

Letters from the front line keeps soldier's legacy alive

Kelly Roche, Ottawa Sun - August 4, 2014



L/Cpl. Syd Hampson from the 10th Battalion is seen here near the beginning of the First World War, likely 1915. His legacy is living on through his letters from the front line.

HAMPSON FAMILY PHOTO Ottawa Sun/QMI Agency

L/Cpl. Syd Hampson's legacy is living on through his letters from the front line.

Transcribed by grandson, Ottawa Police Staff Sgt. Brad Hampson, the family shared their collection with the Sun.

Hampson referred to the Germans as Fritz. Here are snippets from 1914 to 1919:

"I was chopping some wood for the fire when a squadron of 27 allied planes flew over our lines. The Germans started to shell them and pieces of shells were falling all around us."

"I was holding the signal wire and my mate was sitting in front of me when he was hit. He fell back and would have rolled down the bank into the creek but I just managed to catch hold of one of his legs. There I was hanging on to him until "Old Fritz" stopped his machine gun, then I pulled him up and sat him against the tree while I went for help crawling on my hands and knees through our barbed wire for 80 yards until I reached the trench and got the stretcher bearer and one of the corporals and they took him back. The best of it was that they left me out there all on my own for 30 minutes and believe me, I sure kept my eyes open for "Fritz". Oh well, it's all in the game."

"Fritz has been bombarding us with a new kind of a shell this last three days. It looks just like a length of stove pipe coming through the air... We call them sausages. If you are within 20 yards of one when it explodes it will send you bugs."

"I put my ear to the ground and could hear somebody tapping...it was Fritz putting a mine under us."