



LEONARD William A.

Corporal, Co I, 107th Infantry Regiment, 27th Division

KIA 14 juli 1918

Plot B – Rij 02 – Graf 14

Army Serial Number 1211449



William “Billy” Leonard was the son of John and Winifred Leonard of Flushing, Long Island, New York. He had 3 brothers (Arthur, James and Eugene) and 5 sisters (Mary, Catherine, Winifred, Cecilia and Anita). William was “city editor” for the Flushing Daily Times. He was an idealist and so no one was surprised when, shortly after the declaration of war on Germany, he volunteered for the 7th Infantry Regiment New York National Guard.

Being a journalist he became a contributor for the “Seventh Regiment Gazette”. Always in line for a humoristic story, his readers enjoyed to hear about his experiences as a kitchen aid, peeling potatoes and onions or the time when he became ill and fell in love with a curly haired nurse. His misadventures when they had to take the measurements for his uniform on 4 separate occasions or when the children were cheering as they marched through France. Leonard was extremely intelligent, pleasant and with all the charms of fantastic journalist.

On 14 July he volunteered for a mission, in his words: “just to see how they do it”. Possibly itching to find another interesting story to tell. The mission, repairing barbed wire in the trenches close to Mount Scherpenberg. Together with a few Tommies he set off on his first adventure into No Man’s Land. For some unknown reason an artillery barrage was launched and the British sergeant immediately ordered the retreat. Too late, an artillery shell had exploded close by. A British soldier was killed instantly and Billy was severely wounded in the stomach by shrapnel fragments. He was dragged to safety but by the time they had reached their lines Billy had died. He was buried close to where he fell at Mount Scherpenberg and shortly afterwards moved to a British cemetery in Loker. On 5 June 1919 he was disinterred and buried in the American Plot at Lyssenthoek cemetery, Poperinge. The Flushing Daily Times wrote: “He fell advancing to meet the foe”.

William Leonard was the first soldier of the Division to be killed in action.