



The Fort Garry Horse Museum and Archives
LCol Marcus Strachan, VC, MC Armoury
551 Machray Ave, Winnipeg, MB, R2W 1A8

William Dalton Little hailed from Selkirk, Manitoba. Prior to the Second World War, he served part-time in the Fort Garry Horse, Canadian Militia, which was still training as mounted cavalry. He started as a Trooper and had achieved the rank of Sergeant by September 1939. On the outbreak of war, the FGH was designated as a tank regiment, and training began on this new mechanical horse. WD Little qualified as a “Driver, Internal Combustion” (as the term “Driver” still referred to horses at that time) in November 1940, in Camp Borden, Ontario. By February, 1941, he was also qualified to drive tracked vehicles as well as wheeled.

In August 1941, he was selected for Officer training and went to the Officer Training Centre, in Brockville and returned to the FGH with the rank of Lieutenant.

In England, in addition to learning how to command a troop of tanks, he took special training in camouflage and anti-aircraft defence and aircraft recognition. It was not all work though, and after receiving formal permission from his Commanding Officer, he was married to Miss Patricia Sheila Samson at the Registrar’s Office, Brighton, Sussex in 1943. While the final preparations for D-Day were under way, he received the news of the birth of his daughter Sandra May, in Brighton, in late May 1944.

Part of ‘C’ Squadron of the FGH, WD Little led a tank troop using the top secret “Duplex Drive” floating tanks and landed at St. Aubin-sur-Mer on D-Day, 6 June 1944. Their advance blocked by an eight foot high seawall, he led his troop of three tanks along the beach under fire, knocking out a German anti-tank gun along the way. His troop was credited with making the success of the Attack of the North Shore Regiment on the German positions in Tailleville. He was wounded on D-Day and evacuated to hospital in England.

In early July 1944, along with three other FGH officers who had been wounded on D-Day, he left the hospital and made his way down to Portsmouth and the four talked their way aboard a ship heading to France. They met up with the FGH again and were back in action at the Battle of Carpiquet. All four were charged with being Absent Without Leave from the hospital in England. They were marched in one at a time to General Harry Crerar, commander of the Canadian Army, who gave him a reprimand, then shook his hand and said “now go take care of the Germans”.

He was promoted to Acting Captain in August of 1944 and became Second in Command of ‘C’ Squadron. His squadron continued to fight through France and Belgium and into the Netherlands in October 1944. It was at the strong German defensive position of Hoogerheide that WD Little earned the Military Cross. The citation reads as follows:

Capt Little commanded a troop of tanks in the first assault wave on 6 June 1944. In the campaign through France and Belgium he established a reputation for bold decisive leadership. It is the action of 7 October 1944, in Holland, however, for which he will be chiefly remembered.



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Capt Little had been detailed to support the infantry in an attack on Hoogerheide. Without this town our forces could not cut the enemy communications between South Beveland and the Walcheren islands. But from the moment our infantry moved forward, they came under unexpectedly heavy mortar and machine gun fire. It was necessary to change the plan but there was no time for an Orders group. As soon as the danger became apparent, Capt Little went forward alone and on foot, to reconnoiter a better position for his own tanks. Following his reconnaissance, he placed his own tank in a very exposed flank, thus drawing fire while the rest of his tanks made the dash to the flank position he had chosen. Although his tank was hit several times, it was not knocked out. From their new position, the tanks were enabled not only to cover the advance of the infantry, but in doing so destroyed two machine guns, at least one mortar and two 40mm guns in addition to a great many infantry. A few moments later, the last obstacle to the town was removed when an enemy self propelled gun was destroyed by Capt Little's own tank. The capture of Hoogerheide isolated the enemy garrison and the approaches to Antwerp. The personal courage of Capt Little contributed in an essential manner to this vital achievement. Awarded as per Canada Gazette dated 10 November 1945 and Canadian Army Routine Order 6193 dated 12 November 1945.

He was confirmed in the rank of Captain in November 1944. Now in command of two troops of tanks, as Second-in-Command, he continued to lead his men in action as the campaign in the Netherlands moved forward until the German surrender in May of 1945. As he had been one of the 'originals' in 1939 and had a family, WD Little began his discharge and return to Canada in late June 1945.

After the war, WD Little stayed in the Regular Army. In 1958, a Regular Force component of The Fort Garry Horse was formed in Petawawa, Ontario. WD Little, with the rank of Major, was made regimental second-in-command. During his time with the Regular regiment, he had the tune Red River Valley arranged as the official Slow March of the Fort Garry Horse, and that music is still in use today.

After his retirement from the military with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, WD Little remained in touch with the regiment in Winnipeg. He gave significant support to the production of a comprehensive regimental history which was published in 2012, and also funded the restoration of ceremonial gold lace crossbelts and sword slings worn by officers of the regiment with traditional Patrol dress, maintaining our cavalry traditions. In February 2018 he visited the Canadian War Museum on the occasion of the acquisition of the medals of Lieutenant Colonel Marcus Strachan, who had won the Victoria Cross as a cavalryman with The Fort Garry Horse in the First World War. Those medals now reside at Strachan Armoury in Winnipeg, home of The Fort Garry Horse.