

Norman A. MacKenzie
May 3, 1974

Interview No. 507

Tape No. 1, Side No. 1

Mr. Specht: Dr. MacKenzie could you tell me what year you were born?

Dr. MacKenzie: I was born on the Fifth of January, 1894. Which makes me about eighty and one half years at present.

Mr. Specht: And that was in Nova Scotia?

Dr. MacKenzie: That was Pugwash, Cumberland County, Nova Scotia, though my people were all Pictou County people both my father's people and my mother's people were MacRaes. Pictou County was the town, the community, the harbour to which the highlanders first came in 1773.

Mr. Specht: And your family is from these original settlers?

Dr. MacKenzie: Yes. That's right.

Mr. Specht: What was your father's occupation?

Dr. MacKenzie: My father was a Presbyterian minister. That's how I happened to be born in Pugwash because he was a minister at the Presbyterian Church there. To my regret because its a lovely little seaside town. Incidentally that's where Cyrus Eaton was born, or near there. I was taken as a baby of one year old to a mining and iron smelting community, Londonderry Iron Mines, Colchester county. I lived there for some three years with my family, naturally, but the fumes from the smelters had a good deal of sulphur in them and my Mother tended to have asthma as a result. So we moved from there back to Pictou County to a little coal mining community, very primitive one, but the country

around it was lovely. It was called the Vale Colliery or Thorburn and I lived there as a boy with my brothers and sisters and chums, many of whom went into the mines from school at the age of thirteen and fourteen as trapper boys as they called them.

Mr. Specht: Trapper boys? What was that?

Dr. MacKenzie: Trapper boys were the boys who...as you know, the ventilation in the mines is a very important matter, and at intervals in the mines they had hinged doors that when the rakes, as they called them, loaded with the coal that was dug, were pulled through by pit-ponies, the boys would open the doors and after the rakes and the pony had gone through they would close the door again and control the ventilation. This had partly to do with insuring that some fresh air always got in to the mines and that in the event of a fire or explosion it would tend to confine it to a limited area. In any event, it was in this little coal mining town. Now I left Thorburn as a boy of twelve to go to Pictou Academy. I'd finished my high school entrance and my mother had died that spring. She was quite young, forty or forty-one and there were seven of us. The youngest was a baby of two months old. My father and my two older brothers went on a harvest excursion to western Canada supposedly so my brothers could earn some money and come back to college, university. As a matter of fact they never earned the money and they're both buried in Saskatchewan. They remained farming there until they retired. Now I, being on my own...

Mr. Specht: Were you the third oldest brother?

Dr. MacKenzie: I was the third oldest brother. At the age of twelve, I got on the little train that went from New Glasgow which was the nearest town of any size, to Pictou where Pictou Academy was located. Having arrived there I got myself a boarding place and went and interviewed the principal, Bobby McLennan, as we called him, Robert McLennan. A very fine typically Scottish teacher who taught Latin and Greek and French and German and chewed tobacco constantly and never spat!

Mr. Specht: Did any of your family remain in Pictou County?

Dr. MacKenzie: Yes, I have a sister who, after graduating from Mt. Allison University, and training as a Home Economics specialist in one of the hospitals in Rhode Island, came back to New Glasgow as the dietician in the Aberdeen Hospital there. In due course she married a very fine young man, a farmer who lived on the very top of Green Hill near where my father's people had settled and lived. He died quite young while he was visiting with her in California, some relatives there. So being a widow, she went back as a dietician and she retired quite recently. My youngest brother who was too young for the World War One, enlisted in the R.C.A.F. in World War II and was in service right up to sometime in '46 before he was discharged. He had some injuries and he lives with her in quite a comfortable home at a place called Alma on the outskirts of Westville, about six miles from New Glasgow, at the foot of Green Hill that I've been talking about. So I've just returned from visiting them this week. Among other things I was in Halifax because I'm still a member of the University Grants Committee of Nova Scotia and

have been for some ten years and I went back for the wind-up meeting about ten days ago.

Mr. Specht: Is Pictou Academy a private school?

Dr. MacKenzie: No. Its something after the fashion you'd expect from the Highlanders of the Scottish Academies. It wasn't a boarding school. I had to go find myself a place to board in one of the homes in the little town. It had at that time, a very distinguished reputation. It was certainly far and away the best high school or academy in the Maritime Provinces and we had people coming from as far away as Chile and the West Indies and so on. Its revenues were provided by the county and the town and occasionally in the early days, I think, by the provincial government. It had been hoped by Dr. Thomas McCullough, who founded it, that it would be a non-sectarian, free university, but the Family Compact in Nova Scotia was almost exclusively Anglican. They had founded a college at the University at Windsor, Nova Scotia in 1789, I believe it was.

Mr. Specht: That's fairly close by though isn't it?

Dr. MacKenzie: Well, in those days it was a couple of days journey. You had to go on horse-back. There were no roads and so on. In any event, they denied Thomas McCullough the privilege and the right to establish a college in Pictou so he had to be content with the Academy. He later became the first president of Dalhousie University in Halifax. He was a very distinguished man and a Presbyterian minister of course, in those days. As I say he did great things for education and for the free education in Nova Scotia. Anyway, I went to Pictou Academy and I was a

student there in the winter months for the three years. That would be 1906 to 1909. I came home to Thorburn where my father was still the Presbyterian minister, for the summer vacations. I did a bit of work in the hay fields with the farmers and whatever I could get.

Mr. Specht: Was Thorburn quite a close-knit community with a strong Scottish flavour?

Dr. MacKenzie: Very much so. As I said, it was very primitive. We had no water because the mines went under the town and drained off, I suppose, from the water table the water you would normally get if you dug a well. So I know in our own home which was more or less in the centre of the community, the Manse, we had three molasses barrels, great big punchions, in the cellar and we filled them up with rain water off the roof and had a little pump, had pump, up in the kitchen and used it to pump the water up. For drinking water there was a spring about three-quarters of a mile away from where we lived, in the woods and my dad fixed that up. He put in a small half barrel as a catch basin with a bit of a pipe for the run-off and we had to carry our water in buckets from that spring, or haul it in winter on a sleigh in a little barrel we had which had originally contained beer. We had salvaged it from the miners. But all the people in that community they were either Presbyterians or Roman Catholics, nobody else. There were a few families of Irish. I know some of my chums, we didn't have separate schools, we all went to school together, the Ryans and the Flynns, I remember

them quite well. They, as I say, were pals of mine. A number of them got killed overseas in World War One. Everybody else was a MacIntosh or a MacDonald or a MacNeil or a Cameron or what you will.

Mr. Specht: Was there much incentive for education though?

Dr. MacKenzie: Very little. As I say, most of the boys thought of going to work in the mines and they left school a little after grade eight and went in at the age of thirteen or fourteen and began their career as miners. Occasionally, as in my own case, my father a Presbyterian minister, he had had a university education and my mother had been sent as a girl along with her younger sister to Edinburgh, to the minister's daughter's college in Edinburgh. She went there for some seven years. So she was a very well educated young woman. The manager of the mine, I was talking in my office today to my secretary there and she said a distant relative of hers that she met over the weekend, was asking about me because I had been overseas with one of her nephews, Jimmy Maxwell. Now Jimmy Maxwell was the son of the manager of the mines and the MacIntoshes in that town were the managers of the mines in Thorburn and you probably will find their sons and daughters going on to high school and occasionally to the university, but most of them, as I say, went to work. Very few of my chums, my boyhood bhums, went on to college and university. Some of them went to Pictou Academy and some of them did go on to become doctors and lawyers, preachers and so on. More from the farms I think than from the coal mining towns did this.

Mr. Specht: Would you continue now from when you left Pictou?

Dr. MacKenzie: Yes. When I left Pictou I got on a harvesting train like my brothers and went out to earn some money. I didn't earn it. So after about four years there on the prairies, batching with my two older brothers, I was fourteen or fifteen when I went out, we did everything for ourselves. We made our own bread and our own butter, raised our own pigs, killed them, cured the bacon and so on, but it was very interesting as to why I stayed, but we weren't making any money.

Mr. Specht: You were hoping to make money on the wheat harvests?

Dr. MacKenzie: We hoped to make money working or however. They were hoping to make money on the wheat harvests or the few cattle runs or whatnot. But I had to make up my mind either to remain a farmer or to do what my family had always wanted all of us to do and go back to university. It looked as if I was the only one who was likely to do this. I, in the autumn of 1913, got on a train, second class or whatever you call it, I sat up all the way six days back from Regina to Halifax and entered Dalhousie as a freshman. I went back west again in the summer of 1914 to earn a little money and was there for four months. I came back in August just after the war had started and a little before the university opened so I got myself a job as a manual laborer helping to build a fox farm near where my father then lived. I was due there at seven, carrying my lunch, walked about two miles or so and I worked there until six or thereabouts in the evening and walked home again and I got for that the magnificent sum of 75¢ a day, not 75¢ an hour, 75¢ a day!

Mr. Specht: I would infer from the fact that your family went west, your brothers and yourself that it was pretty hard times in terms of making money?

Dr. MacKenzie: Well, it was practically impossible to make money in...

Mr. Specht: That was a pretty prosperous period in Canada's history wasn't it?

Dr. MacKenzie: At the time, but wages were very, very low. When I worked in the west in the harvest work for \$2.50 a day for a fourteen hour day that was good pay. Incidentally when I came back World War One had just broken out and we all became excited about this and we wanted to get in on it before it got over. You know, we thought it would be over in six months at least. So I enrolled in the OTC at Dalhousie...But my first association with this was when I was at Pictou Academy in the years 1908 and 1909. I enrolled in the Cadet Corps to train as a cadet instructor. Somewhere in my records I have a certificate that I was awarded as being qualified as a cadet instructor for the Cadet Corps of Canada. Then as I say, when I came back to Dalhousie in the autumn of 1914 the first thing I did was, after registering at the university, was to enroll in the Officer Training Corps.

Mr. Specht: Had Dalhousie had an officer training unit before the war?

Dr. MacKenzie: I don't think so. I wasn't aware of it. I'm pretty sure it hadn't. It became apparent that by the time you

finished your officer training course and got posted it would be two years maybe. This wasn't fast enough so I and my chums began to look around for something that ensured service more quickly. Some of them got into the cycle corps. They were only recruiting thirty-five in the Halifax area. I tried to get in, but I was too late. I did enroll in the Army Medical Corps and I decided being instructor there and whatnot was for the birds so, when Col. Ryan came along with authority to enroll recruits, young men for the Mounted Rifles, the Sixth Regiment Canadian Mounted Rifles, I and a lot of my chums from Dalhousie and a number of other university people from the University of New Brunswick and from Acadia and from Mt. Allison and St. Francis Xavier University, all the universities in the Maritimes at that time, we hurried to get enrolled in the Sixth Mounted Rifles. We were mobilized, my outfit, the squadron to which I belonged, early in February, in Halifax. We had done some training drill before that and we were sent to Amherst, a little manufacturing town in Cumberland County, where there were vacant car barns, that is factory buildings in which they had built railway cars and there we were installed in the dead of winter. Our bunks were three tiered wooden affairs with chicken netting and straw paliasses. We had been there a few weeks when the Twenty-second French Canadians, the Vingt-deux, the Royal French Canadians came in to occupy the same building. Incidentally the former Governor-General, George Vanier, was a young officer with the Twenty-second battalion at the time.

We had a very happy time with them. Got on with them famously. We were only divided by chicken wire netting and they had bands and they made music and so on and so forth. And we liked them very much. They turned out to be as we all know, one of the best regiments in the Canadian Corps. I think they had the highest casualties of any of the Canadian battalions or regiments. In part because they were cheerful and noisy and didn't have much regard for their own safety or anybody else's. When they were relieving another regiment in the front line they'd be noisy marching in and noisy after they got there so the Germans would shell them and this, plus the fact that they were excellent on attacks, shock-troops as the whole Canadian Corps was used pretty well throughout the war, resulted in very heavy casualties.

Mr. Specht: In Amherst, this would be the spring of 1915 then when you were taking your cavalry training?

Dr. MacKenzie: Yes.

Mr. Specht: Mounted Rifles - what kind of maneuvers would you take training in?

Dr. MacKenzie: We were in troops and squadrons and we did foot drill of course, and rifle drill and practicing. We never really got our horses even when we went to Valcartier and we were as I say foot sloggers. But the officers had horses and the machinegun section when it was formed also had horses and I transferred from the C Squadron to the machinegun section because it was alleged to be the suicide squad and I thought this romantic.

Mr. Specht: When did you transfer?

Dr. MacKenzie: In the spring of 1915. Before we went to Valcartier. A goodly number of my chums transferred. Incidentally, Arthur Rogers and his brother Norman, who became Minister of National Defence in World War II, and was killed in an air crash, were both troopers as we were called, in C Squadron of the Mounted Rifles. Later they became Signallers and they were sent back to Canada to get commissions in the Highland Brigade that was being organized, the Eighty-fifth and the Hundred and Eighty-fifth and the Hundred and Ninety-third and so on, and the rest of us stayed and sweated it out in the trenches. Now we were unsuited to working with infantry, because we were a different formation and we went to France in 1915, but by the end of that year, we were taken out of the trenches and re-organized. The Six Regiments of Mounted Rifles that had gone to France were re-organized as four infantry battalions, an infantry brigade, and my regiment the Sixth, was broken up and the machine gun section and "a" Squadron, I think it was, went to the Fourth Mounted Rifles, a Toronto outfit. Naturally we took a dim view of Toronto and everybody from Toronto. We tended to describe them as Timothy Eaton's counter jumpers. (Laughter) The others went to the Fifth Mounted who had come from the Eastern Townships.

Mr. Specht: Were you mixed up then with other...people from other Canadian recruiting centres or did you stay pretty well with the Nova Scotia...?

Dr. MacKenzie: Well we stayed in our Company as Nova Scotians, but we were mixed up with the...became part of this Toronto Regiment,

and our chums who were in the other squadrons they became part of the men who had been recruited in and about the Easter Townships.

Mr. Specht: I wonder if at that time the Toronto fellows, if they were different? Like they probably had a different accent didn't they?

Dr. MacKenzie: Oh yes a bit. We Maritimers always a little accent of our own and Toronto had a bit of an accent of its own. They were almost exclusively urban people and we were very largely small town, village, country people, apple-knockers and whatnot from the Anapolis Valley.

Mr. Specht: What was your first campaign in World War One?

Dr. MacKenzie: Well we went in at Plugstreet just at the left of Armentieres, in around , and we were there in the autumn of 1915 and when we were brought out and re-organized, we were sent into the Ypres Salient and one of the most serious battles in terms of the casualties to Canadian Regiments occurred on the Second of June, 1916, to the Fourth Canadian Mounted Rifles to which our machine gun section and "A" Squadron had been transferred.

Mr. Specht: They were at the tip of the salient?

Dr. MacKenzie: Yes. They went in on a bright, sunny, summer evening up to strength or over from their routine 800 and 1000 officers and men and the General of the Division, General Mercer and his staff and Brigadiers, came in in the morning to inspect the trenches and while they were in, the Germans put on a minor offensive to hold the British troops in that area and not allow

them to move south to help the French with an offensive they were carrying out. The Germans, as I say, put a barrage down behind the area of the salient where the Fourth Mounted were. I think the Princess Pats were involved in the same bombardment. And they battered the trenches which weren't up to much because the water level was near the surface in the salient. The trenches were mainly sandbag buttresses.

Mr. Specht: Is that as protective as a deeper hole would be?

Dr. MacKenzie: Oh no! It was nothing like as protective. And then as if not satisfied with that they blew mines under you with the result that the first count of survivors of the Fourth Mounted from that was 49. Later on some stragglers turned up and brought the total up to just over 70.

Mr. Specht: Where were you at this time?

Dr. MacKenzie: I was, fortunately, on the sub-staff so called, of the Third Divisional Headquarters, General Mercer. He, as I say, had gone in and was killed, the Brigadiers were killed and the Colonels were killed, everybody. But, anyway, I was out of the line at that time serving with the sub-staff and this no doubt is the explanation why I survived that particular occasion.

Mr. Specht: What was your rank serving with the sub-staff?

Dr. MacKenzie: I was a trooper.

Mr. Specht: What were your duties as trooper?

Dr. MacKenzie: I was, because having been a westerner in a sense and having been with the Mounted Rifle Regiment and, I suppose, that we were in the Machine Gun Section, had our machine guns which were hauled in limbers, four horse limbers, and I was on the lead of one four horse hitch with a youngster, Tommy MacDonald.

End of Side One, Tape One.

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Interview No. 507

Tape No. 1, Side No. 2

Dr. MacKenzie: Tommy MacDonald, as I say, he couldn't have been more than seventeen or eighteen. He was the pole-driver and we carried on in this fashion. When the regiment was broken up and reorganized, I and three other of my chums were sent to the sub-staff of the Third Division to do the same kind of work with the transport, hauling supplies and so on and so on. Tommy MacDonald, my pole-driver, he went back into the trenches and became a prisoner of war. He served as a prisoner to the end of the war and I had lunch with him in Halifax last week. He survived and he's not too well, has got a bit of a heart condition, but he's one of the few of my chums that survived. I've got three others in this community here, two of them out in White Rock and one up in Haney. We are going to have a celebration one day if we can get all together.

Mr. Specht: After the pre-salient affair what did you do?

Dr. MacKenzie: After that we went down to the Somme and I was still serving in somewhat the same capacity with horses, hauling supplies and that out. I was there on the fifteenth or sixteenth of September when the first tanks moved into action and a bombardment of the German trenches took place preceding the attack at that time. As you know the Somme was one of the bloodiest affairs in history. It began on the First of July. I think there were 50,000 British soldiers killed on that one day and they had upwards of 350,000 casualties in that affair.

In any event, I was away up front with...

a team of horses and to this day I don't know whether it was a German shell or one of our own premature shells, anyway my horse as we say, got shot under me. He was quite seriously wounded. I took refuge in a shell hole still hanging on tho his reins until things quieted down a bit. Then I led him back and he was turned in to the Veterinary Corps there, the hospital for horses I suppose.

Mr. Specht: You were working on supplies?

Dr. MacKenzie: Yes. I saw him no more. After Somme wound up as far as the Canadians were concerned, we moved up to the Arras front in preparation for the Vimy operation.

Mr. Specht: What action did you experience at Vimy?

Dr. MacKenzie: Well again, I was one of the lucky ones. I went through the salient and the Somme and then the Arras front and the winter weather in France is just as wet as it is in Vancouver in the winter. It rained or snowed or froze or what you will all the time. And this was the very beginning of the flu epidemics and I was running a temperature and feeling miserable so I went on sick parade and the doctor took me off duty for that day and an hour or two later I got word that I had seven days leave to go to England and I immediately sent one of my chums to the doctor to tell him I was feeling better because I wanted to get my leave. However, he "smelled a rat" and he came round to the hut or quarters or whatever it was where we were existing and had a look at me and he sent me off to what was more or less the equivalent of the front line casualty clearing station and there I spent the rest of the day and that night again on one of these

wooden frame beds with old chicken wire matting and a palliass and I remember that during the night I drank a whole petrol tin full of water. That's what we used to conserve water in, and I drank a whole one of them. So when they came round in the morning I was obviously running a very good temperature so they sent me back to another hospital unit this time manned by nurses, which pleased me greatly. They were the first attractive looking girls I had seen in years, and the first white sheets and so on. They took my temperature and put up the chart and after that I picked it off the foot of the bed and had a look at it. I was running a temperature of somewhere between 104° and 105° and this developed into pneumonia and there were no anti-biotics in those days and pneumonia was a killer. After eight or nine days there was the crisis and you either came out of it or you died. But I remember vividly the morning, early in the morning when the nurse came round to take my temperature and it was a little below normal from 104° , 105° and she thought I was going to pass out and so proceeded to feed me hot stout. Well I thoroughly appreciated hot stout. In any event I had passed the crisis and was on the mend and in due course they sent me back to one of the base hospitals at Etaples. When I was in condition to be moved from there they put me on a hospital ship, the Australian hospital ship, Warhilda, which was later submarined, torpedoed and sunk by the Germans' submarines and I spent Christmas Day, 1916, in a bed on the Australian hospital ship the Warhilda. We were landed at Southampton the morning of the 26th.

We were lying on stretchers along the dock there and they very kindly came round to us and they said "Now we'd like to send you to some hospital in an area where you know people or where you would be happy and comfortable. Where would you like to go?" Well, I said I have some relatives of my mothers, MacRaes in Aberdeen, I would be very happy to be sent to Aberdeen. Well they said, "Sometimes we can't send you to the place you...the first place you want. What would be your second choice?" I said in that case I would like to be sent somewhere in the London area because a Mrs. MacDonald who's a friend of mine and of my Australian family, is the head of the Red Cross in that area, and I'm sure she would look after me. And they said, "Fine." So they put me on a hospital train stretcher and all and I arrived late that evening, about half-way between London and Aberdeen in Manchester, in the damndest fog I think I've ever seen and the ambulance in which we were transported from the train to the hospital we were going to, which was in Stockport, would get up on the sidewalk and on the tram-lines and so on. And I felt, in some ways, I was in greater danger there than I had been in the trenches. (Laughter) In any event, we landed up in a former insane asylum in Stockport, in great long wards, with mainly the casualties from the Somme. I remember one chap who was a Scottie from one of the Highland regiments, who had been wounded on the First of July, badly wounded and lay there for three days, I think, before they picked him up. The result was his wound had gone bad and he had gangrene and what not and I think he had recently undergone, while I was there, his third amputation of his leg and they were practically up to the hip joint at the time.

He was still very cheerful and as far as I know survived. I was moved out of that after a couple of weeks or so, to a school building that they took over in North Reddich, on the outskirts of Manchester. And there I was in with five other chaps in the room that had been the teachers' lounge. This was very cushy, very pleasant. The only drawback was one of these guys was an epileptic and sometimes he would get the fits in the middle of the night and disturb us.

Mr. Specht: Did you miss most of the Vimy Ridge because you were in England?

Dr. MacKenzie: Yes. Because I was a casualty in England.

Mr. Specht: For several months.

Dr. MacKenzie: That's when I went to the 185th.

Mr. Specht: You were down with the flu though, not really injuries.

Dr. MacKenzie: Flu and pneumonia, which as I say, killed more than the Germans did in the whole of 1918.

Mr. Specht: When did you return to France then?

Dr. MacKenzie: I returned to France the end of 1917, beginning of 1918. I transferred at my own request and went first with the 185th Cape Breton Highlanders. I was with them at Whitley Camp in Southern England and when that regiment and their division was broken up I went first to the 17th Reserve which was the Nova Scotia Highland Regiment Reserve in Braniskott and from there, at my own request, I was shipped out, still a private after all these adventures and years, to the 85th Nova Scotia Highlanders. They had been through Vimy and in Paschendale, they were, I think the batallion or the regiment that actually cap-

tured the village or town of Paschendale. I know one of my intimate chums, later a missionary in the West Indies, George Martin, got a M.C. there. He told me that that morning they not only moved into Paschendale but he and a couple of others had gone right through the village out into 'no-man's' land beyond it, but as there didn't seem to be anybody backing them up and as the regiment had had very heavy casualties, hundreds of them killed and wounded, he had gone back to the village itself, which they held.

Mr. Specht: So it actually was a break-through clear through the lines then at that village? But they didn't have the force to follow up effectively?

Dr. MacKenzie: That and the condition of the terrain. Just beyond belief. The wounded fell into the shell holes and drowned in the mud and water there and the only way you could move was on these duck board pads. And, of course, the Germans shelled hell out of the duck board pads. Killed and wounded as many of those as they possibly could. There was no other way to get in and out.

Mr. Specht: What action did you see in 1918?

Dr. MacKenzie: In 1918 we were in front of Arras and I remember being a little uneasy. By that time I did most everything and anything there was to do in that batallion or regiment. At that particular moment I was a scout or a sniper. As a scout I was sent out on a small patrol into the little ruins, the little town of Fampoux just left of the Sensee Canal, it ran along there and a bit to the north of Arras, the foot of Vimy Ridge and we did a number of raids and patrols, expeditions of that kind. We blacked our faces. We left all our identification, marks and whatnot

and, I put eleven rounds in my Lee Enfield, that's ten in the magazine and one in the barrel, a couple of bombs in my pockets and a dagger that I pinched off a German prisoner and we crawled around there. We didn't see much or do much. Although, another patrol to the left of us got into trouble and the officer in charge, a young chap who had just come in from Halifax and Dalhousie, Cyril Evans, I think his name was, he was seriously wounded and Col. Ralston, who was our Colonel and didn't know the name of fear, contrary to regulations went out himself and brought him back. Unfortunately Evans died of his wounds a few days later. Ralston was recommended I believe, two or three times for the V.C. He wasn't awarded this, as I say most of the things that he did were contrary to policy. In any event, when I came back we were then existing in a deep German dugout that we captured from the Germans earlier and I was relating to my chums there what we had seen and so on and so forth and busily unloading my rifle. The proper drill is pull the bolt back and forth several times to be sure it is empty then you pull the trigger. I'd forgotten about the round in the barrel of my rifle and I nearly blew my foot off. Actually instructors pointed the rifle at the ground. My chums were very annoyed with me that I hadn't either wounded myself or wounded one of them so that they could be sent back to a comfortable future in England. Well then after that we were moved with the maximum security in order to obtain surprise if possible down to the Amiens Front. And on the Eighth of August, by this time as I say, I had become a scout...

Mr. Specht: Was this scouting for intelligence information?

Dr. MacKenzie: Oh yes, that and also, out in front of the regiment as you advanced. I had a chum, George Talbot, we called him Fatty Talbot, he and I were the two scouts of our company and when we went over in the early morning on the Eighth of August which you know later became the 'Black Day' of the German Army. It was the first major defeat that they had had. We were away out in front this foggy, dark morning and we leap-frogged with another regiment, one of the other divisions and I remember when the sun came up we were out in a wheat field where our main objective was more or less situated and there we sat in the sun having suffered very few casualties and we watched away off on the left, our left, we were on a bit of high ground, the cavalry forming up and coming down in columns and advancing in line and disappearing along with the tanks ahead of us. It was the only time in the war I ever saw cavalry actually going into action. I understand that they caught hell from machine guns whenever they got within range of what was left of the German defences. Our regiment, as I say, had achieved our objective with very little loss.

Mr. Specht: Did you capture a position?

Dr. MacKenzie: Oh yes. The next day we moved over to the left where the Australians were holding the line and we advanced again that day into the old German trenches. I remember I again was leading the van as a scout and I think it was lucky for me that I was because the German machine gunners sighted in on us and I could see the bullets hitting the ground at my feet. I don't think I ever ran as fast in my life or did as long a

broad jump into a trench that was on the far side of a road that ran through there. A German trench. The four chaps who attempted to come after me, they were all casualties. As I say, sometimes it pays to be out in front. Less flack from anybody.

Mr. Specht: How did you get your Military Medals?

Dr. MacKenzie: I got the first one there on this kind of operation. I was one of the survivors. I had charge of a group of them in trenches there which we held and consolidated and then we were pulled out and sent back to the Arras front where we were sent through to Mount Dury. That was a very uncomfortable operation, because we were exposed to shellfire and gas during the day and the next morning we were to advance up through the German barrage, which lined at Mt. Dury. Again I found myself in command of the platoon and we spent the night in what had been a German engineering dump. It was quite an exciting experience because we were in among the Germans. I remember that in the morning we began to advance when the sun came up. One of our lads went to the entrance of a German dugout and made prisoners of about fifteen or twenty Germans that had been down there within fifty or a hundred yards of us. There were enough of them there to have eaten us. They were in shelter and we were up top. Well then we advanced across the open and I remember the mail had come up the night before. Somebody was carrying the mail bag which was a sandbag (some odd parcels and things in it) and again as I say, we were well out in front and one of our own shells fell short and landed right amongst us, between my legs. It was a dud. It

didn't go off. But we decided we were perhaps a little too far ahead so we got into a hole and began to look through the mail. There were some quite nice parcels in it and we decided that several of the chaps whose names were on the parcels were casualties. So we proceeded to divide up the...and then we advanced up to the top of the old Mt. Dury, and there we ran into very heavy machine gun fire and there was a stone windmill on the crest of it and I galloped as fast as I could out to that mill which was more or less the extreme of our objective and got in behind it. I could see and hear the machine guns, the German machine guns, and the bullets chipping the bricks of the windmill on both sides of me. But I was in the centre. The next day I had another look at it and they had put a shell through the top of it and dropped a mass of masonry right where I had been. Well anyway I saw the Germans coming up on both sides. I decided that I didn't want to be a prisoner and all alone, so I picked up my rifle and my bombs and beat it out of there hell for leather back to the German trench from which we had advanced. And as I got there I hit wires or something and fell into the trench and they thought I had had it and reported me dead, and this went back to Canada.

Mr. Specht: Were you knocked unconscious?

Dr. MacKenzie: No nothing. Ther Maj. Jackson who had been at Pictou Academy years before me and had served in the South African War, and had gone down to Texas as a Presbyterian Minister, and had come back to enlist in the Highland Brigade, he was in command of what was left of the regiment. He knew me and he knew my faterh. He said, "Well MacKenzie, how are you?"

And I said "I guess under the circumstances Im doing as well as can be expected." Well he says, "you know what's required?" I said, "Yes, I know I've got to go up and take that bloody windmill again." He said, "Yes, that's so." We got up and at that point, one of the things that happened, as you know, machine guns were mounted on swivels, played like a hose. This one played across and bang got the lad on my left and the lad on my right and missed me. So I went through to the windmill and for these activities I got a bar for my medal. Then we were pulled out again and sent in to cross the Canal du Nord and capture Bourlon, the town of Bourlon and Bourlon Wood and to go on as far as we could toward Cambrai.

Mr. Specht: This is in the final offenses of the war then?

Dr. MacKenzie: Yes. In due course we had had as usual heavy casualties and I found myself at that time I think I had the rapid promotion from a trooper to a private to a Lance Cpl. to a Corporal and Sgt. all in the matter of about a month, in command of what was left of the whole of "C" Company of 85, which was about 25. And we were holding a front which a batallion would normally hold and holding it mainly with machine guns. Because we had the, what was it, four, eight Lewis guns which a company normally has and we also had a couple of German machine guns that we had capture.

Mr. Specht: It seems like your activities around that windmill were a kind of series of skirmishes then with the front line German troops too?

Dr. MacKenzie: Yes. The Germans were holding against us, you see.

Mr. Specht: And by gaining the windmill position were you in a position to sort of threaten their flanks?

Dr. MacKenzie: Well that was our objective and then the regiment following us was to leapfrog us and go on and push the Germans back if they could to the Canal du Nord. And As I say, the machine gun fire was extremely heavy. I don't think I ever saw so many men killed so fast in such a short time. The ground was literally littered with men on both sides. So they more or less dug in and we dug in and held. During the night the Germans pulled out and went back across the canal and we moved up to occupy it and we were pulled out of the line sort of as reinforcements on the Bourslon Wood and Bourslon Town, to attack in another area.

Mr. Specht: Where were you when the war ended?

Dr. MacKenzie: I was in a village, amusingly enough, on the canal in front of Valenciennes. We had moved up through Dinant which was a magnificent occasion because we had our pipe bands and whatnot and we were the first troops to go through this town. The French inhabitants -- you can imagine how grateful and how thankful they were. We had a bandmaster, a rather sober old lad, they rushed out and filled up his [coronet with flowers and hugged and kissed all the rest of us].

End of Tape One, Side Two