

was often invited to dances and dinner parties. Young and handsome, more than one young lady must have reflected on what it would be like to be a constable's wife. Although he enjoyed their company, Pearkes knew that, according to regulations, he could not get married and remain in the Force, for some years. Moreover, a constable's pay was small and with no outside income, marriage would have to wait.

Early in 1914 Pearkes began to think more carefully about his future. He enjoyed being with the Mounted Police, but at that time the force was small in size, limited in the area it covered and advancement was slow. He was twenty-six years old and, among other possibilities, he had some thoughts of studying law. It was at this time, in August, 1914, that the Great War broke out and changed his career.

Like thousands of others, Pearkes wanted to join up. The White Pass and Yukon Telegraph Station at Carcross became one of the favorite places in the community where people gathered to read the news bulletins the telegraph operator posted outside his office. Those fortunate enough to have a map of France were able to show others the locations of towns and cities as the Germans swept through Belgium and Northern France. There was great excitement throughout Canada and in the cities to the south, men were queueing at the recruiting stations to get overseas before the war was over.

Constable Pearkes was among many in the Mounted Police who, as soon as they heard the news of the war, applied for discharge from the Force in order to enlist. So great was the demand, however, that the authorities in Ottawa decided to give only constables who were also British Reservists permission to leave. Even with this restriction, there were a large number who left, leaving a considerable gap in the ranks of the RNWMP. Pearkes remained in the Yukon during the winter of 1914-1915, but decided to try again. This time he applied to purchase his discharge because of urgent, private affairs concerning the "proving up" of his homestead in Alberta. As this was considered to be of more consequence than going to war, his application was approved, he paid his fifty dollars, and as quickly as he could he was en route to Vancouver. There he enquired which regiment might be going overseas in the quickest possible time. He was told the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles, a cavalry outfit then

located in Victoria, was considered to be the most likely to be sent on the next major draft. Within a day or so Pearkes enlisted as a Trooper and started a thirty-year career with the Canadian Army.

Even as a young boy in England, Pearkes had his own pony. His horsemanship improved in Canada and in the RNWMP so that within a few months he was promoted to Rough Riding Corporal. Before the year was out he was fighting in the trenches, and by the time the war ended, he was a lieutenant-colonel who had won the Victoria Cross, the Distinguished Service Order, the Military Cross and the Croix de Guerre. Five times wounded and four times Mentioned in Despatches, he was one of the most decorated officers in the Canadian Corps. He remained in the army, and by 1940 he had been promoted to major-general, commanding the 1st Canadian Infantry Division. Later he was appointed General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Pacific Command — an area which covered not only British Columbia and Alberta, but the Yukon and the western part of the Northwest Territories. In 1945 he was elected to the House of Commons and later became the Minister of National Defence. In 1960 he was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, retiring after several extensions of his term following the Canadian centennial celebrations.

From the time he joined as a constable in the RNWMP until he retired in Victoria, Pearkes had served his country in peace and war for over half a century. Whether on patrol in the Yukon, in the trenches at Passchendaele or sitting in the Cabinet Room in the Canadian Parliament, his guiding star was his strong sense of duty and responsibility. It's a good quality in any constable — or cabinet minister.

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