

Jerry H.L.W. Flynn

It was morning on September 12, 1918 when a Waterloo mother received two pieces of mail – a letter from her son, a pilot fighting overseas in the Great War, and a telegram from the secretary of the Canadian Air Force.

One can only wonder which letter Mrs. Lilly Flynn opened first.



The letter from her 19-year-old son, Captain Jerry Flynn, was dated August 13 and he wrote of being in good health. The telegram from Ottawa told Mrs. Flynn that her son was reported missing on September 3.

The story of Jerry Flynn is but one story of the losses that Waterloo families suffered in the Great War between 1914 and 1918. Jerry Flynn was one of sixteen Waterloo soldiers who died.

On the day his mother received the telegram, the local newspaper wrote that Flynn, a student at Kitchener Collegiate Institute before signing up for the war effort in 1917, “enjoyed the distinction of being one of the youngest, if not the youngest captains in the British service.”

The article went on to detail Flynn’s distinguished record as one of the most “skilful aviators in the Royal Air Force. What was remarkable was that Flynn accomplished all of this at such a tender age, earning him the name, *Little Jerry*”.

“He had been in France since November 1917, and so proficient did he become that he was promoted successively from Flight Lieutenant to Lieutenant . . . Captain Flynn had at least ten enemy machines to his credit . . .”

The punchy news piece could not convey the despair that Mrs. Lilly Flynn must have felt that fall morning near the end of the First World War.

It would be much later that newsreaders in Waterloo would learn of the agony “Little Jerry’s” squadron would express the day he went tumbling down in flames after being shot by one of a dozen Fokkers.

In 1967, the *Waterloo Chronicle* published an account by Captain Bogart Rogers of the moment Flynn’s comrades learned the “pet of the squadron” had lost his life:

On that day the whole outfit blew up like a toy balloon. A kid named John Trussler, grabbed his champagne glass, hurled it the length of the mess, leaped to his feet and started a vivid impression of a lunatic . . . he swore and cursed and cried. He cursed God

and the Germans. He cursed the war and the army. He cursed his parents because he was born.

He told Little Jerry Flynn – who he knew was sitting in the room listening to him, who was sitting right there in that chair – that he didn't have to worry. They couldn't get away with it.

His comrades tried to stop his cursing and raving and finally pulled him down into a chair. He hid his head in his hands and sobbed horribly. Half of the others were sobbing. The rest were trying to quieten things down but feeling no better themselves.

The next day one of Little Jerry's friends, a soldier named Green, went on early morning patrol to even things up for Jerry by "knocking down a Hun in flames."

But later in the morning, (Green) collapsed – suddenly, unexpectedly and completely. His nerves snapped with the twang of a broken flying wire and they were forced to send him home for a long rest.

Flynn had been given the opportunity to take some leave shortly before he died. He had decided to wait, and keep fighting until he had secured enough leave time to come home to Waterloo for a visit.

*In memory of the Waterloo men killed in
active service during the Great War*

Lt. Wilfred R. Bauer
Pte. Henry Godfrey Bish
Capt. George Gilbert Bricker
Pte. Charles Innes Carthew
Capt. Frederick Gibson Colquhoun
Pte. Robert William Dyer
Pte. Roland English
L/C H. Clayton Fenner
L/C William C. Fleming
Capt. Jerry Flynn
Pte. Adam Henry Grosz
Driver Herman Samuel Grosz
Pte. Louis Peter Steckenreiter
Pte. Henry Treusch
Pte. Sheldon Uffelman
Pte. Bernard Woodward

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