

James Aaron Ross Jr.

Compiled by Judy Hansen
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James Aaron Ross Jr., Jimmy as they called him, was born November 8th 1919 just over the Montana, United States boarder in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada to James “Aaron” and Relva Eliza Booth Ross. Both his parents were United States Citizens, his mother being raised in Alpine, Utah and his father born in Joseph, Utah. When Aaron was eleven his father decided to move the Ross’s to Canada because there was more room for the stock so they could homestead. The Ross family was constantly between Utah and Canada. Jimmy’s mother had been a school teacher in Richfield, Utah and was teaching with Aaron’s sister Margaret. That is how his parents met. Aaron and Relva married July 10th 1918 in Provo, Utah and within months he took his new wife to Canada. Relva was very sick most of the time she was pregnant with Jimmy. She had to have a caesarian section and developed ‘milk leg’ after childbirth. She laid in the Lethbridge hospital for nine months. Eventually Aaron took her by train on an army cot to Salt Lake City where she had her right leg amputated. They only left eight inches of leg. When she returned to Canada, little Jimmy was 2 ½ years old. They homesteaded in Canada until Jimmy started school and then the family rented a farm in Raymond, Canada. Jimmy was an only child and he took care of his mother a lot while he was growing up.



The family moved back to Utah in 1935. Being a Stockman, his father was constantly back and forth between Canada and Utah. They lived at 943 S 12th E in Salt Lake City. Jimmy graduated High School at West High in Salt Lake City in 1937. His mother, being a school teacher always wanted him to advance in school but Jimmy always liked to keep himself busy with mechanics. His first year at West High he talked his mother into buying an old car which she did for \$10. He was going to “fix it so it would run.” After school, he would stay in the garage for hours fixing up his old car. His mother said that was the best \$10 she ever spent. In 1936 he went to work for Carlson Bros. As soon as school got out he would go and keep their show room clean. He wore white overalls and all he had to do was to dust the automobiles. He loved this job! His last year of high school he earned enough money to buy a \$25.00 car that took him back and forth to school through the whole winter.

In Oct 1940, Jimmy was driving a car on highway 91 near the Provo River Bridge and due to this accident he was taken to the hospital with a fracture of the right leg above the knee along with several cuts and bruises. He initially was taken to the Utah Valley Hospital in Provo, Utah but was transferred to a hospital in Salt Lake to be closer to his parents. His mother wrote in her

autobiography that Jimmy was 'in bed 14 weeks' because of this broken leg. Later, this injury effected some of his skills in the Canadian Army as he notes in a letter home.

After graduating High School, Jimmy went to work as a "hard rock" miner for Bristol Silver Mine Co. in Nevada. It was while he was mining near Pioche, Nevada he had to sign up as a non-declarant alien registered under U.S.A selective service. If you were working in the mines you didn't have to go to war but Jimmy watched as people kept leaving and told his mother he "couldn't stand it any longer." His father took a job at a defense plant at the beginning of the war and was living in Hanford, Washington. His mother went to American Fork, Utah and lived with Jimmy's grandmother at that time and was there from 1942 to 1951. Jimmy enlisted in the Canadian Army May 17, 1943 in Seattle, Washington.

Jim was in the Canadian Army Estates Branch Ottawa Ontario. His Regtl.number was K51355. He eventually was assigned as a Trooper in the 10th Arm'd Regiment. His mother noted what a great writer Jimmy was and he often wrote home during his time in the Canadian Army. We can get a feel of what his Army life was like through the following letters he wrote home. His mother printed these letters in her Autobiography:

Little Mountain Camp

Vancouver, B.C.

May 14, 1943

"Dear Mother,

Hello! How are you? Fine I hope. I am not so good, in my mind at least. I got turned down in the R.C.A.F. simply because I am too tall. I still can't see why $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch should make any difference but I guess its regulations. If I had known then what I know now I would have gone into the Marines long ago. I can't hardly make up my mind what to do. There is lots of good outfits but little room for advancement. If I can get in the right outfit I'll get a chance at officer's training school. There may still be a chance to get in the U.S. Army. Even if there is I don't know whether or not to take it. Monday I will have to make up my mind about what to do. I hate to miss the R.C.A.F. and my chances for U.S. citizenship too. One thing about this army is the fact the officers and men are close together.

I wish you could see Vancouver. You would really like it: A very beautiful city and one of the cleanest I have ever seen. The camp here is about 3 miles from town but the street car is only 2 blocks away. I'll have the run of the place till I get a uniform which will probably be Monday. Last night I was down at the docks and watched a passenger ship come in. It wasn't mine though. I am trying to make up my mind to go downtown tonight. It might cure the dumps. I had a very nice trip coming up. I wish you could have been along.

It's too bad you can't see the prices here. For breakfast this morning I had Ham and 2 eggs, potatoes, toast and coffee for 35 cents. For dinner roast beef, potatoes, vegetables, soup, pint milk, and pie for 50 cents. Not bad, huh. Labor's wages are only 10 cents an hour under Utah. Well, write soon or I may be gone. (Here it is Pte. Not Pvt.)

Love, Jim"

Camp Borden, Ontario, Aug 1943

". . . We left Vernon July 31st . . . The next morning we awoke very close to the B.C. - Alberta line. The beauty of the surrounding country is astonishing. I would like very much for you to

see it. What was seen of Jasper was lovely. There was a totem pole about 30 feet high near the station. It was awful - the correct meaning of the word - the colors are a work of native art to say nothing of the carving. The few hours through bush country to Edmondton showed me something I little expected. The country is rolling, similar to Cardston, but covered with small evergreens and quaking Aspen. I awoke on the prairies of Saskatchewan. These prairies have their typical beauty, different from Alberta, having a sparkling of trees everywhere . . . I did see some of the blackest and most fertile soil in Manitoba that I have seen anywhere. . . Most of Ontario is small mountains but with trees so thick I doubt if a deer could find his way. There is one forest with hardly a gap, except for the numerous lakes, over 1000 miles long. I am told that from an airplane Ontario looks like a great Lake filled with little islands. At last on Wednesday morning we reach the end of our journey here at Borden, right at the tip of Georgian Bay. The scenery is also lovely except for the sand . . . I can now tell you I have had an official recommend for officer training.”

Camp Borden, 7 Oct 1943

“. . . For the past 2 weeks I have been on wireless schemes. They are a lot of fun and one sees a lot of country. I graduated as a qualified wireless operator and am now entitled to 25 cents a day more as soon as I go to Trained Solders Regiment. I am wearing my ‘sparks’ to show my trade. . . You, by all means, should see the scenery around here. It is gorgeous without stretching it a bit, and you know that a remark like that coming from me means that it is just that. The country here is slightly rolling and pretty well covered with trees of almost every kind. The Maple is the most prominent with evergreens a close second. . . It being autumn right now there is more color than I have ever thought nature could produce. The Maple leaves alone range from a light tan through a bright red to a deep purple. I should get a few and send them to you. Put them in a book so I can frame them sometime; as I likely will not be in this country again at this time of the year. . . “

9 Oct 1943

“. . . If you can lay your hands on a late snapshot of Julie in a cute pose send it to me . . . Last week orders came out that there will be no more promotions of any kind on this side of the ocean. . . “

19 Oct 1943

“Dear Grandma: . . . I am to start my gunnery course a week from today and will be through my training this side of the water in six weeks time. Yesterday I drove a tank for the first time, a Ram; which is about the same size as the Sherman you hear so much about down there. It was more fun than a picnic and just about is easy. I almost wish that it was to be my steady work instead of wireless and gunnery. As a gunner, though, I will have the satisfaction of knowing it was me that brought down a certain Hun tank and that was the reason I joined. I will have just as much responsibility as I would have had in the Air Force if I had gone there. A tank and a plane cost about the same. I have had a little over a week on trucks. They made me instructor the second day and that is the most boring thing that ever happened to me. It so happened that every man under me had never driven as much as a passenger car before in his life . . . Here one gets used to a lot of action of some sort or another, and those long hours each day are very tiresome. Again, the more action one gets the more he wants, just like a habit forming drug. I can now see why so many World War one veterans turn to the action of crime. It wasn’t the criminal

tendencies at all but their love of action combined with the strife of the times. It's just like a tonic. A person won't pass up anything with action in it, especially a fight, without getting in the middle of it . . . I expect to be home on furlough in December. I will close now wishing you a very happy birthday, Love Jim"

Oct 31

"Dear Mother. . . About my trip to Toronto . . . The afternoon I spent in the museum. It is one of the largest on this continent. I could not begin to tell you everything there. I believe it would take two weeks to see, really see, it all. I spent most of my time looking over samples of mineral deposits collected the world over. You would deem them very dull and uninteresting; but to me they are like your genealogical books are to you. . . Sometime I must take you to see some minerals and explain what I can of them to you. . . The museum had everything else: Stuffed animals, skeletons a prehistoric animals, armor plate hundreds of years old from all over Europe, examples of the whole area of firearms, Egyptian mummies, Indian lore, Eskimo creations, and something you would really enjoy, some clothes of the Victorian era worn by some of the royalty. The hostess club had lunch, on the lower floor for us, and my three and one half hours there were very enjoyable . . . I will surely be glad to see how Julie is growing and acting up. I will be tickled to death with a picture of her . . . Don't let those war pictures bother you. I have seen some taken during actual battle into Tunisia and they are a long way from being as bad as the kind Hollywood dreams up. Last week I read an article by a woman who had lost a son in Africa just as Mrs. Snow lost Ham. You live right with her through the whole story as she tells us his likes and dislikes, his growing up, and obvious character. He was not afraid, none of us are. He went into it with an open mind and his mother evidently worried herself sick. His letters home were just as they should be but always have one hint in them. I am going to give you that same hint. It is every bit as important that we don't worry as it is you. We don't worry about battle, the future, or being killed. We worry about those who are worrying about us. If we know our parents, wives or whoever is left behind are not worrying, we won't. It is every bit as important that you be a good soldier at home in that way as it is for us to be good soldiers here and on the Battlefield. I wish every worrying parent could realize that. Now, be a good soldier. While looking through "Coronet" I ran across a letter from a Russian captain to his wife. It is beautifully, lovingly realistic. I am copying it here for what it might be worth

_____ 'I know that when I am dead, for you I will continue to live and that nobody will edge me away from your careful heart. But if it happens you meet a man as fine for your grief, whom you will love a little and as if a result of your love you have a new life and it is a son, then let him bear my name. Let him be my continuation though I am dead and your new friend is alive. This would not punish him, for not everybody must die, and if he cannot understand then leave him without sorrow and let it be not his but our son. And when a new Sevastopol is built, come here, and somewhere on the Chersonese, somewhere near the sea, plant poppies. They grow very well, and that will be my grave. It maybe you will make a mistake. Maybe it won't be me but another who lies there. It doesn't matter. Someone else will think of her own and plant flowers above me. Nobody will be left out, for we shall lie close and there will be no space to spare where we lie.'

This is copied with the same punctuation as the original. So aside from that what do you think of it? The gunnery is coming along fine. It is the easiest course I've had yet. Interesting, too. I like it much better than wireless. It is quite a bit different, however, than any gunnery I have studied up until now. You see, this is machine guns up to a small cannon. There is quite a difference. It

is the type of training that interests me. It is made so interesting and the theory which I already know makes it simpler. We have twenty-twos mounted to shoot by telescope from a moving tank. I am enclosing one of my targets. Do you think there is much room for improvement? Well I'll close for now and try to do some studying. Write soon. Love, Jim"

30 Nov. 1943

"... you asked about that little picture that I had taken in B.C. I want no picture of mine on display without my beret. A beret means more than wings do to a pilot. I've had another one taken, it is not finished yet but it isn't bad. The happy smile isn't there, but it shows my mind pretty well. That smile doesn't appear as often as it used to anyway."

#2 C.A.C.R.U. C.A.A.F.
Canadian Army Overseas
20 Mar 1944

"... We had a stiff recap on basic training with a few little additions and it kept us going night and day. Only about 10 percent passed all subjects. I was one of them and had "A" in all subjects but physical training. That leg I had broken kept me back in that. Today I started my regular course and it looks like a good one. I am studying the same thing I was in Canada but in an advanced form. I will likely be in this camp another 16 weeks ... The country over here is beautiful, all green and almost like spring, though the damp climate, similar to Seattle, makes it seem cold. In another month most of the trees will be in leaf and the country will be a mass of flowers. So they say. I think I will try to get down to Kew (is that how you spell it?) in lilac time to see if that good piece of poetic literature is really true. The country lanes we hear so much about back home are just like the stories and the picturesque little villages are just as quaint. I know you would thoroughly enjoy a visit here in peacetime. ... another historic place I look forward to seeing is Sherwood Forest. Just think of the thrill I'll get telling the kids I've been in Robin Hood's own cave. I hope I hear from you soon, as yet I have had absolutely no word whatsoever from anyone at home. Sometimes I think they are floating the mail over to us in a bottle. ..."

"B" Sqdn., 27th C.A.R.
Canadian Army Overseas
June 14, 1944

"The reason you have not heard from me for sometime is that I am in France and have been since shortly after the first wave. Naturally I am all right and not even scratched though I have had a bad scare or two. About all I can say is that I have been too close to the Germans for comfort ... I can say that the country is beautiful and you would like it very much, under different circumstances of course. Almost everywhere one looks there are flowers of some kind, usually poppies, red ones ... It is England all over again as far as climate and scenery are concerned. All the buildings I've seen, that is what is left of them, are very old and primitive. Their steeples and towers make lovely sniper and machine gun nest. You can't imagine a town like these. In a lot of places two cars cannot pass and the streets are as crooked as a dog's hind legs. I have not yet talked to any civilians and likely won't for some time, but it is very easy to see that they have been under the oppression of the Germans ... I have seen only a handful of

working people, men or women. I have had a chance to look at a few pieces of German manufacture and found them interesting... I guess it is no use to say don't worry."

21 June 1944

". . . two days ago some of us got to a farmhouse and got enough eggs for a taste along with a quart of milk and a quart of cider. There happened to be a French Canadian there to help with the talking or we wouldn't have been able to make ourselves understood. There were three or four families all in the one place and you should have seen the excitement when they and four or five French Canadians were trying to talk at the same time. Of course all of their hands were going and it was a real circus. We gave the kids some of the first candy they had seen in years and the grown folks the only good cigarettes they have ever had. They all seem glad to do anything possible to thank you. As one fellow passed cigarettes around the house all answered very politely, "Merci" until he got to an old lady of perhaps 80, who answered plainly "No, thank you." It gave me quite a buzz... "

"B" Sqdn. 10th Canadian Armoured
ICommand. (Fort Garry Horse Regt.
Canadian Army Overseas, B.W.E.F.
28 July 1944

"Dearest Pinky: . . .So you went to another broadcast, did you? Did I ever tell you about my trip to Buffalo, N.Y. and the broadcast I attended there? We had a grand time until the broadcast was over and the house full of young ladies spotted two distinguished looking Canadian uniforms, us. The girls flocked around us about 40 deep and we signed autographs until our wrists were stiff. A very exotic looking young lady took our pictures and we got in the papers the next day. Sorry, but I absolutely can say nothing of battles or engagements or whatever you want to call them. I have had my full share of them and two or three narrow escapes. Every time I think of the last one I shudder and then shudder some more. I lost everything I had except the clothes on my back and the commando dagger. The Jerries have absolutely no comprehension of humanity whatever. I also have a large piece of shrapnel in my pack which missed my head by inches and I have a hole in my helmet the size of a quarter . . . How In the world do you remember the names of all those composers? I don't know most of them, let alone remember them. I like music but not that well. I believe you and I can discuss these things much better when we see each other. . . Write soon mon cher. Au Revoir la seour lamour."

(This next letter came the day before the telegram)
(Same address and date)

"Dear Mother: I received your last letter a few days ago and will have a little trouble answering it, for reasons beyond my control and my mind is in such a state that I can only think of one thing and that isn't letters . . . After being wounded the first five days he was over here Paul Winther is on his feet again... He is getting a good rest in white sheets anyway... I'll tell you one thing, that will satisfy you. I know that your prayers have been answered and that very recently and I can tell you that I very soon offered my own thanks. From right now on I am asking for divine help and I know it is the best help there is. I am not in an exactly sunny mood today and you can tell by this penmanship that my nerves are in no condition for writing. I will write again as soon as I can think of something more enlightened to say. All my love, Jim"

“B” Sqdn. 10 Canadian Armoured Regt.
Fort Garry Regt.

Canadian Army Overseas, B.W.E.F

Aug 5, 1944

“Dearest Mother: Your letter of July 23rd just came taking only 10 days to get here, the best time yet.

August 6, 1944

There was too much noise last night for decent writing so will continue today. I should do better, I just had my first good wash and a shave in five days so feel considerably better. Your parcel with the chocolate bars, shaving cream, etc., came a few days ago. It had not been very well handled and everything was pretty well smashed. Dad said to send to you a Wheat Pool check I have and cannot cash on this side. I will send it if I remember. . . . It has been quite some time since we were at the place where the little French boys stayed with us, but there have been other Units come in. It is safe enough now for the Limeys at that point. Last week I had a couple of good trips to a couple of large towns further back, and a pretty good time and picked up a couple of new words. It was a nice change for a couple of afternoons. News is pretty much nil here so I guess I shall close for now. I had two letters from dad during the week and one from Aunt Ida. I hope you can take that trip with dad; It would do you both good. Bye, love, Jim”

Jim was with the Fort Garry Horse Regiment and landed on D-Day Nan sector (east) of Juno Beach on the 6th of June 1944. *“The Fort Garry Horse, as part of the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, landed on D-Day at Bernières-sur-Mer. They fought at Rots in the Mue Valley on 11 June 1944, and later played a key role in the capture of Carpiquet airfield on the outskirts of Caen. This was followed by vicious fighting on Verrières Ridge, the night attack - Operation Totalize - and the 'Mad Charge' during Operation Tractable.”*

Jim was killed in action during Operation Totalize in the attempt to crush the German forces in the area to the south of Caen, Normandy, France on August the 8th 1944. He was buried on August the 9th on the east side of the road south of Caen. A double funeral for him and Lloyd Chipman was held in American Fork, Utah where the passage was quoted, *“Greater love hath no man than he who lays down his life for his friends.”* He was eventually re-buried in January 1945 in the Bretteville-sur-Laize Canadian Military Cemetery in Bretteville-sur-Laize, France Grave 7, Row G, Plot 5. I don't believe Jim or his mother ever knew that he and Ellen Caroline Rich were the parents to a beautiful daughter Jane Ross. On August 8, 1946 he was awarded the France-German Star, 39-45 Star War Medal, and Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp. His name is also on the Veteran's Honor Wall in the American Fork City Cemetery, American Fork, Utah.

This story is a combined effort of the Lehi Historical Society and part of the Stories Behind the Stars project (see www.storiesbehindthestars.org). This is a national effort of volunteers to write the stories of all 400,000+ of the US WWII fallen here on Fold3. Can you help write these

stories? Related to this, there will be a smart phone app that will allow people to visit any war memorial or cemetery, scan the fallen's name and read his/her story.

Canada, WWII Service Files of War Dead https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=9145&h=797&tid=&pid=&queryId=270cf4423f26b19d7991cc6478501e48&usePUB=true&_phsrc=Pzw103&_phstart=successSource

Washington, Passenger and Crew List

https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/8945/images/WAM1383_53-0395?treeid=&personid=&hintid=&queryId=270cf4423f26b19d7991cc6478501e48&usePUB=true&_phsrc=Pzw104&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.65403114.555441070.1597376366-191968104.1597088908&pId=237856

McDonald Family Tree <https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/tree/85504147/person/392203029532/media/f370ac63-9433-4825-afaf-88a186794c35>

The Autobiography of Relva Booth Ross

James Aaron Ross written by Phyllis Ross Dickson, daughter of Robert F Ross, brother of James Aaron April 22, 1976

<https://www.virtualmuseum.ca/edu/ViewLoitDa.do;jsessionid=AA4CA468C341498246AF6B0A414F2CF1?method=preview&lang=EN&id=20419>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juno_Beach

D Day and the Battle of Normandy

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/normandy-invasion>