Century-old military badge returned to son of WWI soldier



A Brentwood Bay man has commemorated the day with a long-lost piece of family history – a military badge found in a field in Northern France

CTV Vancouver Island
Published Wednesday, November 11, 2015 4:36PM PST
Last Updated Wednesday, November 11, 2015 6:35PM PST

A Vancouver Island senior has reconnected with his father's past thanks to the enterprising efforts of a man with a metal detector some 7,800 kilometres away.

Brentwood Bay resident Mike Morry said he never talked much to his father William Sweetland Morry, a soldier in the First World War, about his time overseas.

"I haven't thought of my dad as much as I probably should have because he died when I was only 15, so I hadn't thought of him for a long time," Morry said.



Mike Morry poses with a picture of his father, a soldier in the First World War, along with a military badge that was recently sent to him by a man who found it in northern France. Nov. 11, 2015. (CTV Vancouver Island)

PHOTOS

But a chance discovery near Hazebrouck, France changed that. Nicolas Groudefroye was searching a field near his home with a metal detector when he unearthed a weather-beaten war badge with the words "W.S. Morry" and "Canadian" embossed in it.
"I've found lots of Canadian and Australian badges from the Second World War," Groudefroye told CTV News. "When I found the name of the soldier, I was really happy and I wanted to give it back to the family, because I was happy to have found it but it doesn't belong to us."



A nearly 100-year-old military badge belonging to William Sweetland Morry is shown in Brentwood Bay, B.C., Nov. 11, 2015. (CTV Vancouver Island)

Groudefroye traced the badge back to a Victoria-based battalion called the 67 Royal Scots, who saw horrific action during the First World War as they fought trench-to-trench at the Somme and Vimy Ridge.

He said he believes the badge was lost when the soldier exited a train in the Hazebrouck area.

He was then able to track down the soldier's only living son, Morry, whom he mailed the heirloom to.

"Hello Mike. As I promised, here is the little name tag that your father lost while he was traveling around Hazebrouck during the First World War, almost 100 years ago," Groudefroye wrote in a letter sent with the badge. "If you should ever get to France or close to Hazebrouck it would give us great joy to visit with you and show you the region your father passed through."

Morry's first reaction was one of raw emotion. "When I opened it, first thing I did was cry," he said. "All of a sudden it was like he was right back in the room, and it was pretty overpowering."

Morry said he now feels reconnected to his father through the remarkable discovery.
"I can visualize him slinging something over his shoulder," Morry said. "This little badge would just pop off. It was only held on by a few rivets."

And it was all thanks to the kindness of a complete stranger.

"[Nicolas] must have felt something when he read [the badge]. This belonged to a real person and it's important that it make its way back to the family," Morry said, adding he would pay a visit to Groudefroye if he ever visits northern France.

The last known Canadian to fight in the Great War, which took place from 1914 to 1918, died in 2010, according to the federal government.

But for Morry, his father's war-time past is only just now coming to life.

With a report from CTV Vancouver Island's Scott Cunningham

http://vancouverisland.ctvnews.ca/century-old-military-badge-returned-to-son-of-wwi-soldier-1.2654381
Downloaded May 17, 2017