions,” 48.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Harari, “Martial Illusions,” 49.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Harari, “Martial Illusions,” 49-50.

<sup>17</sup> Harari, “Martial Illusions,” 57.

concepts such as honour were paramount.<sup>18</sup> Harari locates the switch in memoirs from the “old lie” to that of modern disillusionment in the change to how identity was conceived, with internal ideas of development of the self in a continual process coming into play. The modern soldier had to find a way to incorporate the wartime experiences into a continuum from before to during to after, and the experience of disillusionment provided this.<sup>19</sup> The modern soldier got his significant life experience that led to further development of the self; the growing-up experienced in becoming jaded by war was a form of enlightenment. The conclusion is basically that “disillusionment is the product of prewar cultural expectations more than of any new military realities.”<sup>20</sup>

Others have expanded upon how Fussell sees irony as one of the main ways that disillusionment was expressed. One of these people is another outsider to the realm of history; hailing from the London School of Economics, Lilie Chouliaraki charts how the use of irony has changed in war writing from the early 20<sup>th</sup> through the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. She claims that “linguistic variation in the genre may reflect deeper transformations in the ways we witness war and in the moral discourses...that such witnessing makes available to us.”<sup>21</sup> Of irony generally, she says that it “differs from the tragic trope in that, rather than heroically defying or dramatically lamenting death, it embraces the futility of human life by stoically accepting its inevitability yet emptying it of meaning.”<sup>22</sup> This is a sentiment Fussell would recognize and agree with.

Other historians looking at memoirs naturally focus on different things, but the use of language continues to be common. In looking at how soldiers expressed pain and how it was recorded in memoirs, Joanna Bourke noted some interesting changes. She examines how pain from wounding is

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<sup>18</sup> Harari, “Martial Illusions,” 66-67.

<sup>19</sup> Harari, “Martial Illusions,” 67-68.

<sup>20</sup> Harari, “Martial Illusions,” 69.

<sup>21</sup> Lilie Chouliaraki, “From war memoirs to milblogs: Language change in the witnessing of war, 1914-2014,” *Discourse & Society* 25.5 (2014): 601.

<sup>22</sup> Chouliaraki, “From war memoirs to milblogs,” 602.

viewed and described, which also shows how societal notions affect the shape of war memoirs. Back in the American Civil War, for instance, pain was to be silently endured, and even took on redemptive properties. This seems tied to religious ideas about suffering being redemptive—as in the suffering of Christ—and was sometimes expressed in such terms in the memoirs produced.<sup>23</sup> This changed by the Second World War, where wounding was expressed in gory ways, and the tone was aggressive rather than silently enduring.<sup>24</sup> Fussell also noted the greater gore in Second World War accounts, as in the section where he discusses *Catch-22* and the horrific scene involving a young man cut in half by an airplane propeller.<sup>25</sup> But something else Bourke notes is quite interesting, and that is the way in which war memoirs end up being structured to conform to the standards imposed by certain publishers, where everything from the content to the title is set-up a certain way.<sup>26</sup>

It has been noted that the narrative format may tell a story in and of itself. Hope Sneddon and Jesper Gulddal argue that “it is necessary to go beyond the layer of explicit commentary to come to grips with the exact nature of the author’s account of the war,” and that “narrative analysis brings out an otherwise concealed dimension of the text, which complicates or even contradicts the author’s stated views on the war.”<sup>27</sup> This almost seems to be validation for people like Fussell who taught English becoming more heavily involved! The authors also note themes of “disillusionment and growth” in one of the German memoirs they were examining,<sup>28</sup> which counters some of the criticism levelled at Fussell that he was only using British and French sources.

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<sup>23</sup> Joanna Bourke, “Bodily Pain, Combat, and the Politics of Memoirs: Between the American Civil War and the War in Vietnam,” *Histoire sociale/Social history* 49.91 (2013): 49-50.

<sup>24</sup> Bourke, “Bodily Pain, Combat, and the Politics of Memoirs,” 53.

<sup>25</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 334-335.

<sup>26</sup> Bourke, “Bodily Pain, Combat, and the Politics of Memoirs,” 54.

<sup>27</sup> Hope Sneddon, and Jesper Gulddal, “War Stories: Narrative Sense-Making in German Eastern Front Soldier Memoirs,” *Politics of Memory* 2.3 (2013): LC.6.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

All these discussions center mainly around external considerations, though. Fussell sees the discontinuity between idyllic pre-war life and the horrors of modern, mechanized war finally ripping the veil of lies from the eyes of those who experienced it. Harari mentions some internal motivations such as integrating the discontinuities of before, during and after into a continuous whole, but once again it seems to be the external factors of societal forces being the determining factor; the difference in character between Renaissance and 20<sup>th</sup> century memoirs is put down to being a case of different societal expectations and structure. This is missing an important element though, one which is provided by the writings of another historian, Michael Roper. By looking at the writings of a single person over a period in excess of sixty years, he is able to see the personal motivations behind memoir writing in a way not otherwise evident. He examines the writings of Lyndall Urwick, who served in the First World War, a man who was a prodigious writer. In a letter home Urwick wrote from the war, a period of three days in the trenches was followed by him going to the field hospital; sixty years later, that period had stretched to over ten days, and he had to be ordered to the hospital against his protestations.<sup>29</sup> The later recollection appears to be more truthful though, if one did not know better; it is more detailed, there is more precise dialogue reported...yet it is factually incorrect.<sup>30</sup> But the way in which the story changes over time opens up a whole new avenue of inquiry; as Roper says, "This article...is not to expose such re-remembering as fictitious. Rather, it treats re-remembering as a process motivated by the psychic needs of the past and present."<sup>31</sup> He mentions how the popular memory approach—which seems to be the most prevalent—has "little to say about the range of possible personal motivations for remembering, or about the specific unconscious processes which might be brought into play by it."<sup>32</sup> Roper manages to show what some of these motivations are, at least for Urwick. His first memoirs were

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Roper, "Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction in Personal Narratives of the Great War," *History Workshop Journal* 50 (2000): 181-182.

<sup>30</sup> Roper, "Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero," 182-183.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Roper, "Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero," 184.

written in the 1950s, while he was working in a public office position; he changes the nature of staff officers from people whose “minds don’t seem to work rationally at all”, to that of the true heroes of the war.<sup>33</sup> This may seem odd given that Fussell says “No soldier who has fought ever entirely overcomes his disrespect for the Staff,”<sup>34</sup> unless one takes into account the personal motivations behind such a reimagining. Urwick was trying to win a knighthood, so the staff officer—who his current administrative job resembled in many way—had to be cast as heroic.<sup>35</sup> But then, when he was past his career days, the emphasis was back on the regimental soldier as the hero; the staff officer was no longer a hero, but a victim.<sup>36</sup> In addition, the change in how his hospitalization occurred, and how long he was in the trenches before it, may have served to alleviate some of his guilt at surviving the attack that killed almost everyone who remained at the front when he left.<sup>37</sup> In 1972 he says he felt guilt that he had “deserted them in their hour of need,” but that “there was no gainsaying Elliot’s order.”<sup>38</sup> By remembering it other than how it actually happened, a number of psychological needs were met.

I will be using the ideas developed by many of these historians when discussing the different levels of separation between the actual event—war, horrific battles and imprisonment—and a reader’s experience of it in a finished memoir; however, my main contribution will be building most upon what Joanna Bourke notes in passing, that the publishing house tends to impose certain style guidelines, which affect the message conveyed to an extent.<sup>39</sup> With the additional materials which were left out of my grandfather’s memoir, and the interview with his daughter who served as transcriber, editor, and the person who submitted the final manuscript, I am well positioned to develop this point further.

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<sup>33</sup> Roper, “Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero,” 186-187.

<sup>34</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 92.

<sup>35</sup> Roper, “Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero,” 188.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Roper, “Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero,” 194.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Bourke, “Bodily Pain, Combat, and the Politics of Memoirs,” 54.



## The Dieppe Raid

In April of 1942, Winston Churchill and his Chiefs of Staff agreed with Roosevelt that a second front would be opened in the war, to take some of the German pressure off of Russia. This would entail a major operation in spring of 1943 (Operation Roundup), to be preceded by a cross-Channel operation called Sledgehammer, to be mounted in late 1942 if the Russians seemed to be in danger of defeat.<sup>40</sup> The British knew that this was a plan doomed to end in disaster, so they concocted an alternative. A planned commando raid on the French town of Dieppe, which would have employed 500 men, was enlarged into a mini-invasion using over 5000 men, that could serve as a substitute for the proposed Operation Sledgehammer.<sup>41</sup>

Originally, it was not to be a frontal assault, but rather an attack on the flanks of Dieppe itself, to the west at Quiberville, and east at Criel-sur-Mer. It was believed that tanks could seize the St. Aubin aerodrome, and the high ground south and south-west of Dieppe.<sup>42</sup> This got changed to include a frontal attack on Dieppe itself, with additional flank landings at Puys and Pourville; the gun batteries at Berneval and Varengeville would be taken out by paratroopers, and heavy air bombardment would precede the attack.<sup>43</sup> This operation—now code-named Rutter—continued to be modified, including the removal of the heavy air bombardment that had previously been considered essential.<sup>44</sup>

The Canadians trained for the operation on the Isle of Wight; secrecy was a high concern, and the troops did not know they were training for anything in particular, just that there was an emphasis on combined assault techniques.<sup>45</sup> Tests were conducted with landing tanks on the beaches, which were

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<sup>40</sup> Denis and Shelagh Whitaker, *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1992), 53-57.

<sup>41</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, 87-89.

<sup>42</sup> Canadian Military Headquarters, CMHQ Report No. 100, *Operation "JUBILEE": The Raid on Dieppe, 19 Aug 42 Part I: The Preliminaries of the Operation*. London, England, 16 July 1943, para 25.

<sup>43</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 26-27.

<sup>44</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 41-42.

<sup>45</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, 124-125.

considered to be comparable to those at Dieppe;<sup>46</sup> this was just one of the blunders involved in mounting the assault, as the beach composition and grade was nowhere close to similar. The rocks at Dieppe are chert, several metres deep; tanks cannot dig down to gain traction, the stones get in between the drive sprocket and track, break the track link pins, and the tank is disabled.<sup>47</sup> The unique beaches of Dieppe were common enough knowledge to be mentioned in travel guides, making this an inexcusable failure of military intelligence.<sup>48</sup>

Training exercise **Yukon**, which was a dress rehearsal for the raid, took place on June 11 and 12, on the English coast. As some of the troops landed two miles west of their objective, and others got lost and landed one and a half hours late, it was determined that another exercise was required.<sup>49</sup> During **Yukon II**, carried out June 22-24, things went better for the most part, but there was still a lack of precision in bringing landing craft to their assigned beaches, and insufficient smoke cover to assist in approaching these beaches.<sup>50</sup> These issues were considered to be naval issues, and General Montgomery took steps to correct them.<sup>51</sup> Although these concerns were addressed, there was not another exercise to see if things would work out better under battle conditions. Nevertheless, General Montgomery had confidence in the fighting spirit and ability of the Canadians; “The Canadians are 1<sup>st</sup> class chaps; if anyone can pull it off, they will.”<sup>52</sup>

On July 2, 1942, the men embarked upon the ships, for, as far as they knew, an exercise called **Klondike I**.<sup>53</sup> Once the ships had embarked, they were told that this was an actual operation, and the

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<sup>46</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, 133.

<sup>47</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, 151.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 70-75.

<sup>50</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 77.

<sup>51</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 78-83.

<sup>52</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 85.

<sup>53</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para. 98.

destination was finally announced.<sup>54</sup> The men had to stay on the ships, waiting for weather conditions to be suitable; the operation kept being delayed.<sup>55</sup> After being on board for a number of days, strictly regulated recreational breaks on shore were arranged.<sup>56</sup> The men learned their tasks, and prepared their gear, including filing of Sten gun components required to make it so they would actually work.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, the German's 10<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division had been moved from the Russian Front to the vicinity of Dieppe...the promise of a poorly defended port was even more false than it had previously been.<sup>58</sup>

On July 7, at about 06:15 hours, four enemy aircraft attacked the flotilla, dropping bombs that caused considerable damage, but only caused four minor casualties.<sup>59</sup> The damage was not enough to cancel the attack; however, the navy made the decision that the weather made it impossible to carry out the attack successfully on July 8, so the attack was called off.<sup>60</sup> At this point, Brigadier Chilton wrote to General Crerar the following; "The troops will be got off the ships today and after that it will probably be impossible to maintain security. The Army Comd has therefore recommended to the powers that be that the operation be off for all time."<sup>61</sup> However, the political considerations that had caused a commando raid to become a mini-invasion were still in play, so the raid was simply rescheduled, with minor tweaks.

About a week after being cancelled, the plan was revived. "The Government accepted the very strong possibility that our intentions to operate against them earlier in the summer would have been discovered by the enemy but considered that the risk was a reasonable one."<sup>62</sup> This was due to the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, 169.

<sup>57</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, 170.

<sup>58</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, 172.

<sup>59</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 102.

<sup>60</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 102, 103.

<sup>61</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 103.

<sup>62</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 110.

aforementioned political factors.<sup>63</sup> This new plan, still aimed at Dieppe, was given the code-name of **Jubilee**, and fundamental changes were made to the plan. The paratroopers that were to take out the gun emplacements were replaced with commando units; this would allow for briefing the units just prior to the mission, as opposed to the four days for briefing required by paratroopers.<sup>64</sup> This worked in concert with the plan to not concentrate troops beforehand, but rather move the units directly to their ports of embarkation just prior to go time; this was an attempt to keep some secrecy to the mission, and was made possible by the fact that most of the troops to be used had undergone extensive training for the cancelled operation.<sup>65</sup>

One of the worst decisions was to forego a heavy bombardment by bombers prior to going in; this option had been tabled again but left till the final moment to be decided upon.<sup>66</sup> On August 17, the decision was made that bombing beforehand would not be a good option. Ludicrous reasons were provided such as not being able to ensure accuracy, or that bombing might alert the enemy.<sup>67</sup> The least valid argument was that the destruction caused would make it difficult for tanks to get into Dieppe;<sup>68</sup> tanks would not be able to get into Dieppe anyway, due to the composition of the beach!

So, it was that 6106 men headed across the Channel in the early hours of August 19, 1942. At 01:24 hours, a radar officer at Beachy Head (Sussex coast) picked up echoes of an enemy convoy in the path of the raiding flotilla.<sup>69</sup> Although the warning was forwarded to force commander Captain John Hughes-Hallet, they continued on their path,<sup>70</sup> and at 03:47, the section of the flotilla carrying No. 3

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<sup>63</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 111.

<sup>64</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 127.

<sup>65</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 128.

<sup>66</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 133

<sup>67</sup> CMHQ Report No. 100, para 139.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, 3.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

Commando encountered the German convey about 7 miles off the coast of France.<sup>71</sup> This destroyed the possibility that No. 3 Commando could accomplish their goal of silencing the gun battery at Berneval.<sup>72</sup> No. 4 Commando did manage to silence the guns over at Varangeville,<sup>73</sup> but this was practically the only successful part of the disastrous raid.

While the Royal Regiment of Canada was supposed to be landing on Blue Beach under cover of darkness, they were lost out at sea.<sup>74</sup> The first wave was 35 minutes late, while the following assault wave was almost a full hour late.<sup>75</sup> The first wave landed at 05:25, five minutes after the main landing; their task had been to knock out the guns that would wreak havoc on the landing of the main force.<sup>76</sup> As they were supposed to be under cover of darkness, no naval fire support had been planned; as they were actually coming in during daylight, they received heavy fire immediately.<sup>77</sup> The men were cut down before they even reached the beach. "The seawall was only 40 yards away, but no more than 15 of the first wave of 150 men reached it."<sup>78</sup> "The beach was...plainly visible to the Germans, whose own fire positions were extraordinarily well-concealed from our view. The ROYALS were shot down in heaps on the beach without knowing where the fire was coming from."<sup>79</sup> The final fate of those who landed at Blue Beach was that over half the men on the beach had been killed, by grenades lobbed down from on top of the cliff, machine gun fire, and four 75mm guns.<sup>80</sup> The Germans were impressed by their fighting spirit though; "We were amazed at the attacker, who fought with a bravery and élan against an

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<sup>71</sup> Canadian Military Headquarters, CMHQ Report No. 101, *Operation "JUBILEE": The Raid on Dieppe, 19 Aug 42. Part II: The Execution of the Operation. Section 1: General Outline and Flank Attacks.* London, England, 11 August 1943, para 24.

<sup>72</sup> CMHQ Report No. 101, para 25.

<sup>73</sup> CMHQ Report No. 101, para 30.

<sup>74</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, 238.

<sup>75</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, 239.

<sup>76</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, 241.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> CMHQ Report No. 101, para 74.

<sup>80</sup> CMHQ Report No. 101, para.99.

opponent who could not be seen. Nobody thought of giving up. Taking effective cover behind their dead comrades, they shot uninterruptedly at our positions. Thus with their bodies these dead soldiers provided their comrades with the last service of friendship.”<sup>81</sup> These words by Lieutenant Walter Hopenner of the 12<sup>th</sup> Field Company, 571 German Infantry Regiment at Puys is testament to the valour displayed by the Canadians in the face of disaster.

This mix of slaughter and heroism was common across all three beaches of the assault, Green, White, and Blue. The final casualty list for the Canadians was 893 dead, 1886 prisoners of war.<sup>82</sup> An entire book could be written detailing the various horrors of that day, and indeed many have been written by the men who lived through it, and the traumatic prisoner of war camps that followed for so many who survived. It is those works, the personal accounts written in an attempt to make sense of it all, that will be examined in the following sections, as the levels of separation between the actual event and the final reader becomes apparent.

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<sup>81</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, 247.

<sup>82</sup> Canadian Military Headquarters, CMHQ Report No. 108, *Operation "JUBILEE": The Raid on DIEPPE, 19 Aug 42. Part II: The Execution of the Operations. Section 2: The Attack on the Main Beaches*. London, England, 17 December 1943, para 296, 297.

## The Six Degrees of Alteration

### The First Degree of Alteration

The first degree of alteration is when the events are experienced by the soldier. This turns the *real event*—the plain facts of what occurred—into the *perceived event*. Now, this runs counter to what people generally think about eyewitness testimony and first-person accounts. The traditional authority of eyewitnesses is based on the following assumptions; first, that knowledge consists of objective facts that different people can all experience the same way and verify independently of one another; second, that eyewitnesses of an event know more facts concerning that event than others; third, that eyewitnesses know these facts with more certainty than others.<sup>83</sup>

However, this is not the case. For one thing, even if one were able to perceive reality fully objectively, it would only be an experience of a narrow slice of reality.<sup>84</sup> This is partly why “of twenty who return from a battle, no two agree about the beginning, the middle, or the end, and recount it differently.”<sup>85</sup> Benjamin Harris, a soldier in 1808 said, “All I can do is tell the things which happened immediately around me, and that, I think, is as much as a private soldier can be expected to do.”<sup>86</sup> Indeed that would be all a soldier could do, if, in fact, they could perceive things without any filters.

It is not possible to perceive things without any outside or inside influence altering perception, however. As psychologists Anders Sand and Mats E. Nilsson note, “Humans’ perceptual systems sometimes fail to accurately capture their surroundings: A stimulus may be misperceived as something

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<sup>83</sup> Yuval Noah Harari, “Scholars, Eyewitnesses, and Flesh-Witnesses of War: A Tense Relationship,” *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 7.2 (2009): 215.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Harari, “Scholars, Eyewitnesses, and Flesh-Witnesses of War,” 216.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

else or may not be perceived at all.”<sup>87</sup> This is true for normal, everyday life; it will be even more so in times of war. This has been noted by those who research such issues; the distortion of factual knowledge—the famous fog of war—is itself a key part of the war experience. Robert Graves, who in addition to being a famous writer was also a veteran of World War One, said “the memoirs of a man who went through some of the worst experiences of trench warfare are not truthful if they do not contain a high proportion of falsities.”<sup>88</sup> It is simply inherent to being human that what is perceived in the mind will be different to at least some degree than what objectively happened.

In the memoirs of Dieppe veterans examined when preparing this paper, no explicit acknowledgement of this phenomenon is made, but certain passages bear it out. “I felt no fear because I wasn’t there at that moment. I was detached from the whole bloody scene, watching the tragedy from afar. This state of mind seemed to last for some time, as I floated above it all...I came back to reality with a shudder.”<sup>89</sup> This soldier experienced an out of body experience due to the sensory overload from explosions, machinegun fire, and people literally dying all around him. A more powerful example of how perceived reality can differ from objective reality would be difficult to find, but the following might qualify as such.

Clifford Sewell, the author of the memoir which inspired this paper, did not mention in the manuscript itself anything which would demonstrate how perception and reality can differ greatly at times. In the additional materials which accompany it, and which I came into possession of while conducting research, there is a submission to the War Claims Commission, which lists the sort of maltreatment he suffered while a prisoner of war. At the end of his deposition, there is a paragraph

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<sup>87</sup> Anders Sand and Mats E. Nilson, “When Perception Trumps Reality: Perceived, Not Objective, Meaning of Primes Drives Stroop Priming,” *Psychological Science* 28.3 (2017): 346.

<sup>88</sup> Harari, “Scholars, Eyewitnesses, and Flesh-Witnesses of War,” 220.

<sup>89</sup> A. Robert Prouse, *Ticket to Hell via Dieppe: From a Prisoner’s Wartime Log 1942-1945* (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1982), 17.



that I will quote in its entirety, due to the powerful message it conveys. “You have admitted, quite rightly, that we did suffer maltreatment, the full extent of which you will never know, because the Mind will only absorb so much and then it becomes too numb to register any more. There are, not weeks, but months of the first two years of my imprisonment of which I can remember nothing at all, other than a mad nightmare of yelling Germans and their clubbed rifle butts; a few things stand out clearly, like the time in the Military prison in Oberglogan.”<sup>90</sup> This passage also leads quite smoothly into the next degree of alteration, which is when it is altered over time in memory.

### **The Second Degree of Alteration**

The second degree of alteration is when the perceived event gets further altered in the soldier’s memory. A working definition of military memoirs defines them as synthetic narrative texts that are written retrospectively and are based largely on personal memory.<sup>91</sup> They are affected by the issues inherent to memory, as well as the benefit of hindsight.<sup>92</sup> This can be ameliorated to a certain extent, though, if the soldier kept detailed notes during the war. Although still informed by memory, and showing obvious signs of hindsight, the memoir of A. Robert Prouse is based largely on the extensive notes he kept during his years as a prisoner of war in Germany, following the Dieppe Raid. An interesting outgrowth of this is that it includes the only account of homosexuality amongst the prisoners in any of the memoirs examined.<sup>93</sup> It also includes the only mention of an alternative outlet some soldier came up with, which involved alterations to a medicine ball.<sup>94</sup> It comes across in the writing that

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<sup>90</sup> Clifford Sewell, “War Claims Commission; Statement Concerning Claim for Maltreatment (1953; in the author’s possession)

<sup>91</sup> Yuval Noah Harari, “Military Memoirs: A Historical Overview of the Genre from the Middle Ages to the Late Modern Era,” *War in History* 14.3 (2007): 290.

<sup>92</sup> Harari, “Military Memoirs,” 303.

<sup>93</sup> Prouse, *Ticket to Hell via Dieppe*, 113.

<sup>94</sup> Prouse, *Ticket to Hell via Dieppe*, 114.

he found these things to be a disturbing, negative part of the prison experience, which may explain why other accounts, not based off of extensive notes, make no mention of such things.

One interesting thing that happens with memory in older adults is a change in how past events are remembered, accentuating the positive over the negative. Older adults end up “remembering a higher proportion of positive stimuli and a lower proportion of negative stimuli...reconstructing autobiographical memories so they seem more positive than they actually were.”<sup>95</sup> This explains the lack of details on what were considered negative, sordid sexual practices in the other memoirs. It also explains a change in Clifford Sewell’s opinion about French people. He had expressed anger about the French in conversations with his son in previous years, due to being turned in by a French person during his escape attempt,<sup>96</sup> but the memoir does not mention being turned in by a French person at all. Instead, it has a passage regarding when he was captured when the Dieppe Raid failed, in which he expresses gratitude that the bombardment of the town was cancelled, and explicitly says that “The French people were NOT the enemy.”<sup>97</sup>

So far, I have only discussed how events filtered through memory may be changed in emphasis, or not actively remembered due to a bias towards positivity in older adults’ memory. There is another issue to be considered though, which is false memories. Memories can be altered by post-event information; imagination exercises can make it so people feel they are recalling real events, when the events were never experienced by them.<sup>98</sup> This means that since the soldiers writing their memoirs have all the extra information released about wartime events after the fact available to them, their

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<sup>95</sup> Mara Mather and Laura L. Carstensen, “Aging and motivated cognition: the positivity effect in attention and memory,” *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences* 9.10 (2005): 500.

<sup>96</sup> Michael Sewell, in discussion with the author, January 19, 2017.

<sup>97</sup> Clifford Sewell, *Survival: a Soldier’s Diary* (in the author’s possession): 19-20.

<sup>98</sup> Lawrence Pathis, Steven J. Frenda, Aurora K. R. LePort, Nicole Peterson, Bebecca M. Nichols, Craig E. L. Stark, James L. McGaugh and Elizabeth F. Loftus, “False Memories in highly superior autobiographical memory individuals,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 110.52 (2013): 20947.

memories of what happened can end up incorporating some of that information. In addition, even if no imaginary events become incorporated in the narrative—something which could happen easily enough, given how real events can seem imaginary when viewed through the lens of trauma suffered—events that happened to others could end up being recalled as events experienced.

I found an example of this in the handwritten notes of material that did not get into the finished manuscript of Clifford Sewell. In his statement to the War Claims Commission, he describes this punishment that he suffered; “Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>, 1943, for refusing to work, was taken to German Military prison...there I was made to stand on a metal ball about two ft. in diameter with stationary bayonets fixed at my front, back and both sides, this treatment lasted for 2-hrs. each morning and afternoon for three consecutive days. During which time I was on bread and water ration. Returned to work party Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1943.”<sup>99</sup> This is a very detailed account of the punishment, written in 1953; it was also told to his daughter and son over the years. There is a glitch, however; in his handwritten notes which got left out of the memoir, this punishment was something relayed to him by his friend George Sadoquis after an escape attempt, and it was a punishment reserved for German soldiers who committed a “bad crime,” with time on the ball dependent on severity of the offence.<sup>100</sup>

This raises many questions which deal with memory and memoirs. It would seem that his earlier, official account would be more accurate, due to being closer to the time of the event; however, he mentioned in the War Claims statement that entire months were blurry in his memory, and that “having to try to remember, is like having to re-live that time of horror over again.”<sup>101</sup> So, it could be a case of information told to him becoming incorporated into memory as an event he experienced, and

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<sup>99</sup> Clifford Sewell, “War Claims Commission; Statement Concerning Claim for Maltreatment (1953; in the author’s possession)

<sup>100</sup> Clifford Sewell, handwritten pages of his memoir, in the author’s possession.

<sup>101</sup> Clifford Sewell, “War Claims Commission; Statement Concerning Claim for Maltreatment (1953; in the author’s possession)

later in life the events untangled, perhaps after talking to George while writing the memoir. Or, it could be that due to the aforementioned positivity effect, he dissociated himself from a horrible memory, remembering it as something which happened to someone else. Possibly it could be that both accounts are true; he had that punishment imposed upon him, and George relayed an account of it from another camp, where it was reserved for German soldiers. Then, he simply remembered the account that was told to him, while his brain hid the more negative account from being recalled. It brings up many questions and is a great demonstration of how events are further altered in memory from what objectively happened in the first place.

With more questions raised than answered, it is time to proceed to the next degree of alteration, when the events as remembered are further changed during the writing process.

### **The Third Degree of Alteration**

Everything written by humans is done so for some sort of purpose. This purpose will determine to an extent what information is included, and what emphasis is given to certain data over others. In the case of military memoirs, this is one of the forces that alter the account still further from the objective reality of what initially occurred.

Let's begin with the way in which military memoirs have changed in form and emphasis over the centuries. What could almost be considered proto-memoirs emerged during the Crusades. Participants wrote eyewitness accounts of battles and the mysterious sites they saw in the Holy Land, but "Since medieval culture discouraged the writing of autobiographical accounts, most of the Crusaders who wrote about their adventures hardly ever mentioned themselves as protagonists."<sup>102</sup> Another issue was the largely oral culture of the aristocrats, which would make it less likely that they would write down

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<sup>102</sup> Harari, "Military Memoirs," 291.

accounts of their exploits. Some medieval accounts were written down by learned chroniclers who interviewed them and recorded their words for posterity.<sup>103</sup>

The Renaissance saw the emergence of a more familiar sort of memoir, due to the printing press and greater literacy rates.<sup>104</sup> Another factor was that combatants had to produce written accounts of their exploits to get rewards, transfers, and things of that nature.<sup>105</sup> Many soldiers simply expanded these accounts into full memoirs.<sup>106</sup> These accounts differ from more modern ones though, in an important aspect; they generally present a romantic, heroic image of war. They celebrated the actions of heroic knights; they viewed war as a natural phenomenon, and a positive cultural institution. Many wrote their memoirs to inspire readers and their descendants to “take up arms, and to conduct themselves well and honorably in war.”<sup>107</sup> It can be boiled down into a simple idea; war contains many horrors, which is why the warriors who go to war are awesome.<sup>108</sup>

In modern times, however, the paradigm has flipped completely, and military memoirs, especially those written in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present, almost universally express a view of disillusionment with war. Any memoirs which present a positive view of war are now generally considered to be false to some degree, or just bad literature.<sup>109</sup> This is due to the fact that many veterans have written of their experiences with the objective of warning the younger generation about the horrors of war. This passage from the conclusion of Clifford Sewell’s memoir states it quite plainly; “I hope this true story will help some young man to decide whether or not to join the forces in the event this country ever calls men to war. But just remember that in any war there is plenty of guts, but NO

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<sup>103</sup> Harari, “Military Memoirs,” 292-293.

<sup>104</sup> Harari, “Military Memoirs,” 293.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Harari, “Martial Illusions,” 55-57.

<sup>108</sup> Harari, “Martial Illusions,” 60.

<sup>109</sup> Harari, “Martial Illusions,” 45.

GLORY!”<sup>110</sup> This is a direct opposite of the goal intended for Renaissance memoirs, where achieving personal glory was paramount; it stands to reason that such a difference in purpose for writing would end up with a very different end product.

In studying five memoirs written by Dieppe veterans, there was not often such an explicit mention of the purpose for writing, although most of them did conform to the modern trend of expressing disillusion. The one exception was the account of Lucien Dumais, who was captured at Dieppe, but then escaped, returned to England, and went back as an espionage agent. His account conforms more to the older, Renaissance model, or even a heroic war novel. There is not one specific section that lays this out, but rather the book in its entirety; certain quotes stand out more than others though and give the feeling that this is an account of duty and honour.<sup>111</sup> This stands in contrast to what was written by another Dieppe veteran who escaped, although from the attack itself rather than captivity. Denis Whitaker has a stated purpose, which is to discover the real reasons behind the Dieppe Raid, and find an acceptable sense of purpose to it.<sup>112</sup> This shaped the finished work to the point where initially it was uncertain whether it could be called a memoir, as the bulk of it is made up of information and accounts from the author’s research into official records, and interviews with other veterans. It does, however contain a memoir within it; the author puts sections throughout the entire book that are his experiences and thoughts on the battle itself, as well as the planning and training exercises he directly experienced.

Getting back to a more traditional memoir though, the choice of what to include in Clifford Sewell’s account was directly affected by the purpose behind it. When interviewing Clifford’s daughter Veronica, a window into this was provided. There was a story remembered by his son, and by the

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<sup>110</sup> Sewell, *Survival*, 42.

<sup>111</sup> Lucien Dumais, *The Man Who Went Back* (London: Futura Publications Limited, 1975), 5, 21, 27.

<sup>112</sup> Whitaker, *Tragedy to Triumph*, xii.

author of this paper, that did not appear in the memoir. It was not in the handwritten notes either, which leads to the idea that it was not intended to be included. There was a guard on the Death March who was particularly brutal, and when soldiers fell and could not go on, he would bash them to death with the butt of his rifle rather than use a bullet.<sup>113</sup> At the end of the march, when the Americans liberated them, all the prisoners who had any strength left tackled that guard, and broke whatever body part they could grab; Clifford Sewell was responsible for breaking all the fingers on one hand.<sup>114</sup> Naturally, the guard ended up dead.

What this reveals about the purpose for writing affecting the way things are remembered or written down involves the audience for the book, in this case. Clifford Sewell and his daughter Veronica envisioned this as a book aimed at young people of about high school age.<sup>115</sup> Clifford was thinking about warning the young men who might be called to war in future times; this precluded putting things in like the above account, which might be too much for younger readers. In the finished, small print run version that Veronica had published through a company that does coffee table style books for families mostly, the same considerations came into play when it came to selecting additional materials. The War Claims Commission document first came to my notice by its inclusion in the book; however, not the entire document was included. This was a conscious decision on her part, due to the judgement that it was too brutal in its description of maltreatment to be included.<sup>116</sup> As the book was printed after his death, it was entirely her decision. When asked if it was something Clifford had decided to leave out upon consideration, she said, "He never even thought of putting it in."<sup>117</sup> Her influence on the final shape of the book will be become more apparent in a later section.

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<sup>113</sup> Veronica Kostuch, interviewed by author, January 15, 2017, transcript.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

This illustrates how the author's intended purpose behind the memoir can alter how events are portrayed. Now it is time to go to the next degree of alteration, which is when the already altered event gets filtered through the value laden, potentially distorting lens of language.

### **The Fourth Degree of Alteration**

Once the perceived event has been filtered through memory and the purpose for writing, it needs to be expressed through the medium of language. The limitations of language are a concern when writing memoirs; as Fussell notes, "the presumed inadequacy of language itself to convey the facts about trench warfare is one of the motifs of all who wrote about the war."<sup>118</sup> In the case of soldiers trying to write about wartime, they are trying to "make sense of their experiences and communicate them to an audience consisting mostly of uncomprehending civilians."<sup>119</sup> The soldier has a message to get out, and in order to convey it, he or she must select words, phrases, and narrative strategies that can transmit it to their audience.

The use of irony is one way to make language convey certain realities of war, as experienced by the soldier. Fussell says of World War One that "It reversed the Idea of Progress."<sup>120</sup> Irony reverses the old trope of heroic death by accepting its inevitability, while emptying it of meaning.<sup>121</sup> This can help in conveying the paradox of modern war, that the technological advances in the name of humanity have made individuals meaningless.<sup>122</sup> The use of irony can serve a paradoxical purpose in the crafting of a memoir, however. Memoirs are narrative texts in which their authors appear as the main protagonist.<sup>123</sup> Their actions must have some sort of meaning, in some sense at least, in order to fulfil

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<sup>118</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 185.

<sup>119</sup> Sneddon and Gulddal, "War Stories," LC.6.

<sup>120</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 8.

<sup>121</sup> Chouliaraki, "From war memoirs to milblogs," 602.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Harari, "Military Memoirs," 290.



this function. The ironic trope tends to work very well to express disillusionment. This very disillusionment though constitutes a meaningful experience in itself.<sup>124</sup> The soldier is able to express to the audience that war is in many ways a meaningless experience—if that is why they are writing, naturally—while at the same time creating personal meaning for their character as the story progresses.

In studying the memoirs of Dieppe veterans, the overall feel of the writing was not ironic; most had the sense of a factual retelling, albeit in a narrative structure. An article by Chouliaraki made the point that “irony should not be seen as a coherent argumentative structure...but as textual ‘moments’ that randomly punctuate the Battlefield Gothic, so as to articulate the author’s stance towards the death he/she witnesses.”<sup>125</sup> One way such ironic moments show up in the narrative is when suppressed emotion surfaces as an irrelevance, such as when a soldier begins wondering what the words to a poem or song are in the midst of an artillery barrage.<sup>126</sup> An instance of such irony can be found in the handwritten notes of material that did not get included in the memoir of Clifford Sewell. He was pinned behind the seawall with the rest of his men; there was a stalemate of sorts going on at the moment, as if either the Germans or Canadians exposed themselves to take a shot, they would get shot, so there was a moment of calm.<sup>127</sup> He noticed that his men were looking at him oddly, because he was laughing. They asked what the joke was, and he asked if they heard the various sounds around, and what they were; was it bees, thunder, and some guy whacking gold balls around?<sup>128</sup> His men listed what each of the sounds were; artillery, mortar rounds, and machinegun fire; they asked if he was losing it.<sup>129</sup> He replied that what was so funny was that he had been trained with the Webley .45 revolver, yet for the raid they gave him the .38 caliber version, which was pathetic in its power, and they sent him to go fight

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<sup>124</sup> Harari, “Martial Illusions,” 68.

<sup>125</sup> Chouliaraki, “From war memoirs to milblogs,” 604.

<sup>126</sup> Chouliaraki, “From war memoirs to milblogs,” 606.

<sup>127</sup> Clifford Sewell, handwritten pages of his memoir, in the author’s possession.

<sup>128</sup> Clifford Sewell, handwritten pages of his memoir, in the author’s possession. Additional information on what the exact sounds were described as from Michael Sewell, in discussion with the author, January 19, 2017.

<sup>129</sup> Clifford Sewell, handwritten pages of his memoir, in the author’s possession.

against all the massive firepower arrayed against them with just that.<sup>130</sup> The sheer absurdity and futility of the situation hit him all at once, and formed the joke in his mind of a meadow filled with natural sounds and people engaged in leisure activities.

In addition to the difficulties in finding words suitable to convey the wartime experience, or certain literary devices such as irony that might be chosen to do so, the very structure of memoirs plays a role. They are narrative texts by definition, and use “narrative to transform lived experience (Erlebnis) into symbolically mediated experience.”<sup>131</sup> This involves creating stable and understandable characters; establishing a temporal sequence of events; crafting a plotline and finding ways to show emotional response to the horrors of war.<sup>132</sup> It is “a process of interpretation whereby the chaos of lived experience is transformed into orderly storylines.”<sup>133</sup> Given the fact that soldiers have an incomplete view of the battles they are involved in along with the distortions introduced by memory, it is easy to see how moulding it into a coherent, readable storyline can further alter the account. Vaguely remembered comrades must be fleshed out into fuller characters that the reader can relate to. There must be some sense of progression from beginning to end that satisfies the requirement for a narrative; a diary can simply list events as they happen with no unifying thread, but a memoir must provide one. A common plotline in many of the Dieppe memoirs is to follow a chronological approach that basically goes like this; joining the military; life in England; training for the Dieppe Raid; the Dieppe Raid; being captured; prisoner of war camp; escape attempt(s); the Death March; returning home; final thoughts/life back at home. There is variation in how long each section is, and some memoirs had some sub-segments, but most accounts written by soldiers who were captured at Dieppe followed this basic template. The memoir of Lucien Dumais did not follow this template fully, because he did not remain in

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Sneddon and Gulddal, “War Stories,” LC.6.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

captivity for long. His memoir follows more the format of an adventure novel; it follows the template of the others up until being captured but emphasizes the successes of his unit during the raid itself. Over half the book follows his exploits once he returns to France and runs a covert operation, full of close calls and the sort of intrigue one expects in spy novels. At the end of his account there is not any stated lesson learned from the wartime experience; the adventure itself is reason enough to fulfil the requirements of narrative.

Some form of meaning or lesson learned is a feature in the other memoirs, for the most part. In Clifford Sewell's memoir, the lesson was that in war there is much bravery displayed, but no glory to be had.<sup>134</sup> For Jack Poulton, it was an understated lesson, where he is able to forgive enough upon returning to Dieppe in 1992 to shake hands with some German pilots who flew during the raid.<sup>135</sup> The realization that they were all just men doing what they thought was best for their country was his character's insight that brings the story to a more meaningful conclusion. For some, it was the idea that the Dieppe Raid taught valuable lessons which enabled success on D-Day that made the whole experience worthwhile; in a way, they are harkening back to the Renaissance military memoir in the sense that it is an external validation that provides meaning, rather than internal measures such as some form of enlightenment.<sup>136</sup> Whatever form of lesson or meaning is put forth by the soldier who writes the story of his wartime life, it is necessary that there be one in order to fulfil the requirements of the narrative format.

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<sup>134</sup> Sewell, *Survival*, 42.

<sup>135</sup> Jack A. Poolton and Jayne Poolton-Turvey, *Destined to Survive: A Dieppe Veteran's Story* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1998), 144.

<sup>136</sup> Harari, "Martial Illusions," 70.

It is not just the soldier writing the memoir who determines narrative structure, or meaning, however. There are other forces of alteration which further change the shape of the finished product. It is time now to examine what they are.

### **The Fifth Degree of Alteration**

So far, the forces that alter written accounts from the objective event are inherent to the soldiers who write of their experience. It is their perception, their memory, their purpose for writing and their understanding of language. Language does impose strictures of its own, but it is still being used by the author, and therefore a factor tied to him/her. It is now time to examine external factors that shape the finished memoir yet further. The first external factor, which is the most important one to be examined in this paper, is that of the publishing house and/or editor.

It was while reading an article by Joanna Bourke that this factor first came to my attention. Her article examines the changing use of language to describe experiences of pain suffered by soldiers, as written in their memoirs. As expected, the way pain was written about changed over time as societal attitudes evolved.<sup>137</sup> What was surprising, however, was the influence publishing houses have on the way the narrative takes form. She notes that memoirs written for McFarland and Company conform to a certain style, and that authors admit to learning their rules—including the sort of titles readers respond to—in order to get their work published.<sup>138</sup> As this company wants books which celebrate military combat, submitted memoirs must evoke that feeling in order to get to print. Alternately, a memoir entitled *Combed Out*, which was published in 1920 by Swarthmore Press, is a First World War account which presents a message of disillusionment with war.<sup>139</sup> This publisher specialized in pacifist

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<sup>137</sup> Bourke, "Bodily Pain, Combat, and the Politics of Memoirs," 56-57.

<sup>138</sup> Bourke, "Bodily Pain, Combat, and the Politics of Memoirs," 54.

<sup>139</sup> Bourke, "Bodily Pain, Combat, and the Politics of Memoirs," 59.

literature, so in order to be published by them, a memoir could not be written in a way that celebrated warriors.

It may be that factors such as this influenced the tone of Lucien Dumais' account of the war. There was not much information available on the publishing house he used, but the descriptions for two other war accounts advertised in the back of the book describe them with the language of adventure, promising an exciting read. Perhaps Dumais emphasized heroic action in order to get published, or maybe his account was simply a good fit for that particular publishing house; it is impossible to know for sure. It does raise questions that historians must keep in mind when reading it though.

This line of thought was kept in mind while reading through Clifford Sewell's memoir. Initially, the plan was to compare the original transcribed version with the finished product, looking for changes in wording that might have altered meaning or tone somewhat along the way. That all changed while interviewing his daughter Veronica and over the week that followed. In the small print run she had published, each page of the memoir has a watermark of Clifford's handwritten notes. Prior to the interview, I asked if those pages were still available for viewing, and she did manage to find some of them. It was a small number of pages, fourteen of them, because Clifford's house had burned down in a fire January of 2002. Most of the handwritten material burned in that fire. The surviving pages were placed on the table, and the interview commenced. She confirmed that one of the pages had not been used in the memoir, but said it was just a forward that did not end up being used.<sup>140</sup>

The interview was completed, and transcribing it began in the following days. After finishing that, it was time to look more closely at the handwritten pages, in order to see what changes might have been made from the written to the typed, to the final product. It was immediately apparent that these pages were not the notes for what was in the book; they contained practically every story that was not

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<sup>140</sup> Veronica Kostuch, interviewed by author, January 15, 2017, transcript.

included. These stories had been told to me in person by Clifford Sewell, as well as to his son. More interesting yet, most of the pages were numbered, and had notes to locate where they would be situated in the memoir; “starting on page 2 at Ontario. 11 lines down from top of page 2.”<sup>141</sup> This changed the entire focus of the project, as it became obvious that Veronica had a large part in shaping the memoir. With this in mind, a more critical examination of the interview began.

At the beginning of the interview, Veronica is asked if there are any stories she remembers being told, that were not included in the finished memoir. Her response is “Not to my knowledge, not that I remember.”<sup>142</sup> Yet when prompted, she recalls a story involving a motorcycle when he was riding dispatch in England; later on she recalled a rather brutal instance from the end of the Death March, and another regarding the first time he had to kill, along with how it made him sick to his stomach.<sup>143</sup> The latter stories were likely left out at the insistence of Clifford Sewell; they do not appear in the handwritten notes, although it is impossible to say with one hundred percent certainty due to many of the original notes being burned up. Veronica did say that in her opinion he had left those out due to the brutality being too much for the intended audience of readers, being high school students and other young adults.<sup>144</sup> This is consistent with Clifford’s stated purpose for the memoir, and likely was due to his choice.

Something which was partially included in the finished book raises further questions though. It contains an image in the additional materials section at the back; this shows part of Clifford Sewell’s statement to the War Claims Commission. Veronica said the whole document was not included due to being too graphic for the intended audience.<sup>145</sup> When asked if this was her choice or his, she answered

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<sup>141</sup> Clifford Sewell, handwritten pages of his memoir, in the author’s possession.

<sup>142</sup> Veronica Kostuch, interviewed by author, January 15, 2017, transcript.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

that he had never thought of putting it in, but that she and David—another person who assisted when getting the book ready for the small print run—thought it should be included.<sup>146</sup> This decision was made after Clifford Sewell died in 2004; so here was a clear case where she was directly shaping the memoir, making decisions to include material he never thought of including, at a time when he would not have been able to object if it did not match his purpose for writing. This merited further scrutiny, so a closer examination of her stated role in the creative process began.

Initially, Veronica states that she did not have to prompt Clifford's memory, and that he remembered the events very clearly.<sup>147</sup> When asked if she had to do much restructuring in order to create a story that flows and has coherent chronology to it, she states that "He actually wrote very coherently, and very well; all I had to do was, uh, correct some grammar, ongoing sentences, uh, put paragraphs in, change a few words so that uh, he didn't have 'that, that, and that,' or 'the, the, and the,' in the same sentence."<sup>148</sup> She said that she never changed a word without asking him, that she would write down a few variations of a sentence, then bring it to him and have him sign off on which one would go into the book.<sup>149</sup> It sounded like typical editorial duties that would not shape the finished work beyond what the author intended.

The story gets more complicated though once she is asked about the stories which do not appear in the memoir. She says that although much of the manuscript was written while Clifford lived in his house and his wife was alive, the work undertaken later was during a time when the beginning stages of Alzheimer's were starting.<sup>150</sup> She mentions that it took a couple of years to draw the story out of him during this time, and that grief over the loss of his wife and house might have affected what he

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

remembered at that point.<sup>151</sup> But when asked what percentage was written under these conditions, she said that about eighty percent of it was written before that. When asked to describe the final twenty percent of the writing process, she began to mention some gentle forms of prompting, such as asking for additional details, or trying to explain it as if to someone that knew nothing about war at all, as if they were from a different planet.<sup>152</sup> Still, she maintained that her role was simply to correct grammatical issues, mainly; a clue emerges though, when she is asked about those stories which did not make it in, and if that might be due to Clifford's intentions for the book. She notes that some humorous stories made their way into the book, but says of those that didn't, "So, whether he just...uh, forgot to write that down, because we all knew it...or whether he had his own reasons, that I can't speak to."<sup>153</sup>

This seems reasonable and raises no big questions, until one examines the handwritten notes and sees all the material which was not included in the transcribed manuscript. The vast majority of the material being asked about in the interview line of questioning did in fact get written down and was in Veronica's possession. It was readily available and kept safe along with the other material which was put into the additional materials section at the end of the book. Given the fact that the material was in her possession, with detailed descriptions of where in the overall manuscript it was to be inserted, this leads to choosing between two options:

- 1) She did not read these particular handwritten sheets.
- 2) She deliberately decided against their inclusion due to her vision of what the finished memoir should convey.

It seems unlikely that option number one is the correct answer, given her involvement in the book's creation. She had been involved in transcribing the work since at least 1998 and continued with

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.



the project until publishing the small print run in 2005. She printed out many copies of the manuscript and sent it to various publishers, eventually getting about 6 paragraphs of it published in some small Winnipeg newspaper.<sup>154</sup> She went through the hassle of transcribing his written notes, the notes from talking with him where things would be jotted down on any close by piece of paper, and conversations that were recorded on a tape recorder.<sup>155</sup> That level of ongoing dedication to the project precludes the possibility that she simply forgot to read the handwritten notes that she carefully protected and kept with other important documents.

It seems most probable that the second option is correct. She selected which material to leave out in order to shape the memoir into what she felt best conveyed her idea of Clifford's vision. This is an important point to keep in mind; she does not believe that she shaped the memoir from what he intended. This is not entirely untrue, due to the fact that her vision of the what the book was intended to convey and his were indeed very similar; this has allowed her to continue believing that she was only responsible for correcting spelling, sentence structure and grammatical issues, never implementing them except upon his approval. She also did not add to what he wrote or take away from the original transcribed version his son received in the year 2000, other than removing the original forward, and some other very minor changes. However, even if the handwritten notes would comprise 10 pages in the oversized coffee table book format used for the final version, given that the memoir ends up being 43 pages, that is twenty-three percent of the story being left out! It is impossible to remove twenty-three percent of a manuscript and not alter the message in some form. In this case, it serves to emphasize the negative aspects of Clifford's experience a tad more by leaving out tales that contain some humour, but at the expense of full character development. Certain sections of the book end up passing by too quickly, providing a less satisfying experience to the reader, which will be the reason that

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

Clifford wrote those extra pages and where to insert them into the manuscript. He was an avid reader and will have noticed how certain elements of good storytelling needed addressing.

In order to understand how much of a difference leaving out the additional material made, it is necessary to look more closely at the sections for which it was intended. In the manuscript as finalized by Veronica, the section on Clifford's time in England before the Dieppe Raid preparations is only one page long. The handwritten pages would expand it by a full four pages and give the sorts of details that keep readers focused. His duties involved riding a motorcycle as a dispatch rider, and he tells of the dangers involved in that job. Dispatch riders could be severely injured if they were at the side of a half-track vehicle when it was making a turn; they would be thrown off the bike and have to try and land safely; apparently there was an entire hospital dedicated to treating injured dispatch riders.<sup>156</sup> Some mention is made of the training undergone by dispatch riders; not much, but at least half a page. He gives the name of a town, Aldershot, and describes "the Devil's Punch Bowl," which was a local feature used to train the motorcyclists; it also led to some broken arms and legs.<sup>157</sup> These sorts of details provide the reader with a connection to the area, rather than just being words on a page. There was an incident where he was driving along a highway at night, following an air compressor truck, and suddenly found himself driving through a plowed field, as a German bomb had landed such that it detonated under the bike; it threw him through the air and off to the side about sixty feet.<sup>158</sup> This anecdote helps provide a sense of how luck plays a major role in survival.

Following the theme of how surviving war is often a case of blind luck brings up another incident, this time on the beaches of Dieppe. A young man who worked as a circus roustabout in civilian life was walking ashore with a man on each side of him. A three-inch mortar shell landed right on the

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<sup>156</sup> Clifford Sewell, handwritten pages of his memoir, in the author's possession.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

top of his helmet; the force of the blast was directed to either side of him, killing both men who were with him.<sup>159</sup> He was driven to his knees by the impact, and two medics came to get him to his feet; when asked how he was, he simply said that he had a bad headache.<sup>160</sup> Once again, it does not glorify war, yet it adds to the sense of what it was like; it even has the sad aspect of his friends being killed while he survived, which keeps it from being inappropriately humorous.

The other two pages intended for the Raid on Dieppe section give a feel for the absurdity of war, as described earlier with the incident while pinned behind the seawall; and the horrors of war, as when he mistook a lower torso for a stump and his hand sunk into it, and simply provides surrounding details which allow the reader to get a sense of the commotion.<sup>161</sup> Considering that the section on the Dieppe Raid in the finished memoir is only seven pages long, the omitted pages would expand that section by forty-three percent.

Given that the pages left out would have made both a qualitative and quantitative difference to the finished work, Veronica's motivations for leaving it out need to be examined again. Although she denies having a role in shaping the memoir, her interview provides the most likely explanation. She says Clifford realized that "you couldn't just write a serious book, so he put some, some of the humour that he remembered," but then goes on to say that he did not want it to end up "Being a joke."<sup>162</sup> For the vast bulk of what was left out, it is most likely that she thought including it would somehow take away from the seriousness too much. Clifford obviously thought the material helped the overall book find the balance between readability, seriousness, and an appropriate level of humour, and this seems to be the case from looking at what was written. His daughter, in her role of editor, seems to have felt differently.

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Veronica Kostuch, interviewed by author, January 15, 2017, transcript.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

There is one page of the material that stands out from the others and has a different reason behind it being left out. It is in regard to re-entering civilian life after the war, along with the wife he married before heading on the Dieppe Raid. In the memoir, all it says is that he returned to work at Prestolite where he worked prior to the war; he worked his way up to supervising the line, and then retired.<sup>163</sup> Well, his son remembered being told that after the war Clifford was going to build houses; he would build one, then build a second, moving into it once the basement was finished, then sell the first one. After two or three moves, it would be an established home-building business, and there would be no more need to move.<sup>164</sup> In the handwritten page which documents this though, it goes much further in depth. The Department of Veterans Affairs had offered to buy a local farm for him, with very low interest payments on the loan; he had been studying a course on agriculture while a prisoner of war.<sup>165</sup> His wife said no to this, so he kept working at Prestolite. Then, the home-building plan mentioned above was described in detail. The addition to what his son recalled though is that when his wife said no, he felt beaten.<sup>166</sup> The prisoner of war camp and Death March had not left him feeling defeated, but this did, and the account of it expresses regret and bitterness that lasted for decades.

The decision to omit this page conforms to a common form of censorship in memoirs of all types. An article on censorship states, "Censors here are often family members of the author that seek protection from being hurt by the revelations in the book, and self-censorship can mainly be found 'by artfully omitting less flattering details.'"<sup>167</sup> In this case, it is easy to see why Veronica left out that particular account; it could be seen to tarnish the memory of her mother, and the relationship her parents had; they were married for sixty years, and were happy for most of the time. The dedication to

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<sup>163</sup> Sewell, *Survival*, 42-43.

<sup>164</sup> Michael Sewell, in discussion with the author, January 19, 2017.

<sup>165</sup> Clifford Sewell, handwritten pages of his memoir, in the author's possession.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> LHE Kleinreesink and Joseph Soeters, "Truth and (self) censorship in military memoirs," *Current Sociology* (2015):6.

his wife on the first page of the memoir supports happy family memories much better and was included in the initial transcribed version; Clifford intended it to be in there. Not only does the handwritten page bring up unhappy thoughts, it also conflicts a certain amount with the dedication; Veronica could have edited it to include the parts talking about post-war plans while making the language less bitter, but hers is an easily understood editorial decision, one which would likely be made by any family member.

Up to now the focus has been on the forces that alter the account from the original, objective event on its way to becoming a finished work. However, the alteration continues even after it has left the publisher and is ready for people to read. It is time to examine the final stage of alteration, one which the reader is an active part of.

### **The Sixth Degree of Alteration**

The final degree of alteration is when the text is interpreted by the reader. The relationship between the reader and the text is complex. As professor of language and literacy Joanne M. Golden writes, “The reader constructs the literary work guided by textual cues and personal knowledge.”<sup>168</sup> During this process, a unique understanding of the text is created. It involves formulating and modifying expectations, combining the information contained in the text, and filling in the gaps; personal knowledge and information gleaned from other sources is used to accomplish this.<sup>169</sup> Thus, the message conveyed by the text—in this case the soldier’s memoir—is constructed not only by the author, but by the reader as well.

Much of this may seem self-evident; everyone relies on their personal experiences and information from various sources to make sense of the world. In addition, much as the soldier who experiences events processes them through the filter of sensory organs and their interpretation by the

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<sup>168</sup> Joanne M. Golden, “Reader-Text Interaction,” *Theory Into Practice* 25.2 (1986): 91.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

brain, producing a version of reality that may be different from other soldiers in the same battle, we might expect readers to do something analogous to this. Interestingly though, a single reader may have multiple interpretations of the same text; it may be due to a shift in context, or because another interpretation arose when discussing the text with others.<sup>170</sup> Perhaps the reader has learned new information about the events described, or experienced events that shift the way in which described events are perceived. Or it may be as simple as being in a different mood than during the last reading; a positive mood can change perception of the events much as the positivity effect alters how older adults view past experiences in memory. The point is that the reader-text interaction is dynamic rather than static and has the potential to alter the narrative greatly.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the various factors that make soldier memoirs less factually accurate than dispassionate accounts compiled from a variety of sources. The fact that memoirs are less accurate has been long known by historians, which led to their diminished status as a source for quite a while.<sup>171</sup> Later, however, the factual inaccuracies were considered less important, as they conveyed a personal view of war, something that the more accurate, 'wide lens' style accounts cannot provide.<sup>172</sup> If that were the whole picture, this paper would not add anything to the historical conversation.

That is not the case, however, for little focus has been aimed at what I term the fifth degree of alteration. Historians have long taken into account the limitations of human senses, the vagaries of memory, and how personal motivation affect how events are recounted. Indeed, the very first lesson to new university students is to be aware of bias and try to correct for it whenever possible. There has also

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Harari, "Military Memoirs," 303.

<sup>172</sup> Harari, "Military Memoirs," 305.

been much discussion of how language is an approximation and the ways in which readers have varying interpretations of texts. If not for the fifth degree of alteration, the idea that soldier memoirs provide a window into the personal experience of war would be uncomplicated...but the fifth degree does exist and exerts an ever greater influence as the length of time separating the writing from the event grows.

The memoir that provides the foundation for this paper was altered quite significantly by the author's daughter, who not only transcribed it, but was editor as well. It was only by a stroke of good luck that her true influence came to light, due to the emergence of handwritten proof of her alterations to the story. And it forces us as historians to take a much closer look at all soldier memoirs, yes, but especially those written in similar circumstances. For instance, after reading Clifford Sewell's material which was omitted, I looked at Jack Poolton's memoir in a new light. His memoir was also written with the assistance of his daughter, and was published in 1998, during the same timeframe that Clifford was writing his. There is even similarity in the titles; for Clifford Sewell, the title Veronica chose was *Survival: A Soldier's Diary*; for Poolton's work, it was *Destined to Survive: A Dieppe Veteran's Story*. Given the fact that Clifford's originally intended title, told me directly, was *All Guts, No Glory*—which better fits his purpose for writing—it raises another question. It seems that for the children who assist in writing/editing these memoirs later in their parent's life, the fact of parental survival is the main thing; it is more important than messages of disillusionment, perhaps. How this may affect editorial decisions as to which material is included must be considered as we read.

Now, this does not mean that memoirs written later in life should be discounted, or that they do not still provide a window into how soldiers experience war. Having talked with Clifford Sewell for many hours over multiple decades, as well as with his son, I can say that even the altered, edited version put out by his daughter does largely reflect his thinking. However, the omissions do take away a fair bit of the 'ground level view' of war; her decision to leave out large sections on life in England and the Dieppe Raid itself ends up providing less of what makes war memoirs a valuable resource for historians. So,

going forward, I believe we must keep it in mind that what we read is not, with very few exceptions, an account only of what soldiers have experienced. This will very likely be the case with memoirs written by younger soldiers who are still alive today. Remember the fact that Joanna Bourke found cases of publishing houses imposing stylistic guidelines for memoirs they would publish. Even supposedly neutral publishing houses will have alterations imposed by their editors, with their own implicit and possibly subconscious biases.

Although, perhaps the alterations and murkiness are fitting, somehow. War is a messy enterprise, full of confusion where no one truly knows what is going on or what the truth is. It appears that when approaching war memoirs, it is a similar experience, and in our quest for the truth, we end up lost and uncertain, never knowing for sure when the goal has been reached.



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**Appendix A: Handwritten Notes of Clifford Sewell, and War Claims**

**Commission Report**



Starting on Page 2 at Ontario. 11 line down from top of  
Page 2

Where we had a couple of weeks of intensive foot marching  
our 1<sup>st</sup> morning we formed up in the lower hall of the large  
girls school where we were billeted at the time, and started  
on the double, "or running fast," out the door to the back yard, then a  
sharp left turn out the yard gate and onto a waiting truck. and  
most of us were breathing hard! The next day the truck was waiting  
for us one block away. The third morning we ran out the back door  
made a sharp right turn and ran all around the large school yard.  
approx 1 acre, then out to the street and the truck was 2 blocks away,  
The 4<sup>th</sup> morning it was out the door, around the yard to the truck  
now 6 blocks away, and the 5<sup>th</sup> day we started out and there was  
No truck, and now we were told to trot, not run, all the way to  
our exercise field, which was only 5 miles from the school, and  
strangely enough I don't think any of us were breathing any harder  
when we got to the field that day, than we had been at the end  
of the run to the truck from the first day on! After two weeks of  
this we settled in to our main training as engineers in construction

Page 19 line no. 8 break of wall. <sup>start</sup> I was walking along the wall,  
looking for some way to get my two sappers off the beach to some  
better place of safety. I was walking on my knees, of course, as I went along  
the wall; to keep my balance in the rough sand, I had one hand on the  
wall front, and my other hand on any debris like bits of stumps, or wood  
a lot of stuff seems to wash up on a channel beach! one very quiet  
surprise to me was a rather large stump lying near the wall, to  
get past, between it and the wall I put my hand on top of it to raise  
myself up a little<sup>10</sup> get over a small bump in the sand, but when I pushed  
down on the stump, I didn't rise! my hand sunk into the stump.

It wasn't any stump! it was the lower half of some poor guy  
who had been cut in half by a shell, and the constant rain  
of mortar fire on the beach had kicked up so much sand and  
dust it was just not possible to recognize the stump or anything  
else.

Assault at Arms.  
A sports event at No.  
Page no. 3 Start after the fair.

In early March of 1940 someone decided that we should have an assault at arms. This is supposed to be a sporting event, with contests of Boxing, wrestling and acrobatics.

These contests are made up of individual boxers, wrestlers or other sportsmen in one branch of the army, sending challenge to some one in another branch to meet them in a ring or on a mat or whatever. For instance when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, Gen. Army was in London, we in the 11<sup>th</sup> field Company of Engineers got a call or challenge to meet a gunner of the 26<sup>th</sup> Artillery at the local sports hall, for a boxing match. I always looked pretty good at P.T., of which I was a company instructor at the time. In that capacity, I put our whole company through their morning exercises. We had a Capt. Wrenchell who thought this was a real good idea to put on a show for all the troops, and the local people too. They approached me to ask if I would take the challenge from the 26 Battery. I told them that I had never had gloves on or been a ring in my life so I couldn't see my self being able to put on much of a show for anyone. I was told that this didn't matter at all, since they would make very sure that the one I was matched to fight would have no more training than I had. So, for the good of the unit I said O.K. if my opponent has no more training than I have it might be fun!

But you can't always believe everything you are told. It was a 3 round fight. as soon as the bell rang to start the fight, all I could see was the jump glove dancing all over my face, once in each round I got in a good hay maker to his body, each time I landed one of them he staggered back to the ropes and the crowd all round for me to go in & kill him. but I couldn't get over him, he was too fast, and I was too strong for him. I learned after he had had three years training for the sport of boxing, but had quit it two years before I met him. So he had had two years of drinking and I had two years working in the Lumber Camp just west of Trout Creek, Ont. So he was too fast for me, but he did keep my nose flattened! Blood everywhere, but I was too strong and tough for him to hurt me. I still think I was the winner, but The referee said he was the winner because he kept control of his action and I had no control. But that life!

Page 6 Line 10 start at England

I was in the 1<sup>st</sup> Division, and in one of these "mad dashes" from the North of England we were chasing the 2<sup>d</sup> division down to the South of England. We were speeding along a nice straight stretch of highway, something not found too often in England, it was about midnite, a very clear sky and a brilliant Moon made it as bright as day and we had no idea there was an Air Raid warning at that time. As I was rolling along, following an air compressor truck, I could see a large ploughed field over to my right and, thankfully, there was no fence along the road side! To make the story short and true, I was following the truck, and suddenly I was riding my bike along in the ploughed field! The cause of this was a bomb had landed on the pavement beside me, went under and lifted my bike and me right off the road and threw me + bike over to the field, about 60 feet, where I landed still riding, of course I couldn't keep going on ploughed ground, but I was able to stop, dismount and look around, my convoy had gone on without me, there on the road where I had been riding minutes before, was a large hole in the pavement, where a big piece of pavement had been lifted out of the road, and it was just behind where I had first realized that I was on the ploughed field!

So the bomb must have lifted me and the pavement and dumped both out in the field.

So I just got back onto the road and caught up to my Convoy going through the next village. The officer in charge of the Convoy took my report and sent one of the Reconnaissance men back to take any pictures he could, but I never heard any more about it

☉☉

Page 6 Start after no fun. <sup>V V V \</sup>  
Down 10 lines.

during all the running around merry old England -  
The covered areas in North England, across most  
of the midlands and down to Shury in the South  
This was excellent training for dispatch riders, but I  
think it proved that our men needed much more practice in  
driving the "Bron Carriers"! These are a light all terrain  
vehicle, designed to carry troops or anything that had to move  
from "A" to "B" very fast. They have no wheels, but run on a  
full set of steel tracks. They'll go anywhere! ploughed fields, over  
ditches, through water up to about 3 feet deep, but the one  
big problem they had was trying to maintain their stability on  
a paved road. for instance, a division moving in Convoy, would likely  
have a Company of "Recon" troops travelling with it. The Bron Carrier  
was the Recon's favourite vehicle. ~~But~~ My problem was! I rode  
a Motor bike! a Bron carrier is about 12 feet long, about 2½ feet  
high at the back, and goes up to about 4½ or 5 feet at the front.  
So there's a big gap between the bottom and top of the track  
from the centre of the Carrier and the front of it. In convoy, ~~the~~  
the dispatch riders have to pass the whole Convoy from time to  
time. If there is a Recon Company in the Convoy, we are in great  
danger, because the roads through the English Country are narrow,  
very winding and are all paved with some kind of a metallic  
surface. ~~if you have to pass~~ <sup>when you pass</sup> these Carriers ~~you~~ have to keep well  
away from the side of them. You have to watch ahead as far as possible  
to see if they are going around curves, and if so, to the right or left.  
because the tracks on a carrier will not grip a paved, smooth surface!  
They may be going 35 to 40 miles per hour, & if they are taking a curve  
to the left, they will all slide sideways onto the road side, till  
their tracks can dig in to the earth and straighten them up in  
to line again. Should a dispatch rider get caught he side one of these  
things on the out side of a paved curve, he can only do one thing  
that's throw his bike down and roll off into the grass, if any, or it  
may be gravel, or crushed rock! so you lose some skin and get a few  
bruises, but if you stay on the bike, you end up being carried up  
the track, through the boggy wheels and around the rear, or front  
sprocket wheels. This happened to hundreds of our young men.  
I learned this, after returning from one convoy duty, and went  
to visit another D.R. a friend of mine in hospital. when I walked in  
the door of that hospital I asked "What on earth is this place?"  
They told me this is a special hospital just for Dispatch riders.  
What had struck me when I first came in the door was



That looking down both sides of the long room, 30 beds on each side, all with their head to the wall and a narrow aisle down the centre, this hospital had four rooms all the same size and all looked the same to me, every man in every bed had something in traction, is hanging from the ceiling, or some bone fixed to hold them up. Looking all down the rooms they were arms, legs, sometime a strap around the lumbar or around the chest, all these ropes hanging down to hold some damaged part! I could only ask "What the hell is this." This I am told, "this" is a hospital for Dispatch riders only! That was enough for me. I had been lucky up to then, so I went back to my Company H.Q. and requested a transfer back to my own section and my old job as Company duty Cpl. So that took me out of that constant danger. I know that my luck would not last forever.

But before I leave the motor bike duty I must tell you of the place I trained for the dispatch duty, a place in the South of England called the Devil's punch Bowl!

Any service man who spent time in South England could tell you where Aldershot is. From Aldershot there is a road called the Hog's Back, this road goes straight as an arrow along the top of a high ridge, approx 20 miles, straight to Guildford and if I remember right it is near Guildford where the Hog's back come to an end in what I call a strange way. One is driving along a very straight road when it suddenly curves away to the left and at the same time goes down quite steeply! It starts at the top by making about a 5 mile circle but it keeps on going down in a large spiral. I cannot remember how many circles there are from top to bottom, I think there must be about seven, and the motor bike training I had, in part, was here in the Devil's punch Bowl, riding straight up and down the side of the bowl, we would start out from a village at the bottom of the bowl and ride straight up, crossing each turn of the road that circled the bowl from top to bottom.

The danger here was that when you were going up, as you come to the edge of the spiral road, the front wheel of the bike has a tendency dig in under the pavement instead of going over it then a few of the riders over backwards! That caused a few broken arms + legs! I like Motor Bikes, but at that time I had had enough!

Page 20 Start at line 5, fine.

As the tanks tried to come ashore, only three of them made it, the rest of them went down with their landing craft, or L.C.T., I think there were supposed to be 9 tanks, they would come in on three L.C.T.s so we lost two L.C.T.s and six tanks, but the three tanks that did make it ashore didn't last long, and they had infantry following them in. Most of the infantry men with the tanks were lost to the constant machine gun fire aimed at the tanks. But one man stands out in my mind, I'll never forget him, a very pleasant young man, really a gentle giant! He was a circus roustabout, in other words a jack of all trades, ie - one of the men who shine in all the tent poles to hold up the big top, and all the other heavy labour that goes with that job. The guy was built like a tank, very strong arms and shoulders, very thick neck. This chap walked ashore with a friend on each side of him, about half way up the beach a 3" mortar made a direct hit on top of his head! The mortar must have been defective because the explosive force when it hit should have gone straight down, but that one's explosive force went out sideways, killing his two friends and of course knocking him down to his knees, a couple of medic's, coming up the beach behind him, each grabbed an arm and hauled him to his feet, when asked how he was, he just complained that he had one hell of a headache! I have never met a more pleasant, cheerful man in my life, always with a big happy smile on his face and a heavy head of lovely yellow gold hair! I hope he is still alive, keeping some friends happy too.

Page 21 8 lines down start at Beach

Lying in the sand we had a good view of the spitfire fighter planes keeping the German Luftwaffe fighters from dropping us! and I saw one really neat manoeuvre by one spitfire, he was coming in very fast and rather low. He was coming in from the channel, and he had a Messerschmidt on his tail. He came in very low - about a few feet below the top of the cliffs, he must have been the worlds best pilot! He held steady till I was sure he was going to smash into the cliff, But No, at the last second he seemed to lift his plane straight up and over the cliff top. The Messerschmidt 109 fighter plane did not have time to jump over the cliff top! he went straight into the face of that chalk cliff, and when I was taken off that beach, that Jerry's tail was still sticking out of the cliff face!

Page 3 - Start under Ont. & Quebec.

The main thing I remember about Petawawa is a stupid injury I saw a man inflict on himself through ignorance!

We were taking instructions on the "Boys" rifle, Why it is called a Boys rifle I have no idea

To give a better idea of the size of it. The normal rifle used by the infantry is the Lee Enfield .303.

And the Bren Machine gun is also a .303

But the boys rifle, so called, I have never seen it used except in the version of a machine gun. I have used it, and seen it used in the "prone" position, ie lying down, and when even a heavy man fires this gun in the prone position his feet will move back a good 4-6 inches

but the way the above mentioned gack all tried to avoid taking the kick back from this gun, he sat up with his back against the tree, he held the butt of the Boys .55 rifle to his shoulder and fired it!

I am told it smashed all the bones in his shoulder.

But it was one way to get a discharge!

This is also known as a Boys anti tank Rifle.

and the .55 is a armour piercing bullet

Bottom of Page 21

At this point my little group had reached a complete stale mate, we could not shoot any germans, and they could not shoot us. on either side, if any one exposed any part of himself, he got a bullet in the exposed part, so both sides remained quiet. as I was lying in the sand, listening to the battle raging all around us, I happened to glance over to my two sappers, Greenward and jimmy <sup>George</sup> ~~Robert~~. It struck me that they were looking at me in a very concerned way, I could they were worried about something, so I rolled over part way to them, and crawled the rest of the way, then asked what was bothering them? they said they were worried that I was losing it! I asked why? their reply, they could see me laughing like I had heard a good joke, so what's funny? so I said O.K. boys, I guess it would seem funny, but tell me, what was that big bang? Jimmy said Come on Corp! You know that was that german 88 shooting over the town at the ships in the channel. I said, Right! and what's that other racket going on in the kitchen along the front? Green answered Come off it, you know damn well those are the machine guns firing out the windows. Hey yap! and just then there was ~~the~~ whump! whump! whump! and a cloud of sand coming down around us! I said right again, and I suppose this is just some nut out on the beach whacking golf ball around. Jimmy started to complain, so I said yes, boys, I am quite well aware of all that's going on, and I know it really is no laughing matter. But you remember that for the past year I have been carrying a large Colt .45 revolver with me, yesterday they took my .45 away from me and gave me this little .38 pea shooter, and I'm supposed to use this against the big .88 that's lobbing those big shells over the town and picking off some of our ships out on the channel, or the ack ack guns up there on the cliff top? Hell! this is at even big enough to threaten at anyone! So I am laughing at our stupid army who sent me, and you fellows into the ocean without even a hand grenade!

But cheer up lads, our turn should come soon!



add to bottom of page 28

Our first few days in the P.O.W. camp, there was no tea ration. and we all liked a cup of tea, one of the first thing we received on our arrival was a british red cross parcel, to divide between 4 people., this was great because the Brits. put a generous size package of tea bags! So everyone wanted a good cup of tea, Problem! No hot water anywhere and no source of heat available. So we had to use our heads, there was a garbage dump in the camp where we found hundreds of tin cans, these we could smash into flat pieces with stones by pounding them on the concrete door sills of the the camp building.

The german guards watched us with great interest, which we formed flattened tin into stoves, fireplaces and many other thing, in which to make small fires, and boil a tin of water on top!

The guards seemed to think this a great idea. But, after seeing that we were actually enjoying our tea, a German officer, seemed to think it was not good that we should have such good spirits! after all, we were prisoners! and here we were enjoying our selves like a troop of scouts at a jimboree! So the officers gave orders to the guards to spoil our fun! They would stand back till a water pot started to boil, then they would kick over the boiling water, and stamp on the tin stove! we got the message loud and clear, they were trying to break our spirits, so we changed our attitude, we stood by our pots, till the water started to boil, then we would get the guards attention by waving him over and pointing to the boiling water, then as he kicked it over and started to jump on the stove, we all formed a ring around him and cheered him on, The jerry just couldn't seem to understand, They were trying to break us, and here we were, just enjoying every minute of it. The jerry guards seemed to get despondent, seeing we enjoying the whole game, before the end of the day the guards had new orders, and they just left us to do what we wished, From then on we could do anything we wished to do, as long as it was within camp rules.

go to page 41 5 lines down

Speaking to George Sadoquis after he was returned to 8 B. from his attempt to escape with Mairin, he had quite a story to tell me of something he observed, and asked the german guards about, so I give you this as he told me, I have no reason to disbelieve George so here it is. When he and his buddies were picked up in the woods ahead of me, they were taken to an infantry camp for interrogation before being returned to stacy 8 B. they were held in a guard house, "the german army equivalent of a jail, in a small room just off to one side of the guard-house office there was a shiny steel ball, about 2 1/2 to 3 feet in diameter, there were four rifles with fixed Bayonets placed around this ball in such a way that if a man was standing on the ball, there would be the point of a bayonet approx. 6 inches from the front of his throat, and 6 inches from the back of his neck, and 6 inch from each armpit! He asked the guard what this was for, the answer was for soldiers who do bad crime, He stand on top of ball, the length of time depends on how serious the crime!

All our soldiers thought we had it tough!  
Imagine standing on a shiny, smooth steel ball, wearing the army steel hobnailed boots! The german guards told George that this punishment could be given for up to six hours!  
I think only a german mind could devise such a torture, and this never used on any other than their own, it would be banned by the Geneva Convention for use against another nation's personnel!

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FILE No. ....

# WAR CLAIMS COMMISSION

## STATEMENT CONCERNING CLAIM FOR MALTREATMENT

(Member of the Armed Forces of Canada)

1. Full name of claimant: CLIFFORD SHAKESPEARE SEWELL

2. Address of claimant: 393 EAST STREET NORTH SARNIA ONT.

3. Rank: CORPORAL No: A20116

4. Corps: 1st Division Engineers Unit: 11th FIELD COMPANY R.C.E.

5. Date of enlistment: Sept 9th 1939

6. Date of discharge: Sept 11th 1945

7. Place where captured: Dieppe, France Date: Aug 19th 1942

8. Prison camps in which held. Give names of camps and date of entering and leaving each camp:

(Name of Camp)	(Date of Entry)	(Date of Departure)
<u>Stalag VIII B (344)</u>	<u>Sept 14th (approx) 1942</u>	<u>Sept 3rd 1943</u>
<u>Stalag in France (Stalags)</u>	<u>Aug 20th 1942</u>	<u>Sept 5th 1942</u>
<u>Sugar factory Stalag (S.S.)</u>	<u>Sept 5th 1943</u>	<u>Jan 5th 1944</u>
<u>Stalag VIII B (344)</u>	<u>Jan 7th 1944</u>	<u>Jan 1st 1945</u>

9. Date of final liberation: April 11th 1945

10. Were you at any time (excluding time spent in travelling from one prison camp to another) at liberty (by escape or otherwise) between the dates given in your reply to questions 7 and 9? If so, give particulars, dates of liberation and recapture:

11. Were you at any time roped or shackled? If so, state:

Yes

(Name of Camp) Stalag VIII B from Sept 30 (approx) 1942 to June 28th 1943

from ..... to .....

from ..... to .....

12. Did you take part in any forced march? If so, state: **Yes**

(Place and Date of Departure) **Dieppe Aug. 19<sup>th</sup> 1942** (Place and Date of Arrival) **Philippin in France Aug 21<sup>st</sup> 1942** (Name of Camp)

**Stalag VIII B (344) Jan. 16<sup>th</sup> 1945** March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945 **Dunderstett** **Prison factory.**  
**Stalag VIII B (344) Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945** April 1<sup>st</sup> 1945 **Dasselberg** **Germany**

Give full particulars of hardships suffered on forced march:

- 1<sup>st</sup> **Dieppe March** Had no food of any kind. <sup>Had to carry</sup> I was forced to carry 2 ammo boxes (about 90 lbs.) was kicked and elbowed with rifle butt when I fell down after about five miles.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> **see attached letter**

13. Have you at any time been transported in box cars? If so, state: **Yes**

(Place and Date of Departure) **French Village Aug 21<sup>st</sup> 1942** (Place and Date of Arrival) **Prison Camp in France (Laotze) Aug 22<sup>nd</sup> 1942**

1<sup>st</sup> **Prison Camp in France Sept 5<sup>th</sup> 1942** **STALAG VIII B** **Sept 14<sup>th</sup> 1942**

3<sup>rd</sup> **Stalag VIII B** **Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> 1943** **Sugar factory, Halez** **Sept 5<sup>th</sup> 1943**

4<sup>th</sup> **Sugar factory, Halez** **Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> 1944** **Stalag VIII B (344)** **Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 1944**

Give full particulars of hardships suffered on journey:

- 1<sup>st</sup> **90 men, 91 men** crowded into one box car as one could sit down, Heat was terrible, 14 men who fainted could not even fall down. Food + kidney movement were dropped on the floor like cattle. (32 hrs.)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> **80 men in one box car, about half could sit down at one time.** After the 3<sup>rd</sup> day over half were too sick to stand so between 25-30 had to stand the whole journey of nine days. **see attached letter.**

14. Were you at any time in the direct custody of the SS, SD, Gestapo or Leadership Corps? If so, state: **Yes**

(Name and Location of Camp or Prison) **Prison Camp in France** (Date of Entry) **Aug 22<sup>nd</sup> 1942** (Date of Departure) **Sept 5<sup>th</sup> 1942**

However, All prison Camps in Germany were under the Direct control of the Gestapo **see attached letter**

15. Were you at any time subjected to any other form of maltreatment? If so, give full particulars concerning the dates and duration, the name of the camp and the maltreatment alleged.

**Sept 6<sup>th</sup> 1943** for refusing to work, was taken to German Military prison in Oberlogau, upper Silesia, there I was made to stand on a metal ball about two feet in diameter with stationary bayonet fixed at my front, back and both sides, this treatment lasted for 2 hours each morning and afternoon for three consecutive days. During which time I was on bread + water ration. Returned to work party Sept 10<sup>th</sup> 1943.

For further information please see attached letter.

I [redacted] do solemnly declare that I am the Claimant herein and that the information contained in the above Statement is a true and accurate statement of the maltreatment in respect of which this Claim is made, and I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing it to be true, and knowing that it is of the same force and effect as if made under oath, and by virtue of the Canada Evidence Act.

Declared before me at

this ..... day of .....  
A.D. 1953.

A Notary Public, Commissioner of Oaths, or other person duly authorized to administer oaths and affidavits. (State office or authority held).

[redacted]  
(Signature of Claimant)

Note: If this declaration is made outside of Canada it should be made before or authenticated by a Canadian Consular officer or Canadian Government Trade Commissioner in the country in which it is made.

(12)

2A ~~80 men in a column of five thousand men~~

Left Stalag 844 Jan 1<sup>st</sup> in below zero weather had to make 30 Kilometers per day, the first three weeks through knee deep snow, and were made to sleep out of doors at night, three times in howling blizzard. Loss of life due to frozen limbs and German brutality was very heavy in my column the first three weeks, we started out with a column of five thousand men. After this we usually were packed into a barn at night. But it is hard to force close to 5,000 men who are very tired and weak from lack of food, into the dark interior of a strange barn. The first few hundred take up the first position they can find to fall down in. So the Barn door always became a bottleneck, those just inside, unable to see, could hardly move, and those still out side all trying to push in as quickly as possible because the German guards were pounding all around the out side of the group with their rifle butts. Some were killed in this way.

Throughout the whole time of the march, from Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> to April 11<sup>th</sup>/45. Any sick persons were allowed to fall out to the side of the road to rest while the column moved on, But, ~~the~~ The Column was followed by three German Guards, who would yell to move on, and any one who was unable to move on promptly, had their skulls smashed in by these three Butcher's rifle butts. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, when we reached Dunderstatt, I do not believe we had 3000 of the original 5000 men in our column. Left Dunderstatt. Here we spent seven days of Hell in an abandoned brick factory. A building of 3 or 4 floors, all the floors were made of 2" x 2" spaced 2 inches apart. All Dysentery cases were put on the top floor (one)

Since at least a third of our number had spent, I leave  
to your imagination, the kind of hell we lived in under death  
those poor Claps who could not control their bowels, and were  
too weak to move up and down three or four flights of stairs.

Our numbers were greatly reduced when we left this place  
on March 9<sup>th</sup> 1945. Conditions became much worse on the road  
and at night from then until we met the Americans in  
Derebnung April 11<sup>th</sup> 1945. We seldom had any food, and never  
even enough water. On liberation, the Americans took a  
count of us, I say only found 8,49 men left of the  
original 5,000 men of the Column, and my weight at the time  
of liberation was 72 pounds. My normal weight is 152 lbs.

13 2A 80 men in a B4 car decided to carry 40, about half could sit down  
at a time, after the 3<sup>rd</sup> day over half were too sick to stand, so I  
and about 30 others had to stand the whole journey of nine days.  
Our rations on this trip were 1 slice of bread and one small piece (about 2 gr.)  
of Bologna, and a cup of water per day. For a latrine, we were given a  
tin can, about 1 quart in size, this one can had to serve 80 men  
as it was continuously being passed from some one to the small window  
to be emptied, day and night.

~~and for the entire time quite comfortable (like we painted)~~

15 Sir's You have admitted, quite rightly, that we did suffer  
maltreatment, the full extent of which you will never know. Because  
the mind will only absorb so much and then it becomes too numb  
to register any more, there are, not weeks, but months of the  
first two years of my imprisonment of which I can remember  
nothing at all, other than a vivid nightmare of yelling Germans  
and their clubbed riflebutts, a few things stand out clearly,  
like the time in the military prison in Oberglogau.

To me, having to try to remember, is like having to  
re-live that time of horror over again, and is  
worth far more than the \$5.00 per day we were  
asking for, to compensate for that time in Europe.

With this parting thought I leave you

Yours,  
[Redacted Signature]

A20116

12. (2 a)

My column of five-thousand men left Stalag 344 Jan. 1st in below zero weather, had to make 30 kilometers per day, the first three weeks through knee deep snow, and were made to sleep out-of-doors at night, three times in howling blizzards. Loss of life due to frozen limbs and German brutality was very heavy in my column the first three weeks. After this, we usually were packed into a barn at night but it is hard to force close to 5000 men, who are very tired and weak from lack

15.

Sept. 6th, 1943, for refusing to work, was taken to German Military prison in Oberglogau, upper Silesia, there I was made to stand on a metal ball about two ft. in diameter with stationary bayonets fixed at my front, back and both side this treatment lasted for 2-hrs. each morning and afternoon for three consecutive days. During which time I was on bread and water ration. Returned to work party Sept. 10th, 1943.

(12)

2A

of food, into the dark interior of a strange barn. The first few hundred take up the first positions they can find to fall down in. So the Barn door always became a bottleneck, those just inside, unable to see, could hardly move, and those still outside all trying to push in as quickly as possible because the German guards were pounding all around the outside of the group with their rifle butts. Some were killed in this way.

Throughout the whole time of the march, from Jan. 1st to April 11th/45 any sick persons were allowed to fall out to the side of the road to rest while the column moved on, but, the column was followed by three German Guards, who would yell to move on, and anyone who was unable to move on promptly had their skulls smashed in by these three butcher's rifle butts! By the 2nd of March, when we reached Dunderstätt, I do not believe we had 3000 of the original 5000 men in our columns left. Dunderstätt! Here we spent seven days of Hell in an abandoned brick factory. A building of 3 or 4 floors, all the floors were made of 2" x 2" spaced 2-in. apart. All dysentery cases were put on the top floor, - since at least a third of our number had dysentery, I leave to your imagination the kind of hell we lived in underneath these poor chaps who could not control their bowels, and were too weak to move up and down three or four flights of stairs.

Our numbers were greatly reduced when we left this place on March 9th/45. Conditions became much worse on the road and at night, from then until we met the Americans in Derenburg, April 11th/45. We seldom had any food, and never even enough water.

Upon liberation, the Americans took a count of us, they only found 549 men left of the original 5000 men of the column, and my weight, at the time of liberation, was 72 pounds. My normal weight is 152 lbs.

(13)

2A

80 men in a box car designed to carry 40, about half could sit down at a time, after the 3rd day over half were too sick to stand, so I and about 30 others had to stand the whole journey of nine days. Our rations on this trip were 1 slice of bread and one small piece, (about 2 oz.) of Bologna, and a cup of water per day. For a latrine, we were given a tin can, about 1 quart in size, this one can had to serve 80 men, - so it was continuously being passed from someone to the small window to be emptied, day and night.



(15)

Sirs:

You have admitted, quite rightly, that we did suffer maltreatment, the full extent of which you will never know, because the Mind will only absorb so much and then it becomes too numb to register any more. There are, not weeks, but months of the first two years of my imprisonment of which I can remember nothing at all, other than a mad nightmare of yelling Germans and their clubbed rifle butts; a few things stand out clearly, like the time in the Military prison in Oberglogau.

To me, having to try to remember, is like having to re-live that time of horror over again, and is worth far more than the \$1.00 per day we were asking for, to compensate for that time in Europe.

With this parting thought, I leave you.

Yours very truly,

Ex. Cpl. Sewell, C.S.  
A-20116

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## Appendix B: Interview with Veronica Kostuch, January 15, 2017

**Mark:** Okay. So you were mentioning that, uh, one of these pages didn't, um, show up in the book, right?

**Veronica:** Okay, that, was just a forward that was never used.

**Mark:** Okay, so was it just like that he, came up with one that was more polished as time went on?

**Veronica:** Correct.

**Mark:** Okay. So, like as part of the creative process, did you notice there were like, stories that you remember from him telling along the way that didn't get included in the finished work?

**Veronica:** Not to my knowledge, not that I remember.

**Mark:** So, most of the stories you remember from along the way ended up making their way into the book?

**Veronica:** Yep.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Mark:** (*reading from page that was out*) "In this book I hope to show..." Is none of this is, like another introduction like, along the way?

**Veronica:** It's uh...

**Mark:** Take a quick look at uh, this one...

**Veronica:** I think that is in the book. Uh, actually grab the book... Where is the book? I think that's the first page. Pretty sure that's the first page.

**Mark:** Hmm, think this one is a little bit different.

**Veronica:** Do you still have the book, do you remember if that's the first page or...

**Mark:** I think the first page was different than that. This is interesting; the little scribbles and the alphabet on the back of one of the pages.

**Veronica:** I know. That's, from when he was in the nursing home and he was, getting the, dementia, unfortunately.

**Mark:** Now did you find that along the way, like, because obviously, um, you were part of the creative process, because he's writing these things, and then you're, having to...

**Veronica:** Edit it.

**Mark:** ...transcribe and edit it, um...were you finding that, was he remembering all of the events like clearly on his own, or was there any times you had to, like uh, prompt anything?

**Veronica:** Very clearly.

**Mark:** So he was remembering these events very clearly; okay, yeah, that tends...yeah, a lot of times people as they get older, they remember the events from before quite clearly.

**Veronica:** Yep.

**Mark:** So, but like with editing, I guess that would be part of...like, some of the questions, would be like what did you have to...do in order like, to make it so like, from a collection of um, his recollections into like a, um, you know, like a, a cohesive book that flows with like a chronology throughout it?

**Veronica:** He actually wrote, very coherently, and very well; all I really had to do was, uh, correct some grammar, ongoing sentences, uh, put paragraphs in, change a few words so that uh, he didn't have "that, that, and that," or "the, the, and the," in the same sentence.

**Mark:** Okay, right. Making a more polished sentence.

**Veronica:** I guess, yeah, yeah. So basically, it was an easy job. There were a few, there were a couple of areas, and this is going back, now, 16, 17 years now...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...there were a couple of areas that...I really had to think about. But, unfortunately, without the book in front of me I probably can't remember, exact. But only a couple, and it was, more of a grammatical...how do I put this and this together to make it sound...

**Mark:** Like it flowed.

**Veronica:** Like it flowed, and to make it saleable.

**Mark:** So now, when uh, you came across like, things like that, was that something where you then would, um, maybe like, go to him and get his opinion on a couple of different...

**Veronica:** Yep.

**Mark:** Okay, so you did...

**Veronica:** I never did anything without, I didn't change a word, without asking him.

**Mark:** Okay, okay. So you...

**Veronica:** Without presenting it to him.

**Mark:** So you would come up with a way that seemed like it might flow better, and then you would go to him and ask him if he thought that *this* worked, or like a different alternative, if it would work better?

**Veronica:** Exactly.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** Yep.

**Mark:** Oh, there's the book; perfect.

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** Actually, we would like to, at some point get a few more, um, copies, because uh, it is quite a nice book.

**Veronica:** It will, now it will come, for some reason, when you don't order them all at the same time...

**Mark:** Mmm hmm.

**Veronica:** ...it has to be retitled.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** But we can maybe just put... "My Survival," or something. You know.

**Mark:** So, it would have to have a different title?

**Veronica:** Apparently, yeah.

**Mark:** So if you don't order them for a while, they like, do they not...

**Veronica:** No, they don't keep them.

**Mark:** Well, I remember at one point, um, a title that he, he mentioned to me at one point was, what the heck was it? "All Guts, No Glory." That was another uh, title, that he...

**Veronica:** Hmm... (*interested sound*)

**Mark:** ...at one point had come up with. Cause I remember him...well I remember like when I was 17...

**Veronica:** I think I remember that, yeah.

**Mark:** Well I remember when I was 17, and uh...I, was, I think I had just started smoking cigarettes about, and, so I visited him on, well, the, the house where they were living; I forget the name the name of that street. Water?

**Veronica:** East.

**Mark:** East Street. And, so, we went to the shed to have a cigarette. And, I remember sitting there—it was a nice day—and uh, he said, "Mark, if there's ever another war, don't go."

**Veronica:** Ha ha, that sounds like him.

**Mark:** And I was like, I was like, "I won't!" And, and he said, like it's different if they, you know, like if your, if your country gets invaded, then obviously, that's like...

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** ...that's just defending your family, right? You know, like if you have to go off to fight some jerks that have come into your country, it's not any different really than if they come and invade your house and you got to get them out of there.

**Veronica:** Yep.

**Mark:** But he, definitely, his experiences in the war, it seems he had come up with the idea of, um, it's not worth it to go fight for someone else's stupid agenda.

**Veronica:** No, no.

**Mark:** And...

**Veronica:** He did not like...the war. And he did not like the idea of taking lives.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** Um, in fact it bothered him, tremendously. But as he said at one time, um, "I know they have families, they have a mother, father, they have, maybe a brother or sister, a wife, kids, but it's him or me."

**Mark:** Right, exactly.

**Veronica:** So, you know...

**Mark:** In that moment...

**Veronica:** ...you do what you have to do.

**Mark:** ...yeah, in that moment, you don't get much choice.

**Veronica:** He said, uh, "In another time, we might be having, having a smoke together and be good friends."

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** He had nothing against the Germans.

**Mark:** As a people.

**Veronica:** As a people.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** Uh, just, he went to war, and this is what he had to do.

**Mark:** Yep.

**Veronica:** So, um...but it did bother him and he didn't talk a lot about it, when I was young.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Um, heh, I asked him some pointed questions like, "Dad, did you ever kill somebody?" And it was...uh..."Ask me in ten years."

**Mark:** Heh, hey, yeah.

**Veronica:** And I probably did. (*chuckles*) But, uh, he just, conversation over.

**Mark:** Right. Wasn't like, it's not something to be proud of or anything, it's...

**Veronica:** No.

**Mark:** ...certainly not like the movies, where they glorify it.

**Veronica:** Oh no, no, no. He would tell us the funny stories but, uh. The snake charge, and everybody running for the hills.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Um, from something that was basically harmless until they...uh, activated it.

**Mark:** Now that was actually one thing I had noticed was like, some of the more *humorous* stories, that I remember from him telling, or like things like, um, like dad had mentioned a story about when he'd been, um, working dispatch, and he was riding the motorcycle, and one of the half-track vehicles kind of

went sideways, and like was, uh, I forget if he, his bike got squished into the wall, but like, something like that had happened. Or stories of how...

**Veronica:** Uh, he, I believe that one he had to ditch the bike. And...

**Mark:** Right. And uh...

**Veronica:** ...he didn't have enough road to...

**Mark:** But I noticed that like stories like that, didn't, end up like, in the memoir. Do have uh, any thoughts as to why certain stories like that may have been, left out. When it doesn't seem to be, it's not a matter of memory; because he seemed, like you're saying, he was lucid, he was remembering things *clearly*, and so obviously there was like, some sort of...reason, that like maybe a lighter, more humorous story might be, not included. Do you think there's a purpose behind that, or...?

**Veronica:** Uh, not really sure. He...oh, how do I put this? We worked a lot on this after mom died.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** At which time, he was in the beginning stages of Alzheimer's.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** But so, he may...and of course he worked out a lot of it when mom was alive.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** Um, it's, there's, there's just so much to writing, as you know.

**Mark:** Yep.

**Veronica:** There's so much to writing a book, particularly when it's truth.

**Mark:** Yep.

**Veronica:** Uh, and particularly when you want to get, whatever message he wanted to get out...

**Mark:** Yes.

**Veronica:** ...which I *think* was basically there's no glory.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** Um, but he realized, you couldn't just write a serious book, so he put some, some of the humour, that he remembered.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** So, whether he just...uh, forgot to write that down, because we all knew it...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...we all knew the story, um, or whether, whether he had his own reasons, that I can't speak to.

**Mark:** Well, like the thought I'd had, might, was that it could have been a case of, because he wanted it to be a book showing, the reality of war and the fact that it's not a glorious or fun time, that, to make, I

thought maybe certain stories weren't included maybe because, didn't want it to appear to be a fun or glorious enterprise. Like his, it seems like his...like, going back to what he told me like when I was 17, it seems like more like maybe the purpose of the book was as...and this is something that, um, World War One, uh, veterans who wrote books, it seems they were like trying to warn the next generation about, um, the reality of, of war, and they tended to be a less glorious account than like, from let's say the Renaissance, where they still had horrible wars, but there, there was a different focus in their, in the memoirs, and I was wondering if maybe it was like, uh, kind of like that. Like, putting the truth out there, but then, not including...like, you select things to match the message that you're wanting to get across. So like if, like, you need a couple of humorous stories to break it up so that people, like you said, so it's saleable and readable, but you also don't want it to be something where it ends up...

**Veronica:** Being a joke.

**Mark:** Or making it so that people think, "Oh it's not so bad." Like, that, because he's trying to make it like, it's not a glorious thing, you don't want to make it then seem, well, well *glorious*. Or like, "Yay war!" You know, like and so, by *not* including some of the, uh, more lighthearted stories or, something that *could* seem glorious, that uh, maybe that's part...like that, that's just a thought that had occurred...

**Veronica:** I think that's a good thought. And uh, you, uh, would have a totally different relationship with him; he would talk to you differently, just by dint of the fact you are a man.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** Um, so you have a different perception, uh—*somewhat* different—of what he went through, um, maybe not much, but, uh, usually a man doesn't want to tell his, his daughter as much as he had to tell me.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Um, so I think you're probably onto something there.

**Mark:** Okay. But of course, like, you're...

**Veronica:** If that helps.

**Mark:** Does a certain amount. But of course, like you were very involved with the creative process, because...

**Veronica:** Yeah, I was.

**Mark:** ...you were working side by side over an extended period of time.

**Veronica:** Yeah, yeah. Took a couple of years to, to draw it out. Um, now, we started working on it after mom died, too.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** So, one has to wonder how much the...grief of that situation impinged on...uh, polishing the story.

**Mark:** Right, yeah.

**Veronica:** He was definitely into it...

**Mark:** Yes.

**Veronica:** ...when we were working on it. Um, but, older, no wife, displaced from his home.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Uh, staying, between me and, his sister.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Uh, mostly with, Tom and I.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** Um, wanting to go home. You know.

**Mark:** Yeah, I, I remember him, like, wanting to go home a lot, like, uh, was hoping it would be rebuilt, and he could, go home.

**Veronica:** Yeah, yeah. And it wasn't that we didn't treat him well...

**Mark:** No.

**Veronica:** ...it was, he wanted his home.

**Mark:** Exactly.

**Veronica:** Yeah. So, he felt, and he said, he said, he, uh, I asked him what we could do for him, and he said, "There's nothing," he said, "I just, this isn't my stomping grounds."

**Mark:** Yeah, yeah, I, I understand. Like if I go somewhere else, it doesn't matter how nice that place is, it's not...home.

**Veronica:** Yep. And he'd been there for 40 years.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Or more.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** So, uh, you know, he knew every inch of his home, he knew all the streets and, all the little nooks and crannies, and places to walk and, people to say hi to and...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...on his walks, and, uh, so I think, um, if, if anything...uh, caused him...to forget, maybe a funny story, it could have been a moment where he was maybe thinking back...uh, we all, we all do it; we can be concentrating on something, and something comes into your head.

**Mark:** Now you'd also mentioned that a certain amount of it had been written before. Like uh, would you say, uh, what percentage would you say, like maybe half had been written before?

**Veronica:** Oh no. Um...probably 80 percent.

**Mark:** Oh, so 80 percent was...okay. Because you see, the thing is like, I didn't get this like, there wasn't any impression that it wasn't, uh, polished; like the book itself seems like it's definitely, like uh, like it *flows*, it seems like a polished product. So...



**Veronica:** Well I think when you read some of these pages, you'll find, quite a difference.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** Not...in the...I'm certainly no intellectual, um...he's a, he was a very, very smart man...

**Mark:** Yes.

**Veronica:** ...as you know. But, I did take English as a major.

**Mark:** Right. More practiced on, wording of things.

**Veronica:** Yeah, yeah. That's really my only contribution, is, um, is to, uh, put it, just rearrange a few words and, and as I said, you know, run-on sentences, okay, where do we slice them and start, you know, and, uh, and uh, maybe get rid of a little repetition.

**Mark:** Yeah. I know that you had mentioned like, um, of course there was, like, so 80 percent done, there was like some prompting obviously involved. Was it more, prompting, like, what was the nature of the prompting? Was it more like, um, was it like *reminding* him of, um, an event, or was it like asking him, is there something else that you remember?

**Veronica:** It would be asking for more detail.

**Mark:** Okay, so it, was it more like, an event had been covered in the 80 percent that he had written, and then it's more trying to get more details, of things that were written?

**Veronica:** Can you make this a little more, I understand because you've, we've talked about it but, can you, imagine that you're writing to somebody who does not know anything about war?

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** From another planet.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** I used to say, "Okay, we're writing to someone who's from another planet."

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** "Who's never had a war. Um, can, can we fill this in a bit."

**Mark:** Okay. All right.

**Veronica:** And uh, then he'd, he'd think about it, and usually he'd come up with, a few more details that either led up to something or, went on during, to, to just to make it um, I guess a little more understandable.

**Mark:** Right, exactly. Like, setting the scene more; like you said, if someone has never...and, well for, people who haven't had war, even if we think we know stuff from watching TV, it really is like being from another planet.

**Veronica:** We haven't got a clue.

**Mark:** Yeah, exactly, like...

**Veronica:** We haven't got a clue.

**(Part 2)**

**Veronica:** So, as I was saying, he did...80 percent or more of his writing down in his basement; he had a little office, and, um, he did it alone, and thus the forward thanking his wife for the time. And the remainder was done, basically sitting at my kitchen table, having a cup of tea, or on occasion, something stronger.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** He did like a rum and coke occasionally.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** And uh...I think we, we went, went over the prompting pretty thoroughly. I uh, uh, basically would just ask him if there was anything else he'd like to say about...this paragraph, or that particular part, subject. And uh, on occasion, there was. Um...we spent many hours, many hours, and um, and of course it wasn't all writing the book; it was, in between, we'd chat.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** And sometimes that brought on memories.

**Mark:** Okay, yep.

**Veronica:** Um, and I'd say, "Take a break dad, take a break. Have a cigarette or whatever." And, then he'd..."Oh, I just thought of something." So we'd go back to it and, um...when he would uh, finish up that, that day, had enough, you know...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...um, then I would, recheck, and that's when I would go to work.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** Um, if it needed editing which it, it usually, there was usually something. Um, and then before we started the next day, I would point out what I had done.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** And, um, I believe I used a different colour, and sometimes I would, you know, if it was long, I would put an arrow down, and then I would write brackets, and uh, say, you know, I, "I think this might work a little better, have a look, and let me know." So, it's really a hundred percent...ach, well...yes, so it's a hundred percent his book with some...um, shall I say, prodding.

**Mark:** Okay, yeah. So now like, when you were at the table while he was a smoke and he would remember something, would he then write that down, or did you have like a, like a computer, or something to type it on at that point?

**Veronica:** I had an old typewriter and word processor.

**Mark:** Okay, so like one of those ones that has like the little screen, or the...

**Veronica:** Oh no, it...

**Mark:** ...full-size screen?

**Veronica:** Like a, 12-inch screen, or...

**Mark:** Okay, so close to a laptop.

**Veronica:** 12, 12 or 14-inch. Like a laptop, but it was a big, big box, one you plugged it into your typewriter, and...

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** ...old technology.

**Mark:** All right.

**Veronica:** Um...that being said, yes, I guess there were times that, a thought would come out, and, we'd grab a piece of paper and, and write it down. Um...you're not always, you're not always near the convenience of a computer or word processor when you think of something.

**Mark:** Absolutely.

**Veronica:** Um, many people think of something when they're in the shower.

**Mark:** Ha ha ha, yep. Well I know like when I was, like my book, was written on the computer, but there was lots of times when I was working security and I'd have a piece of paper, or I'd just grab one from the nearest printer and write something down when I was on patrol or, write something at the desk, or when I was watching TV at home, you know, sometimes I'd just, grab a notepad and write something down cause, yeah, it's not always convenient or, like, your wife's asleep in the other room with the computer; there's always...so yeah, paper still has its place, even in an electronic age.

**Veronica:** You know what, it always will.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** It always will. Um, most of us are not programmed to decide, okay, I'm going to work on my book, and it all comes out.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** Um, it comes out when you're in bed, when you're in the shower, or when you're sitting watching TV or...the worst part is when you're out for a walk if you don't have a tape recorder with you.

**Mark:** Ha ha, yeah.

**Veronica:** Um...

**Mark:** Actually, I'm gonna grab a slice of pizza.

**Veronica:** Which is something I had, is a little tape recorder.

**Mark:** Okay, so...

**Veronica:** As well.

**Mark:** When was that more like um...

**Veronica:** Just for those thoughts that come when you're, outside.

**Mark:** And, were some of his thoughts on there, or is that more when you were on a walk and thought of something?

**Veronica:** Oh, we used to walk together, and occasionally he would, come up with something and...and...so I bought a tape recorder, and I'd ask him to repeat it.

**Mark:** Okay. So, computer, paper, and voice recorder at times.

**Veronica:** No computer; word processor...

**Mark:** Oh, word processor, yeah...

**Veronica:** ...typewriter.

**Mark:** ...right, typewriter.

**Veronica:** Didn't have a, well, computers were out, but I didn't have one. Until...I uh, printed out the final version; no, but the final version actually, the *first* final version was on, done on a word processor.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** Um...of course, the, book was done, the actual text that was sent to be bound...

**Mark:** Mmmm hmmm.

**Veronica:** ...uh, was done on the computer.

**Mark:** Now, what was the name of that, um, publishing place?

**Veronica:** Hmm...it's overseas, I believe it's in, um, Bali.

**Mark:** Oh!

**Veronica:** Um, um, Bali or...sure it's Bali. Uh, I'd have to talk to my, friend that, uh, was good enough to...help me with this, and actually, he should have mention; his name is Dave, or uh, David, Paisley. His wife is Deb, and she was the one who came up with the idea of putting his handwriting in behind...

**Mark:** As a watermark; that was very nice.

**Veronica:** Yeah, yeah. Um, I loved it.

**Mark:** Oh yeah, it looks very nice.

**Veronica:** So, um, Dave and Deb Paisley of Petrolia; I own them a, a debt of gratitude. So, um, seeing as...and, and, and, he, his father, actually um, his father Ted Paisley, was in, uh, World War Two, and he knew dad.

**Mark:** Oh.

**Veronica:** Not well, but he, he knew him. He knew Ward Grenville...

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** He knew um, oh, one of the other chaps I, I can't remember. I think all four are gone. Um, and actually corrected me of the death date of one of them.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** Um...and it was, interesting the way I, I, uh, this got done. At all. Was I was having some, um, laser therapy out in, Petrolia and, the uh, I chatted with the therapist about this, this book that I would like to have published.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** Or at least bound. And he said, "Well, I have another patient who was in, World War Two..."

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** "...and went through London." And, so I took in a, printed manuscript for the therapist to read, and he asked me if I would mind if this gentleman could read it, and I had some reservations because there was a lot of, plagiarists, but I...

**Mark:** Mmm hmmm.

**Veronica:** ...had a good feeling, and I said "Sure." And then he, he made sure that we both came at the same time for an appointment. So I got to, to meet him, and then his son who, um, who actually uh, put it onto his computer and, um, with Tom and I spending a few hours out there reading it, going cross-eyed, looking for typos and things...

**Mark:** Mmm hmmm, mmm hmmm.

**Veronica:** ...um, at their insistence, which was good. And, uh, when we cleared it, he um, sent it, uh, to this, this publisher who does these...they do um, a lot of coffee table books, and things like that. Um...so I don't know, uh, I was mentioning the title has to be changed when you reorder...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...uh, unfortunately. Um, even if it's just a letter or two. Um, it may be because it's done in a, I don't know is, is Bali, I think is, a Third World country?

**Mark:** At least second, certainly not first.

**Veronica:** Well yeah, yeah. I guess maybe not third, but...um. So, it may be the location of, of, uh, the printer, uh, or manufacturer.

**Mark:** Ease of keeping track of stuff somehow.

**Veronica:** Well they do, I think it's safe to say, they do millions of books.

**Mark:** Mmm hmmm. Now do they still have the, electronic files at the publisher, do you think, or would that be something that would have to be submitted again?

**Veronica:** I believe they do not have it.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** But I will check. Dave doesn't even know we have moved, so I have to...

**Tom (Veronica's husband):** I think, if I remember right, Dave said that, they could be reprinted, but to get a deal on it, the, the title would have to be changed.

**Veronica:** Oh!

**Mark:** Mmmm.

**Veronica:** Okay.

**Tom:** And I think it's on a drive somewhere. I don't know if he's got a copy of it yet...

**Veronica:** I don't know, because we were supposed to go get it, and I was too sick and...

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** And...

**Tom:** But it was, everything was going to be downloaded onto a, onto a drive so...

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Tom:** ...uh, or a memory chip.

**Veronica:** But I haven't been in touch with him for a year or so; he may have said "The heck with you."

**Tom:** Well...

**Veronica:** You know.

**Tom:** Then at that time, yeah.

**Mark:** Hmm.

**Veronica:** But I've been thinking about it, and I need to get in touch with them; they're good people.

**Mark:** Mmm hmmm.

**Veronica:** Um...

**Mark:** Yeah, it's too easy to lose touch with...

**Veronica:** ...hmmm.

### **(Part 3)**

**Mark:** So, like you were saying, because people had...

**Veronica:** I think because of the overabundance of, books about the war, it was hard to get this one published. Myself, um, I think it's an excellent book.

**Mark:** Mmm hmmm.

**Veronica:** I think it has the right amount of humour in it, it's not too gory...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...uh, for regular, for, for, um, not, it's not a child's book...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...but for a young person.

**Mark:** Mmm hmmm.

**Veronica:** Uh, something like, like this, um, and it could be anyone's book, not, not just my dad's...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...but it should be really required reading in high school. If it's well written, and not all blood and guts.

**Mark:** Mmm hmmm.

**Veronica:** And intelligently written, which I think this book is. But there's so many out there, that, um, we, and far too few Canadian publishers.

**Mark:** That's true.

**Veronica:** So, I remember buying, going to the Post Office, and getting a package of envelopes and, reprinting and reprinting, and folding and, and spending a lot of money on stamps, and, um, very few replies.

**Mark:** Yeah. So there were some people, some publishers did at least reply?

**Veronica:** There were some that replied. Um, and actually, there was one, Winnipeg...Journal, or, something...akin to, we have a, a little, Sarnia Journal, small newspaper, it's free...

**Mark:** All right, yeah.

**Veronica:** ...this was uh, I think two pages.

**Mark:** Oh, okay.

**Veronica:** And, uh, they did take, unfortunately I don't have a copy, um, they did take an excerpt, about five or six paragraphs...

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** Kind of like the Reader's Digest has Humour in Uniform...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...which is, we submitted to them too, but they didn't want to take anything. Anyway, he got a little, a little blurb in the, in the Winnipeg, Journal or...I think that's what it was called.

**Mark:** Gazette or Journal...

**Veronica:** Gazette or Journal, yeah. So that made him happy; made me happy.

**Mark:** So, so he got to see that while he was still alive.

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Mark:** Good.

**Veronica:** And I wish, I wish I...he would love this book, published or not, if he saw it, he would be very proud of it, oh yeah.

**Mark:** It's a very nice book.

**Veronica:** Yeah, it, the uh, people who, printed and, did the artwork for the cover, and I just had to go on trust.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** With that. I saw some of their artwork, and I said well, perhaps a beach; not a sunny beach...

**Mark:** Not a sandy beach, but more like, stones.

**Veronica:** Yeah, yeah, and um, so we looked at some of the pictures and I, I just thought well, I can't pick; uh, we'll see, we'll, we'll, surprise me. And it's, I think it's very good.

**Mark:** Now with the, actually, with the published um, of course I've got like, one of the early, um, typed versions, and...

**Veronica:** Okay.

**Mark:** ...the final version, there's the um, the, like the battle maps, and that extra information about the Stalag B, or whatever it was...

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** ...um, where did that information come from?

**Veronica:** Basically, uh, if you type in, on the, on your computer, if you type in Stalag B, uh, you'll get some of it. Um, Wikipedia.

**Mark:** Yeah, they got some things.

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** Yep. Um, most of it, you look in, um, Stalag B, um, and Dieppe, and uh, general World War...

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** ...to um, uh, Death March, uh, prison camp, Stalag B.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** Think that, the, Stalag B is, is, the source of, probably half of it...

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** ...and they have much more, they've got pictures, and names, and, and uh, you know, of the people that were there.

**Mark:** So then, was that um, like that research there, to get that, was that something that, um, you did, or did you collaborate on?

**Veronica:** No, that was, that was research that, both Dave and I...

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** ...did.



**Mark:** All right, okay, so that was a collaborative thing between, uh, Dave and you, getting the extra information.

**Veronica:** He had the, the knowledge because, his, his, he actually did a, um, book for his father.

**Mark:** Ah, okay.

**Veronica:** Um, not so much a storybook, but an account, and also showing the medals, of which his father had more. His father uh, last January, not...2015, he was awarded the Order of France...

**Mark:** Nice.

**Veronica:** Which is one of the higher...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** So we went, and um, it was held inside, inside at the, at the Petrolia...okay, let's try that again.

**Mark:** The Petrolia Club? No...

**Veronica:** Petrolia Legion, yeah.

**Mark:** Oh, okay; Petrolia Legion, okay.

**Veronica:** Because he was, I think he was 89 at the time.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** I hesitate...I don't know if he's alive, at this point; he would be 91.

**Mark:** Kind of even odds; it could be either way.

**Veronica:** He, he was frail at that time.

**Mark:** Yeah. Of course, a lot of times then it depends on if they get ill or not. Like they say the aging process tends to stop around 80, like around 90, and, there's not a lot of difference between someone who's 88 and someone who's 110, um...

**Veronica:** No, well, that's, that's true...

**Mark:** ...unless they get ill. But if they get ill, then it's...

**Veronica:** Well, the other thing is, his wife passed away, when he was 89...

**Mark:** Oh shit, yeah, that's bad.

**Veronica:** ...so...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...you don't know.

**Mark:** Nah, no.

**Veronica:** But he was, he was frail. He may be gone.

**Mark:** Hard to say.

**Veronica:** I have a friend who's...I have a friend who's 92, and she shovels her snow.

**Mark:** Yep.

**Veronica:** And mows her lawn, and rakes her yard so I mean, go figure.

**Mark:** I remember watching on TV, I forget if the guy was 104 or 108, but, and this was—he's probably not around now, because this was like, about, seven years ago—but it was on the news, and they just said that he'd just, he'd just, uh, quit weightlifting on the advice of his doctor, at like 104 or 108, and he was still doing like 5 miles a day. But, like, he just kept moving, you know, it was like, just keep going on.

**Veronica:** Well, and, you know, it, may be not pertinent to the book, but of course, I think you know...

**Mark:** Mmm hmmm.

**Veronica:** ...that dad kept up, um, with uh, walking, and uh, he did 300 push-ups one night, and 300 sit-ups the next night, and 300 push-ups the next night, and 300 sit-ups...and he walked, 3 miles a day, every day.

**Mark:** So he kept his fitness regimen going for quite some time.

**Veronica:** He, did that until...a couple months before his death; um, a month before his death he fell and broke his shoulder...

**Mark:** Hmmm.

**Veronica:** ...and I know what that's like, because I've broken mine, and it's...in 2010, and it basically don't heal.

**Mark:** Not very well, no.

**Veronica:** It's very painful. And that broke his will. It was his right hand, he couldn't eat by himself, and...dress.

**Mark:** And his vision had been going down.

**Veronica:** He was basically blind.

**Mark:** And reading was one of his uh, great, uh...

**Veronica:** Passions.

**Mark:** ...one of his great passions, so...

**Veronica:** So, yeah it was, uh, it was tough. And also the, the Alzheimer's, I don't know physically, what it does to you...

**Mark:** I don't think it was far enough that it would, I think if it goes far enough it can...I forget if it was Parkinson's or Alzheimer's, but if it goes to like, final stages it can become fatal, but generally people die of a different cause before it itself becomes...

**Veronica:** Well I, yeah, I know that people die of pneumonia.

**Mark:** Yeah, or, or...

**Veronica:** Even, even people that die of heart failure, unless they have a big heart attack.

**Mark:** It's congestive heart failure from, the, fluid in the lungs type of thing.

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** So usually, what I've been told, and as far as I know, it's pneumonia that takes you out.

**Mark:** A lot of times.

**Veronica:** Now, Dad also of interest, of course he was starved, and uh...I've got to get you the paper, I will, um...oh hell, I can, I can give it to you as long as, please do not lose it, drop coffee on it or anything...

**Mark:** No, no.

**Veronica:** ...uh, I should have, with his medals, his discharge, where he had to, explain the torture.

**Mark:** *Yeah*, I remember seeing that in the book, and that looked like, it was a very interesting thing.

**Veronica:** Well it was a, part of it. We didn't put, it all in, because it's very graphic. Um...

**Mark:** Oh, quick question; was that uh, was not putting it in due to being graphic, was that uh, like an editorial choice on your part, or something that uh, grandfather thought should be left out?

**Veronica:** He never even thought of putting it in.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** Um, David and I, looked at it and thought, it really should go in. And, upon rereading it for me, and upon him reading it, uh, we did feel it was a little...much, for some people to read.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** Um, and it is, it's, it's, it's...absolutely terrible what, the way he was beaten, and chained, and tortured and starved.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** And many others.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Not just him, of course. But what he knew, was that, and he would often say, three days without water...

**Mark:** Three...

**Veronica:** Three hours without, uh, what was it?

**Mark:** Heat? Without warmth, or shelter, or something?

**Veronica:** Without, heat, I guess.

**Mark:** Yeah, that sounds about right.

**Veronica:** Three days without water, three weeks without food.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Well, he decided...he did not want to, hang around anymore. And uh, you know it's...I, I can talk about it now, I couldn't for years.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** Um, and he, he went back, he went back to speaking almost exclusively German, and uh, he would say, "Genug, genug," that's...and uh, he wouldn't eat.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** So I would go home, and I would mix him up, strawberry ice cream, throw an egg in it...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...um, and cream, and strawberries, or chocolate. And, I'd blend it all together...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...and take it over and he'd have...because I had made it, he'd have...

**Mark:** Some of it, at least.

**Veronica:** Well, couple of teaspoons, maybe.

**Mark:** Aah.

**Veronica:** And then I started to feel guilty, uh, because I thought, well, maybe I wouldn't want to be here. I don't know what he's feeling inside, I don't know, he's, he had cancer...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Um, he had cancer basically all through him, and that's not, as some people think, it's not uh...

**Mark:** A good feeling.

**Veronica:** ...unpainful.

**Mark:** Well no, it's not.

**Veronica:** It's a very painful process.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Um, the other thing he did, uh, was he carried on smoking, and I got a lot of flack for giving him cigarettes, and I thought, well jeeze, you know, the man has smoked since he was fourteen.

**Mark:** Well yeah.

**Veronica:** And, the last day of his life, um, I went in in the morning, and, they had him sitting out at the nursing station. And, uh, so I got his cigarettes, and...we went outside, and uh...I had to, put it in my mouth and light it; he didn't have the strength. And I held it at the other end and he had two puffs and said, "Enough." And I thought, I don't like this." Um...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...and that was the last cigarette he had. By, um...hmmm. He wasn't really communicative. By about noon, it was hellishly hot; 35, 36 degrees; it was one of the hottest days.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** And uh, I asked the, the girls to, uh, come and get him to the bathroom and...they said, "Do you think he'd be more comfortable in a, in pajamas or whatever, just laying?" And I said "I don't know; it's, it's up to you." I said, "I know what's happening here." Um, so they put him in a, hospital robe, you know. And in, in bed with just a sheet. And they always came around at two o'clock with, uh, ice cream

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** But the...I can't remember if I called the minister, I think I did. Yeah, I called the minister, and he came. And I sat outside the room, and he spent about 45 minutes about. And didn't, get a word out of him, really. Uh, so, he said, "But call me."

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** And uh, so I went in and, they, the lady with the ice cream came around, and I, I had been swabbing his mouth with those, um, swabs you put in, in water...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...when people are, are dying, or when they're...

**Mark:** Too sick...

**Veronica:** ...to...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...drink.

**Mark:** Or they, sometimes can't swallow things, but still need the moisture.

**Veronica:** Yeah, yeah. So, and he hadn't opened his eyes all day, and uh, I said, "Dad, there's ice cream here." And, he just opened his eyes a little bit. "You want some?"

**Mark:** "Yeah, I'll have a little bit, okay." (*chuckles*)

**Veronica:** So, he nodded his head a little. And, uh, so I got, I think...you know you take a spoon, and you...

**Mark:** Put like a little bit on...

**Veronica:** ...just a little, really just like a tiny bit, I think I got two little spoons down and, it was good, you know. He liked it.

**Mark:** Nice.

**Veronica:** We went back to the water and uh, then they came in, and the gave him, um, soft patch, they call it, in the leg; it's morphine.

**Mark:** Yeah, yeah.

**Veronica:** And I think that was enough to relax him, and let him go. They did that at...between four o'clock and ten after four, and at four forty he was gone. So, and then I called Tom, and Tom got off, got out of work and, I went out into the parking lot, and he just about ran me over, because I was (*make unintelligible sound*), you know

**Mark:** Yeah, not really seeing, not really...

**Veronica:** My dad just died.

**Mark:** ...going to see what's going on at a time like that.

**Veronica:** No, no, And, uh...he was (*unintelligible*) from killing me; it's a big truck.

**Mark:** Shit.

**Veronica:** But uh, good thing he's a good driver.

**Mark:** Yeah, definitely.

**Veronica:** So I was not...compos mentis for a day or so, I had to be because I had to go to the funeral home, and...you don't want to record this.

**Mark:** Okay.

#### **(Part 4)**

**Mark:** Yep.

**Veronica:** Ah, so it's interesting to note that, that when he came back from the Death March, he, uh, was allowed, uh, to leave the hospital for a few hours to go and visit his wife, um, and they wanted to feed him, because he was, uh, he had gone from 165 pounds to 74. And um, in the hospital, they could only, for the first few days, they had to build them up, and they could only give them, uh, a little bit of bread, and, um, I think it was a couple of ounces of milk.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** And then, they could have, they couldn't even have all the water they wanted, because, they didn't get...

**Mark:** Stomach was, must have shrunk a bit.

**Veronica:** Well that, and, if you can imagine, going without food for, we can't, really...

**Mark:** Nah.

**Veronica:** ...but if you can imagine...you've gone without food for four hours...

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** ...and you're famished. And, um, you're really hungry.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** And you order, two pizzas, and you eat them; how do you feel? You're going to get sick.

**Mark:** Yeah...

**Veronica:** So, of course they, they couldn't, they couldn't feed him, any of them, more than, uh, a little bit of bread and, uh, butter, which they didn't have...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** They couldn't give them more than that; so when he went to uh, my mother's, parent's home, they wanted to feed him a big meal, and, uh, much to his chagrin, he had to decline. Um, he also knew he would be very ill...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...if he had eaten, as much as...well, any more than, than, uh, they were allowed at the hospital. I think, my recollection of him telling me, it took, about a month, before he could eat a small meal of meat and potatoes, vegetables...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...uh, about a month. Um, you just don't go for, many months with a piece of bread a day, um...

**Mark:** And not even very good bread at that from what I, from back in the camps, it wasn't...

**Veronica:** Well it was, the German black bread...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...I don't know if that's the same as pumpernickel. Um, not maybe relevant to his book, but, I used to bring home pumpernickel—I love it—and he would just get, I never knew, I never put it together when I was younger, uh, 16, 17, I'd go shopping and I'd bring back this, pumpernickel, and he'd look at it, and he'd grit his teeth, and he'd say, "I'm not eating that stuff."

**Mark:** Ha ha ha.

**Veronica:** And he'd eat everything.

**Mark:** So, it must be pretty similar to the stuff, that they...

**Veronica:** Well, it, it could be, or it might just, might just have brought back the memories but, uh, I mean, pumpernickel is really good bread, but I didn't, wasn't forced to eat that and only that.

**Mark:** And it's different, probably what you get from the grocery store as opposed to what they...

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** ...it will have been pretty, uh, beat up and dried up and stuff.

**Veronica:** Now I think it's from the book, um, that they came across a, um, they stayed at a factory of some sort, or whatever.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** And, um, they found, he had his little group—as you would recall—and uh, that he kind of, took care of...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...and told them what to do, and, and they knew that he was, uh, he had been on a farm so, he knew how to forage. But one of them was looking one night, and uh, found...kind of a warehouse, that was full of bread.

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** So, um, they figured out a way to, um, to get this bread, and they had quite a feast...

**Mark:** Nice.

**Veronica:** For a night or two. Um, and uh, because normally, um...and then they, of course they all stuffed their pockets, when they were, had to go at night, stuff their pockets and such, or bags or whatever, taking with them as much as they, they could...

**Mark:** Oh, for sure..

**Veronica:** Without being detected, um...and he figures that, was part of what kept him alive, was finding that, finding that bread. Because they, and, and some of them did get sick, they just ate too much.

**Mark:** Oh, well yeah, natural.

**Veronica:** The chocolate was another thing, I don't know, I don't know if this went in the book. Uh, the Red Cross would drop them parcels, and uh, the men would, kill another man, of their same, their same countrymen, they were so starving, they would kill another man for his chocolate bar. So you had to be quite careful, and, a lot of the men got it and just ate it.

**Mark:** Oh yeah.

**Veronica:** He divided his into small pieces, and hid it, somewhere, I don't know where. And he would have one little piece of chocolate every day...

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** ...until it ran out, which was usually when they got the next...uh, this was not on the March, but...

**Mark:** Before.

**Veronica:** ...Before, in the camp. But, um, you didn't leave your chocolate sticking out of your pocket, because you, you, you *could* be killed for it. Which is really quite incredible; that's how hungry they were.

**Mark:** Well that's the sort of thing that's so foreign to us, like, especially North America *now*, where, our problem is, I mean, you can see all the TV commercials talking about how to deal with having too *much* food, let alone...

**Veronica:** Well yeah, gluttons.

**Mark:** Yeah, we, we really can't understand...

**Veronica:** Look what we had tonight, and...

**Mark:** It would have been like, well I mean...

**Veronica:** Six months' food, or more.

**Mark:** Now admittedly, that would have been, like however many weeks or months, it would have been a starvation diet still for them, but...

**Veronica:** Well yeah.

**Mark:** ...but they, yeah.



**Veronica:** And of course, many did succumb. Um, but, I mean, he would pick up, and he would get the guys, um, if he saw any grain anywhere, he would pick it up and fill his pockets with it, and get the other guys...

**Mark:** I remember the story which I think, I'm pretty sure is in the book, with like, the two poles, and then the, the pot, with the wood laying in there, and then the other pot...

**Veronica:** Yep.

**Mark:** ...and basically, you could go a certain amount off to the side before you'd get shot, and so within that amount of, you could go off to the sides, they would just grab whatever moved, or seemed edible, and throw it in the pot.

**Veronica:** Uh, what he said, if it moved it was game, if it didn't, it probably still went in.

**Mark:** Heh heh.

**Veronica:** Uh, yeah, they found frogs, and rats, and, and I guess they got lucky one time, found a chicken.

**Mark:** Ah, that would have been a nice day.

**Veronica:** Mmm hmmm, that was a, yeah, that was a bonus.

**Mark:** Oh heck yeah.

**Veronica:** Big pot of chicken soup. And uh, but yeah, he would forage for grain, and uh, if he saw some, "Come on, you, there's grain down there, pick up a handful."

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Grain, dirt, whatever, you, they'd put it in their mouth and just chew on it. And of course, you know if your hungry, if you, uh, took some crumbs off the top of that pie (*points to apple pie in the kitchen*), and you're starving, but that's all you can have, that's gonna, that's gonna help you for a little while.

**Mark:** It's a psychological thing.

**Veronica:** And it's like, quitting smoking, going and getting celery.

**Mark:** Well it's like what you said about like him breaking up the chocolate for the, however many days, it reminds me of something that I'd seen on, like it was that show *Survivorman* with Les Stroud, where he'd go out for a week with basically almost nothing. And sometimes they'd have like, like a little, I mean sometimes he had like an energy, one energy bar, that was like, the idea being you get lost with a backpack, but you didn't actually plan on getting lost out there, you don't have any other food. And he was mentioning that; you know, like if that's all you got, like it's not...eating it all would give you more energy for the short term...

**Veronica:** For the short term.

**Mark:** ...but, having that little piece per day, it's not that it's going to give you so much energy—you're still living off your internal body reserves—but it's the psychological thing; you don't feel, like, as desperate, and you don't feel like you're starving so much because, you got that piece, and you know there's another one the next day, and...

**Veronica:** Exactly, exactly.

**Mark:** ...and the psychological, well that's like, obviously, that's the thing that kept him going, was the psychological, um, fortitude.

**Veronica:** And we don't need, uh, as much sugar, we certainly don't need the sugar we get today...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...but, we don't need, we, human beings, animals, mammals, all of us, we don't need sugar, period. And that, I guess that's arguable, like, they say no, your brain need carbs, and sugars, but, um, perhaps not in the form of chocolate.

**Mark:** Heh, heh, right.

**Veronica:** Um, so, it would give some sort of a little boost to the body to just have, a few grams of sugar, I'm sure.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** If um, and the, and the psychological part definitely.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Would uh...I don't know, uh, I'm trying to remember what they did for water. I know that they did, um...

**Mark:** I think they were given some amount of, water...

**Veronica:** They had a little...

**Mark:** Like a little bit in their canteen, or whatever, like a daily ration that was small.

**Veronica:** Well it was small, and the, the ones that were smarter, um, and this is no big surprise, they did drink their urine. Um, and that is a survival, tactic.

**Mark:** True, but the urine also concentrates salts and such, so you have to make, there's like a certain amount of times you can do that you can, do that before it kind of stops doing so much...

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** But when they were on the March, they also will have, I imagine same as they were foraging for food...

**Veronica:** They found snow.

**Mark:** ...snow, uh, and streams. Like obviously, if there's a stream that seems at all clean, you're going to probably...

**Veronica:** Totally, you're going to fill your canteen, or whatever.

**Mark:** ...yeah. And they were on the go quite a bit, so they will have...and with snow, I mean, since you're walking, you're producing enough heat that uh...once again, like you get some of these survival experts who say, "Oh don't eat the snow, it will cool your core temperature." That um, Les Stroud guy said, he always eats snow when he's out there, if he's on the go. Because...

**Veronica:** Oh yeah.

**Mark:** ...because you're moving along. Like it would be different if you were like, okay, I'm staying in one spot, and I'm sitting in the snow, eating a bunch of snow, then maybe.

**Veronica:** No, no.

**Mark:** But if you're moving around, you're not going to like...

**Veronica:** Well the body, you're, you're still going to sweat.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Because that's what the body does, when you move it.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** So, eating some snow is going to replenish...

**Mark:** Yeah, replenish, and...

**Veronica:** ...the water you put out when you sweat.

**Mark:** ...and also, you don't want to overheat too much, to sweat too much, because then you get cold, because you get wet, so the snow keeping the...

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** ...so yeah. But yeah snow will be something they certainly did uh...water will have been, I mean it's a, it's the, more important on a daily basis that the food, but they will have probably been able to find, and be provided more of it that food on the March of...

**Veronica:** Well, from what I, was told they got one piece of bread per day.

**Mark:** Yeah, yeah, I remember that...

**Veronica:** And so they must have gotten, some water.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Now towards the end, the guards, also fell ill, or just left their allies that were uh, done...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...and, um, so they could, uh, head any way, I suppose they wanted.

**Mark:** Now one, um, wartime story that I, definitely wasn't in the book, was, um, the one about at the end, of the March, when uh, there was that one, uh, guard, the particularly brutal one who had, would...

**Veronica:** Bash.

**Mark:** ...bash them to death with the rifle butt, and at the end, they basically, they all got him, and like, uh, but they were all really sick and weak, so like, I think, it, uh, I remember that dad said grandfather was responsible for like, the fingers on one hand. But it was like, they basically, they all grabbed the guy, and whatever they had strength to, but they got him. But that's one that definitely was not in the book; was that something that just seemed, do you think he though that was too brutal for the...?

**Veronica:** Probably, yeah. Um, remember we're talking about a man who, did not like what he had to do...

**Mark:** Right, yes.

**Veronica:** Um...as I mentioned, I asked him when I was very young—I don't know, 5 or 6, I was rather precocious—uh, had he ever killed someone, and, uh, he, said, "You can ask me in ten years..."

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...and that was the end of the conversation. Uh, I did ask him, probably in about ten years, and uh, when he was in a mood to, talk, and he said he had. Um, I was more, I guess, um...ghoulishly interested, maybe, or maybe just stupidly interested, if he had killed someone with his bare hands, and uh, he had, that was part of being a commando.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** And uh, after the first one that he did kill, and they would...just like they do with TV, you know, uh, they would come up behind, very quietly, either it was a wire, or a knife to slit the throat, and...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...so the man that was being, uh, killed, didn't make a sound, for obvious reasons.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** Uh, after his first, perhaps his first couple, he uh, turned around and was sick to his stomach.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** It was just not something that he, was used to doing.

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** I mean, he could slaughter chickens, but...

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** ...but uh, killing a man was not his forte.

**Mark:** No, no, right.

**Veronica:** It never, he said he never got used to it. I doubt he got sick every time he had to take someone out, but the first time or two, he got sick to his stomach, and, uh, that doesn't surprise me.

**Mark:** No, that sounds about right. For a normal, for a normal, well adjusted person going into it, they're going to have that kind of response.

**Veronica:** Yep. I think, if I killed someone, whether I uh, intended to do it or not, I think I'd be sick to my stomach so.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** It's, it's, it's not even really nice to think about but, um, to remember these people, we have to.

**Mark:** Yeah. I remember um, like dad saying that, one of the big things he had said to dad about, killing, was just basically that it's not something to be proud of.

**Veronica:** No, no.

**Mark:** You know, that's something, that's something like a lot of...well, once again, it's mostly people that have never killed anyone, who think that it's something to be all proud of, they see stuff on TV, or a videogame, or they read it in a book, and...

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** Most of the people that think it's all cool, they've never even really been in a real fight, let alone that.

**Veronica:** Right, right. And I think that a lot of these people, if they actually, uh, saw blood and guts, they would probably throw up too.

**Mark:** Yeah, exactly. They'd be puking, or be traumatized somehow...

**Veronica:** Or they'd be out cold.

**Mark:** Yeah, there'd be some sort of, uh, visceral, physical reaction to...

**Veronica:** Which is, um, I think, a problem these days; and this may not be pertinent, or it may be. Um, you take the video games...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...that the kids, kids are becoming, have become desensitized...

**Mark:** Desensitized, yeah.

**Veronica:** ...because, you can take a video game, and you can shoot everybody...

**Mark:** Or stab them even.

**Veronica:** ...or stab them...

**Mark:** Bash them with a bat.

**Veronica:** ...bash, yeah. You can, whatever weapon, weapon of choice, in the game or...I don't know much about these video games, because I play Bejewelled, and things like that. Um, and I don't like it when the spider gets the butterfly.

**Mark:** Ha ha ha ha.

**Veronica:** But, um, silly, I know.

**Mark:** It *does* desensitize.

**Veronica:** But it's desensitizing our children, and the kids are going to school and, they're, they're beating up other kids; why do you think that's happening?

**Mark:** Well, I mean...well I mean, people were beating up kids a bunch when I was going to school; that's why I had to take martial arts.

**Veronica:** Oh yeah, me too, me too. And there were always the fights. But they weren't...okay, maybe, maybe I'm using the wrong example. Columbine...

**Mark:** Right.

**Veronica:** ...and all the others that I don't remember the names of. There was one recently, uh...I mean not last week, but...

**Mark:** Was it the one a couple of years ago in the States, the one at Sandy Hook?

**Veronica:** Sandy Hook was one...

**Mark:** That was about, that was about two years...

**Veronica:** That was two or three to five years ago.

**Mark:** Yeah, two or three years.

**Veronica:** Um, there was one last year.

**Mark:** Oh there's, there's one about every couple of months in the States.

**Veronica:** So, what the hell is going on, I mean, nobody came into schools with guns before.

**Mark:** Well, part of the, Columbine was like a watershed, it changed things in that, you see, they were the originators of that *mode* of thing, but actually video games, it was interesting. Video games, led them to think they could do it, but then it also made it so they had unrealistic thoughts. You see, normally you get a mass murderer, like a, someone typically going postal; they go and shoot a bunch of people, and then they shoot themselves.

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** Well Columbine, they had planned it out, and they'd made their little bombs, and they had their guns, and they had their, um, trench coats that they thought were going to make them look cool as they killed everyone, and they played a lot of that game *Doom*, a first-person shooter...

**Veronica:** Oh, okay.

**Mark:** The thing was, they thought it was going to be like in the game. They thought they were going to go in here, they were going to gun down all these people, they were going to set their bombs, the bombs were going to blow up a whole bunch of people, and they had a whole bunch of camping equipment in their parents' car, and they were then just going to drive off and live in the woods, and then I guess live happily ever after. They thought they were going to do this, and it was all going to go perfectly, and they were going to get away. Well, of course, if you ever see the video of it...

**Veronica:** Hmmm.

**Mark:** ...the bombs went off, a bunch of them, but they, I don't think they killed anyone; they were not very good bombs. The bombs didn't work out good, when they started gunning people down, a lot of people ran away, you know. It wasn't like a video game, they didn't run towards them, or stand around, they all ran away.

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** The, uh, body count, although it was bad, was a lot less than they thought it was going to be, and they ended up, of course—I forget if they killed themselves or got shot—but they ended up dead there at the scene.

**Veronica:** Yeah, I don't remember much.

**Mark:** It didn't work, it didn't work out according to their plan. Um, but you see, since then, once that was out there in the media, it gave people that were feeling similar feelings that led them to do it to have, a template. Now they got a template they can go on. It's just like, *now* of course, the people that were traditionally doing that, you see them saying, "Oh I'm, I'm, I'm a, I'm part of ISIS," and then they go off and kill a bunch of people.

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** Because, once that got out there, it gave people a template. You know, now if they want to kill someone, not only can they go out and kill them, but they can attach themselves to a cause, but it's like, once there's a template out there...it doesn't make, it's not that it makes people do it, but it gives people that are, at a certain weird psychological place, a, a plan or a blueprint or a story to follow.

**Veronica:** It's almost permission.

**Mark:** Sometimes permission, or...

**Veronica:** Or a reason.

**Mark:** Yeah. Or like, they feel like they're becoming part, well sometimes it's they feel they're becoming part of something. Others it's that, they just, they wouldn't have thought of this option on their own.

**Veronica:** Right.

**Mark:** Like they're, they're at a certain place, like they're, they're ripe to do this obviously, because, it happening didn't...I mean, lots of people have been alive since Columbine, and they didn't go ahead and do it. Um, but the people that are at this place, if, if that had never, if they'd never heard of this sort of thing, they might not have gone ahead and done, that. It gives, it gives them, now it's like an option on the table, they feel they can choose from.

**Veronica:** Yeah, I mean you're, you're putting it—and rightly so—in the category of copy-cat murders.

**Mark:** Yeah...

**Veronica:** Somebody, lays them out a certain way, or kills them a certain way, and, it's 9 stab wounds to wherever, or it's 13, or it's...yeah.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** And then, and then, uh, and then they get the person, and then someone else does the same thing.

**Mark:** And especially when the motivation for like things like Columbine comes out, or others where like they were, um, bullied or whatever, well then someone that *is* bullied and angry, now they, it's like there's someone out there that's said, "If you're feeling angry and bullied, this is an option you can take."

**Veronica:** This is what you can do now.

**Mark:** Yeah, and so like, yeah, there's still all those other options that they can go out and do, but now this option has been added on there. Uh, that's, that's one of the things where they media doesn't create it, the media doesn't tell people to go out and do it...

**Veronica:** No, no.

**Mark:** But, but it, putting it out there...

**Veronica:** Well, it empowers, it empowers.

**Mark:** Yeah. It, and yet it, it's a weird one. You can't hide knowledge totally, but also, sometimes putting things out there is dangerous too.

**Veronica:** Yeah. So, so hence I suppose, that could apply to why dad just...

**Mark:** Left out certain things.

**Veronica:** ...let certain things be.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Because...I mean, I, I do believe there is a...part, of this that he just, uh, perhaps did not want to deal with. And therefore, he would, knowing him as I did, he wouldn't want to inflict...

**Mark:** Mmm hmmm.

**Veronica:** ...uh, dealing with it, upon anybody else.

**Mark:** And I guess it also come back to like the purpose for writing the book, and all.

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** Now did he ever, um, like I know he pretty much said what his purpose was in the book, along the way, but did he ever, like, just kind of explicitly tell you what the purpose he was writing the book for was?

**Veronica:** Yeah, and that was...

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** ...he wanted to make people, young people aware...

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** ...of, the atrocities, the tragedy, and the uselessness...

**Mark:** Okay.

**Veronica:** ...of, of war. Um...and, because you're, you're, you're younger, by a year or two, that I am.  
(chuckles)

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** Why, um...why would anyone of your age, or Matthew's age, why would anyone, uh, feel that by going to war, by killing people, um, it would make them a better person, a hero? Is it, is it really promoted as that?

**Mark:** It's...not so much, but there was like in, uh, reading about, like, the history of soldier memoirs, you look at like um, war, like, from like late Medieval times through the Renaissance, um, soldiers went through some pretty horrific wars, and yet when they wrote memoirs, they did tend to be cast in a more positive light, and, what kind of, the feeling is that, um, it was because of...in...there was, there was specific academic wording to it, but basically, uh, your worth as a, as a man sometimes...



**Veronica:** Okay.

**Mark:** ...would be, uh, proven in the crucible of these horrible experiences.

**Veronica:** Mmm hmmm.

**Mark:** So although it's horrible, you've been kind of raised to see that by, enduring these horrible experiences you now have um, become, um, *more* by going through this experience, uh...

**Veronica:** So it's almost tribal, in that uh, in certain tribes, a man has to go out and, do something, violent...

**Mark:** Some, quest.

**Veronica:** ...and uh, maybe kill a, a wild boar, say, and bring it back.

**Mark:** Right, or like ideas like, um, well in that movie *Starship Troopers* or in some ancient societies even, where, um, you could be part of the society without, let's say, serving in the military, but you weren't a true *citizen*, unless you put yourself on the line. You might not necessarily have had to kill anyone—that wasn't a part necessary to be a full-blooded citizen of the country—but by going out there and...and putting your life on the line and being willing to go out there...

**Veronica:** Mmm hmmm.

**Mark:** ...you've now proven your commitment to the uh, society.

**Veronica:** So, similar to gangs' initiation.

**Mark:** Yep, sometimes. And also, I think another thing is that our, um, why someone in our society might feel that it, the, the urge to go to war, or whatever, is that our...our societies are very safe. Like even in the more dangerous parts of, um, let's say an inner city of, uh, the most dangerous inner city...let's say Chicago's inner city, where they've had like let's say 1000 murders or something in a year, tops. But still, you could live there and be...

**Veronica:** Oh, yeah.

**Mark:** ...pretty good odds that you're not dying. It's pretty safe to walk down the street, for the most part, even in the worst parts. And that's in the worst parts; in the normal parts, our, our...

**Veronica:** Much, yeah, much better.

**Mark:** ...society's pretty safe. And it's kind of been seen as the, at times, as the ultimate adventure, um, just because of the uncertainty. I mean, it is a very uncertain experience.

**Veronica:** Oh I'm sure.

**Mark:** Um, and...

**Veronica:** But what is the draw?

**Mark:** I think that it's a thing to, to prove that, well I mean...

**Veronica:** Just, just proving?

**Mark:** Yeah, well, if it's the ultimate danger, then proving, by facing the ultimate danger you've...proven your, sometimes it's proving your worth to yourself; just that you're willing to deal with that danger. Like if someone has a, like skydiving; I mean, skydiving is a fun one...

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Mark:** ...which like has the nice, uh, view as you're going down, but there's...

**Veronica:** But there are dangers associated with it.

**Mark:** Right.

## **Vita Auctoris**

Mark Sewell was born in Sarnia in 1976. He graduated from the University of Windsor in 2011 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history. He returned to the University of Windsor in 2015 to pursue a Master of Arts degree in history, with the major research paper centered on his grandfather's memoir written about his experience during the Dieppe Raid, and as a prisoner of war.