

22 Aug 2003
928 Muskoka Ave
Ottawa, ON, K2A 3H9

Dear Richard:

No, I'm not dead [yet], just qualifying as a master procrastinator & working on my ingrate status.

When your package arrived with all the web site printout & the copy of the book on the Tyneside Irish, I didn't know how to thank you properly. All you asked for was for me to throw into the pot any reminiscences that George might hve dropped into my memory banks over the years. I thought the least I could do should be to try for any documentary evidence. That was not a smart move, since I am also a world class pack rat. Result: no letter on my part. The only real reason I can give [not an excuse], is that I find my job as a caregiver for Eleanor takes more of my time and energy than I would have imagined. After all these years both avoiding & being barred from, the kitchen, in the interests of public safety, I am now learning to be associate cook.

First, then, my shame-faced thanks for your gift, & my unbounded admiration for the determinedly thorough job you have done on this project.

As to what I can throw into the pot, I doubt that I am not nearly as well informed as your father. He was always closer to George, partly because he had sense enough, unlike me, not to challenge George on strongly-held opinions, partly because his pursuit of the law fulfilled George's early desire to enter the profession. [I guess you know that he began studies with Harry's wife, Mary, he stood first in the law school exams when Harry stood second.

My father rarely talked about his WW I experiences, at least to me. He tried to join the militia [territorials?] when he was under age, I believe a big 14 or 16, but his mother ratted on him & got him thrown out. I think he tried again at the minimum age & got in. Van probably remembers better. I believe he enrolled at U of T [he had lived with Aunt Tot when my grandfather "remarried too soon" after Louise Estelle died & the family broke up. I hardly knew my grandfather LAUGHTON. I have dim recollections of his being at Grand Bend on rare occasions when I was there. He was on better terms with Uncle Clair because, I suppose, they were in the same business, & Uncle Fred was not as virulent in his rejection as Aunt Tot. I presume father was in the CURC or equivalent at U of T, & I guess quit like Van in first year to go on active service. Perhaps it was wholly jocular, but, again subject to confirmation by Van, my recollection was that he said his Canadian unit would not be trained to overseas standards for something like 6 months, that he deserted, talked his way on board a ship over the pond, & wangled a commission in the British army, with a short period of training at an Oxford college. I think my best way of telling you this story is to print out a part of a draft family history - certainly not complete biography of my father, just a bit to give a flavour, & subject to revision. Van hasn't seen it. There are all sorts of stories I should include, like my mother losing her wedding ring, I think on the honeymoon, & father fixing her up ^{with} a quick & dirty substitute, a kid's ring from a box of Cracker Jack [caramel-coated popcorn.]

Despite Eleanor's problems, we are still signed up for a cruise of the UK & Western Europe on Sept. 5th. Perhaps some day I will emerge from my fog & do better. In the meantime, I beg your forgiveness for my tardy thanks.

Regards,

Uncle Paul

no licences yet, also no service stations; acetylen lamps;

In the period leading up to WW I, George drove Tot's car when he was only 12. He & other boys in Parkhill of an age read BP's pamphlets as they came out, founded a Boy Scout troop & persuaded the local dentist to come on board as their Scoutmaster. George tried to enlist in the Territorials but was caught as underage & turfed out. He began studying law at U of Toronto & with Mary, but joined the COTC in his first year (1915) at U of T. It was taking too long for the Canadian contingent to train for overseas, so he said he deserted, wangled a berth on a transport to England, took a commission through a short course held at Magdalen College, Oxford [invited to play "rugby", misconstrued the nature of the game, tackled someone & broke his collarbone], was posted to the 5th of the line, the 26th Northumberland Fusiliers, based in Newcastle. To his dismay he discovered that the troops spoke incomprehensible Geordie. Fortunately the sergeant also spoke English. British officers wore distinctive uniforms with Sam Brown belts, sidearms & peak caps even on the battlefield, so were sitting ducks for German snipers. As a result of this lottery, George was several times acting lieutenant-colonel commanding the battalion, although his substantive rank never changed beyond lieutenant throughout the war. He rarely talked about his experiences; the only story I recall was about German heavy machine guns, which were set to sweep back & forth just over the Allied trench parapets; on one occasion he was standing beside another chap viewing no-man's land when the sweep came up, turned around at the other chap & cut him in two. George was awarded the Military Cross at 19 for single-handedly capturing a German machine nest that was holding up his battalion's advance at Vimy. He went through much of the trench warfare, such as the Somme & Vimy, was sitting on a log by a ruined house at Passchendaele with his old friend, the sergeant, when the latter was hit by a shell & GVL buried in the crater for several days, sent back to Blighty [England] to be put back together, sent back to Canada to die, helped train recruits for a campaign with the White Russians near Vladivostok against the Bolsheviks (including Ken Brown's father), was invalided out with a warning to take it easy & he might live a couple of years. He met Beth as an occupational physiotherapist & later induced Dave Wilson to reintroduce them in Parkhill. Fred & Harry recommended Osgoode, but he hired on as the second staffer for the Department of Soldiers Civilian Reestablishment [later the Department of Veterans Affairs] for a couple of years until the convalescent hospitals were running across the country [mostly TB], then to Maclean's, later Maclean-Hunter. In Oct. 1919 he gave 2 temperance sermons, at College St. Presb'n Church & at a Baptist church. In 1925 he was a presb'n commissioner at Jarvis St. when the Methodist, Congregational, Four-Square & 2/3 of the Presb'ns joined to form the United Church. He became a mainstay of St. George's UC while at 254 Glenview, but finally burned out & dropped all church administrative duties. In WW II he applied

possibly switched to rifle, std carrier uniform & peak caps (or tin hat, of course)

usher at over wedding. Dr Brown became a Dist. Pref. at U of T

chiefly TB, the main killer of Gen troops

chair of Board of Trustees, etc

to enlist & faced at his medical review board the chair of the earlier board who had told him he had 2 years to live! The man remembered him & exclaimed, "What are you doing here, Laughton? You've been dead for 25 years!" He was accepted as a captain in the U of T COTC. I didn't know about this & shortly after, while marching along Bloor St. by myself in my COTC private's uniform, saw this tough-looking captain coming toward me, saluted (smartly, of course), & nearly fell off the sidewalk when I realized I had just saluted my own father. (When Paul tried to go on active service in 3rd yr Hon Chem, George pulled a lot of strings to get around the requirement that scientific students complete their degrees & go into defence research, including General Pearkes who had been put up by George & Beth for a while when he fell on hard times after WW I.)

George was Circulation Manager for Maclean's, then Circulation Director for the company. My childhood was filled with books & magazines, including British & US publications that were distributed by MacLean's, such as the Boys' Own Annual, Irving Berlin's music sheets, and all sorts of US magazines such as "Flying Aces" & "Down Beat". I worked a few times at the Maclean-Hunter plant on University Ave, e.g. handling notifications of Christmas gift subscriptions, or returning unsold copies of "Down Beat" for rebate after tearing off the covers. George also was a founder of the Canadian Circulation Audit Board & long-time member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation, president still at his death even after retirement in 1964. He was instrumental in establishing a much-needed industry code of ethics for door-to-door salesmen. He was a long-time member of the Military Club, resigning when a Jewish officer friend was blackballed for membership. George did not take kindly to being crossed. Van had sense enough not to argue with him more than very briefly; Paul did not, stuck to his guns & was subjected to a number of red-faced yelling matches over the years.

At our cottage on Snake Island in L. Simcoe he had a convulsion & went unconscious & clammy one weekend. I had to row to the mainland for help, but he was conscious when I returned. The problem was not properly diagnosed at the time, but much later a arterial aneurysm was detected in his brain, probably an aftermath of the WW I injury. He and Beth were living in London by then, & Van & I were summoned to vote on the risky operation. Since no operation meant a limited life & sudden death without warning, we voted "Yes." He had the operation, it was a success, but he died instantly on June 11th 1966 of a blood clot that probably formed in his leg lying in the hospital bed. He is buried with Beth in the soldier's plot at Exeter.

rlaughton@censol.ca

From: rlaughton@censol.ca
Sent: April 11, 2004 10:50 AM
To: rlaughton@censol.ca
Subject: FW: message from pml [CLEAN COPY]

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged



pml_genea_c ATT00069.tx
ent_20040406 t

-----Original Message-----

From: David Laughton [mailto:David.Laughton@ualberta.ca]
Sent: April 10, 2004 8:35 PM
To: rlaughton@censol.ca
Cc: Laughton.MaryFrances@ic.gc.ca; laughton@crc.ca
Subject: message from pml

Subject: Laughton/MacDonell genealogy

6 Apr 2004

Mary Frances & David have been keeping me up-to-date on the E-mails flying about, so I have concluded I should stick my oar in too.

First, the clan as they joined the British troops for the American Rebellion all were signed on as McDonell & mustered out as MacDonell. In the 1700's they were Gaelic speakers & couldn't care less which way it was spelled by the Sassenachs. The young gentlemen were, however, often fairly well educated, many of them at the Scottish College in Valladolid, Spain. My mother, Mary Elizabeth, was baptized "McD" but I got "MacD".

As a general comment, the bits & pieces I have assembled are loaded with inconsistencies & contradictions. George Van Wyck's siblings are a case in point. I have all sorts of paper trails, the family tombstone in Walkerton, & several funeral cards. Fred, Harry, St. Clair [known as Clair] & Louise [known as "Tot" for reasons no one seemed to remember] Van Wyck you all know. The others were: two John's, both dying in infancy, one 2 Oct 1881 at 1 month & 15 days, the other in 1898; I also have a note of another dying at 6, but no other trace! Paul, the one who drowned at Grand Bend off the pier, was 1887 to 1 July 1899, age 12; Edna, who died of scarlet fever, was 1894 to 1894 according to the tombstone, "died April 24, 1894, aged 2 years" according to her funeral card; Bessie was 7 Nov 1898 to 26 Dec 1905, so GVL knew her well.

Richard asks for more on the Laughton brothers. He has covered GVL's military career very thoroughly. GVL joined the territorials [militia] when he was 14, but his mother ratted on him & he was tossed out as under age* GVL moved to Toronto with Tot after his mother died & his father "remarried too soon" in Tot's very strong opinion, stayed with the HVL's to finish HS [Harbord, I think], began to article with Mary as he began his law studies at U of T before going from the equivalent of the COTC into Active Service in WW I in his freshman year. I have a dim recollection that GVL met Both at the military hospital in Saskatoon when he was the second person hired for the DSCR [Department of Soldiers' Civilian Reestablishment = DVA] with the job of setting up TB hospitals for the returning troops. TB killed more allies than the Germans. When he was mustered out after a medical board, he was told by the Colonel chairman of the board he might live a couple of

years if he took it easy - easy was getting married & the DSCR! The same colonel chaired his board on his reenlistment in WW II & exclaimed, "Laughton, what are you doing here, you've been dead for 25 years!" He joined MacLean's, later Maclean-Hunter, after his stint with DSCR & as Circulation Manager, later Director, he became the leading Canadian figure in that field. He founded the Canadian wing of the Periodical Press Association, which set ethical standards for the business, & was its President for life, even after his retirement. You presumably know lots more about him.

Fred was one of my & Eleanor's favourite people, kind, a great sense of humour, & a real charmer. Fred took over the store when his mother died & his father left the business to become a drummer. He was town clerk of Parkhill for over 40 years as well as parliamentary assistant as an MLA to the Minister of Highways. [There is a Laughton township somewhere in the north, Kenora county, i think. I loved to go campaigning with him as a kid because of the number of different pies at the strawberry socials. I have his statue of Sir John A., whose hand he had once shaken. Myra, whose HS Greek texts taught me to read Greek in Grade 8, was his bookkeeper, & I often spent Saturday evening till after midnight with her at the store. They had a typewriter on which I learned to type, unfortunately. It had 3 rows of keys instead of 4, 3 fonts on each key accessed by down as well as up shift. Numerals were upper shift on the top row. It is now in the Carlton U Journalism museum.

Bits about Harry are scattered through Mary & Tot. They lived quite close to us in north Toronto & we saw a lot of them* Clair we saw less of than the others, only occasionally at Grand Bend. He was a gravelly-voiced amiable sort. Clair was a drummer, like his father in later years, in his case for a pickle manufacturer. Like Fred & Myra, they had no children. They lived latterly in Royal Oak, Michigan. When he died & Eva moved to Grand Bend, Van voluntarily looked after a lot of her affairs, but got scant thanks for his pains.

Mary Jane Hutton wasn't anywhere near the first woman MD to graduate in Canada. That honour goes to Augusta Gullen, nee Stowe, a Vie student who got her degrees in 1883 through the Toronto School of Medicine. The next four graduated in 1884 were from Queen's, the first two from Trinity were in 1887. Mary Jane McDonell, nee Hutton, was from Trinity in 1890 at age 20! She kept up her medical society membership as long as I am aware, & therefore received all the ads for new drugs, which were kept in a rolltop desk downstairs where I was allowed to rummage. I also have several of her texts, including her Chemistry [1885; "Chromium is thought to be a metal. Its salts are used in tanning...Formic acid is prepared by distilling red ants"] & Gray's "Anatomy". When Eleanor visited Goldie in Hensall, where Goldie's father was bank manager, Molly [Mary Jane] was their Sunday School teacher! Word of Eleanor & me "going together" reached our parents by the Hensall conduit. Molly was a daughter of Dr. James Hutton of Denny, Stirlingshire, son of Capt Hutton, a commander who lost an arm at Trafalgar & was awarded an estate. James emigrated at 19 to Forest, Ont. He was a Vie grad, & as a telegrapher received the first news in Canada about the battle of Balaclava. Molly's sister Jemima [Aunt Mina] was a suffragette, a U of T grad, 1898, with a German MA.

I knew Mary's mother, the large Mrs Buckley, completely dominated by her tiny but redoubtable mother, Mrs Powell. I was at Mrs P's 90th birthday, where she debated the male Laughton siblings into the ground, announced she was going to see them again for her 100th & die, same result, did. Mary was a very sharp cookie, but brittle with everyone except Mary Frances. Harry was as easy-going as she was brittle, a strangely disparate pair. She & Harry joked that she stood first in their law studies, he came second. Their son, Barent Van Wyck [Cornelius Barentse VW was the one who emigrated from the Netherlands to New Amsterdam in 1660 & established the family farm in Flatbush, later home of the Brooklyn Dodgers] was a brilliant student & musician, but very sensitive & somewhat effeminate. He joined the RCAF in WW II, stripped naked in a hotel, left the windows open in the winter time

& froze to death. Earlier attempts to commit suicide failed. Harry developed a doctor-induced deadly phenobarbital addiction. I visited them on my way to a summer RCAF posting to find Harry had just died & waited with Mary for the police & a coroner because their GP was out of town & therefore unable to sign the death certificate.

On the advice of Fred & Harry, Tot went to Business College. Tot worshipped her mother & cut her father dead for the rest of his life. I have the love letters of John Hugh to Louella when he was struggling in Walkerton to make a life to which he could bring her. He wrote long loving letters about his work, his church & the youth groups he was helping. Her replies were single pages filled in a huge script with complaints that he was taking too long! Because of the rift, I rarely saw my grandfather, except a couple of times at Grand Bend when Tot wasn't there. I was quite surprised to read the glowing obituaries collected by Ivan Laughton in Nelson, BC, with encomia from the Gideons, the Travellers, school boards & other groups which he had helped. Tot worked for a bit at the Canadian Bank of Commerce [before the merger with Imperial], then as Harry's secretary when Harry was estate manager at National Trust [later senior VP]. She left to travel around the world with a friend, Aileen McDougall. They stopped in Vancouver to earn some money, & Tot worked as secretary for the Men's Credit Association, met Pearl Hopper at a Chautauqua Settlement House & became interested in welfare work. [Pearl's niece Liz was later one of Eleanor's college friends!] I have a letter to Tot at the Settlement from Harry advising her not to take all the cares of the world on her shoulders (written on 12 Dec 1920, the day of Van's christening - ^was proud of Van's perfect behaviour".) When she returned to TO, she took a certificate (1923) & diploma (1924) in social work, but got so involved with the girls in a home for wayward girls that she had to quit, & retired to Terra Cotta with a canning factory job, at Brampton if I remember correctly. Her Terra Cotta home had been a way station for drivers taking supplies to Niagara during the war of 1812. My mother said she was an occupational physiotherapist, A gal who was on the governing board of the physiotherapists visited Van & Maureen at Grand Bend, saw the pair of pictures of Beth & GVL in their WW I uniforms, & exclaimed "That's the original physiotherapy uniform; I've read about it but never seen it before." I don't know when the occupational & physio were separated. I have many unlabelled pictures of soldiers in what seems to be a hospital setting, some with Beth in them.

Beth stayed with Aunt Gretta Gauld in Clinton when she was going to HS there, as reported by much-awarded children's author, Jean Little, whom I knew as a baby. Gretta was Molly's first cousin. She & Rev. Gauld were medical missionaries in Formosa, now Taiwan. She taught me some Chinese phrases. Jean was blind at birth, improved somewhat, slowly worsened to using a computer with one letter filling the screen at a time, is now forced to use a computer with voice synthesizer.

Lots more where this came from - some of it may even possibly be true!

Paul MacDonell Laughton, 6 Apr 2004