



Charles Edward Reynolds

Charles Edward Reynolds was a self made man. From his humble beginnings, he rose to become an influential man of business. He was educated by the loggers of Northern Ontario, the farmers of the Prairies, his shipmates on the CPR boats and his comrades in war. A life long friend, Mark Grimmett, wrote of him "He was a superman... There was nothing he could not do and do better than anyone else. He had a natural ability that is rarely equalled and his knowledge of men enabled him to get the most out of them, not only did he get their best, he also got their loyalty and affection. He was strict out fair and always kept his word. I never expect to see another man his equal..."

Charles Edward Reynolds was born April 21 1887 in Bobcaygeon Ontario. He was the only son of Charles Christopher Reynolds and Emma Sherman. Ed had two sisters; Florence and Mabel. His father was a butcher who supplied the lumber camps in Victoria County.

When the forests of Victoria County were logged out, his father took the family north to Algoma. These were the heydays of the lumbering industry in Algoma. White Pine Lumber Co, and Wolverine Lumber Co, both headquartered in Michigan, ran logging camps in the region. Edward worked along side his father. He learned to hunt and fish here and often supplied the camp larder with venison and moose meat. He attended High School in Owen Sound. By 1901 his father was headquartered in Webbwood Ontario and was a lumber camp foreman. Edward was said to be one of the youngest and toughest river drivers of the time. Most of his days were spent living in the camps, sleeping by the river where they had to thaw their boots over the open fire.

In 1902 Edward's family moved again. They travelled to the Sault where his parents opened another butchering business. The Social notes from the Sault Star of April 24, 1902 record their departure. "The family of Mr. Chas Reynolds has removed to the Soo." Edward and his father once again supplied fresh meat to the logging camps. Tom Reynolds recalls his father speaking about their trips into the bush. While delivering meat the wagon Edward was riding in was chased by wolves. Later, the CPR in Schreiber or Chapleau hired Edward on as a fireman. He learned the art of hostling (keeping the locomotives filled with water and coal). It required a certain amount of artistry as well as strength and a strong back.

By about 1910 the outlook for work in Ontario looked dim and being a young adventurous man, Edward heard the lure of the West. Travelling on horseback he worked his way across the prairies threshing. It was a trip that took 6 months. In his own words from the Daily Press in Timmins he learned " the back breaking tasks involved in the farming of those days."

When he arrived in Vancouver he continued to work on the CPR boats. Here he obtained his second mates's papers. Now he travelled further afield working the runs to Skagway Alaska, Hong Kong, and Japan. Upon his return from the Orient, Edward returned to the lumbering business building and operating sawmills.

In 1914 World War I broke out and for a man such as Edward the lure proved too great. On November 7th, 1914 he enlisted as a private in 29th Battalion, Vancouver Regiment. 2nd Division of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. They called them "Tobin's Tigers".

He departed for England in May 1915, and later that year in September embarked for France. He earned his baptism under fire on the Kemmel Front in Belgium. As the officers fell victim to the Germans, Edward was promoted in the field to Lieutenant April 13 1916.

In 1916 the 29th Battalion was transferred to the Somme. This was one of the most brutal battles of the war. One million men lost their lives. On Sep 15 1916 Edward was wounded in the shoulder by shrapnel. The Nov 14, 1916 London Gazette published his accomplishments "Awarded the MILITARY CROSS for conspicuous gallantry in action. He showed great initiative, and courage in organising and leading carrying parties under heavy fire. Although wounded he remained at duty and when a shell buried one of his men to dug him out and carried him to shelter." He was also awarded the Distinguished Service Order when he came upon a German officer who turned on him and started firing. The same issue of the London Gazette described it this way: "Awarded the DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER for conspicuous gallantry in action. He led his company with greatest courage and initiative. Later he led a small party against the enemy, himself shooting two enemy officers, and thereby enabling his company to advance. He set a splendid example of bravery and devotion to duty." His comrade in arms Mark Grimmett described it differently. "This German had halted the advance of Edward's company and a frontal attack was the only solution. Armed only with a revolver Edward pressed his men and claimed the post allowing his company to continue advancing. " During the Battle of the Somme Edward continued to be promoted. It is said that he became the fastest field promoted officer in the Canadian Army.

Having survived the Somme the company moved to Lens and participated in trench warfare. Edward experienced prostatitis and sciatica and was sent to England to recover. It was here that he was promoted to the rank of Lt. Col. and commanded a division of the Canadian Forestry Corp posted in Inverness Scotland. His experience in the Canadian lumbering industry helped him turn his unit into one of the most efficient, productive units in the Corp.

The Great War was over the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918. On May 15th 1919 Edward Reynolds returned home to Vancouver. After being decommissioned he opened a shake mill in Mission BC.

Edward's mother, Emma, had moved to Vancouver in 1911 and on December 18th 1920 died. Edward arranged for her funeral.

While he was in Mission he met his future bride Mary Katharine Noble, a schoolteacher in Hatzic. Edward was courting Mary when his mill burnt and he lost everything in the fire. Edward wanted to put off the wedding, but Mary wouldn't hear of it. Edward and Mary married Apr 2, 1925 In Hatzic BC, where Mary's family owned a fruit farm.

Owning nothing, Edward accepted a position of Manager of a new mill on Vancouver Island, for Blodell, Stewart and Welsh. While he was soaping a saw belt to increase the friction, his hand slipped and the saw cut off three fingers and half his hand. There is some controversy revolving around this event. Marc Reynolds recalled that while inspecting the saw, a drunken employee turned it on accidentally. We may never know what really happened. It is said that Edward insisted that he dress the wound himself. His career in the mills ended.

The 1920's were a period of growth and industrial boom in Canada. Ed joined the bandwagon. He heard of a new machine that mixed concrete on the back of a truck. The California patent holder was looking for a franchise holder in Canada. Edward decided to put in a bid. Somehow he learned that someone else had submitted a bid by mail. This written bid was travelling by train. Edward and a friend, drove overnight to San Francisco, beating the train, and convinced the patent holder to accept their bid. Transit Mixers of Canada Ltd. was established and operated in Vancouver until 1928.

Edward and Mary started a family. Charles Edward Junior was born in 1927. A second son, Thomas Burnet, followed him in 1929.

In Toronto, construction was booming and Ed saw an opportunity to expand his business. Edward returned to Toronto in 1928 and accepted a position with A.W. Robinson construction. Later he formed Ontario Ready Mixed Concrete, where he was General Manager. The company was headquartered at the foot of Spadina on Queens Quay. Ready Mixed Concrete was contracted for most of the major construction jobs in Toronto including Maple Leaf Gardens, Eaton's College Street store, and lastly, the new runways for Malton airport. Junior, Burnet, and Mary, pregnant with her third son Robert joined Edward in 1929. The family moved frequently in the early Toronto years. From Lowther Ave, to 3 L'Estrange Place, to 9 Baby Point Rd, and finally to 56 Indian Grove in 1934.

Edward was an active member of the community. He was involved with the Toronto Progress Club, a businessmen club that met at the Royal York. The progress club was involved with providing milk to Toronto's children during the depression. Serving as president for a time he began to make influential contacts.

His war experiences had made their mark, and Edward was also active in The Canadian Corp. This organisation actively served veterans. Edward was elected Ontario president in the 1930's and later became Dominion president as well. The Canadian government had been slow to provide remuneration and benefits to their WW I vets. As WW II loomed in Europe, The Canadian Corp needed a strong leader with influence that could lobby the government to enter the war. Edward resigned his position with A.W. Robertson and took on these responsibilities full time, supported by his contacts within the business community of Toronto.

Polio was a debilitating disease that affected many people during the 1930's. Each summer the city issued announcements to avoid crowds and large gatherings. Mary and her children accomplished this by leaving their home on Indian Grove and travelling to visit friends and family. Each summer they loaded up their trailer and headed to places like Wasaga Beach, Dundalk, Lake Bernard, Sundridge, and Woodland Beach.

The last two weeks of the summer Ed joined them. They left the trailer at Sundridge and took the train to South River. A logging inspection car transported the family 12 miles to Park. It was undeveloped country in the 30's. To reach the campsite the car and trailer were placed on the railroad line that travelled through the park. For two weeks the family enjoyed fishing for trout, swimming, boating and teaching "Sport the Wonder Dog" to ride a cobbled together water board behind the 3.2 horsepower motor. Ed was a avid outdoorsman and instilled his love of fishing and hunting in his children.

In the late 1930's Edward was suffering from severe sciatica. The pain grew worse, and it was feared that Edward would lose his leg. Lang's Mineral Remedy, an iron based supplement, cured his ailment. Impressed with the results, the whole family was required to take a daily dose of Langs for several years. Ed and Mary marketed the product and opened a store on Queen Street W. It is unclear whether this was successful. They did have success with a concrete casket company, which was eventually sold. During the 1930's he also tried his hand at politics, running for alderman and almost winning.

World War II ended and Ed was appointed to several different committees by then Ontario Premier Col. George Drew. His last appointment was Chairman of the T and NO railway. The family moved to North Bay in mid October 1945. The T & NO later became the ONR. During his tenure, the ONR expanded their services through Northern Ontario and investigated the establishment of a deep-sea port in Moosonee. Ed hoped this port would handle deposits of iron ore and other minerals found in Northern Ontario. He felt that by establishing this port the northeastern part of Ontario would blossom and grow.

Ed Reynolds did not live to see his dream become reality. He died August 19th 1962 in North Bay. He is buried in Terrace Lawn Cemetery.

Charles Edward Reynolds was a hardworking adventurer, and a leader of men. He accomplished much in his life and left his mark on many.