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## Local News

### Canadian fighter's view of enemy attack

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James Hayward Arnal, raised in Windsor Park, wanted all his life to be a soldier.

When he reached the age of 21 in 2004, he joined the army, was posted to the 2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and was thrilled in 2006 to find he was going to serve in Afghanistan. It would be a great adventure, he thought.

But once on the ground in Kandahar, Cpl. Arnal found himself increasingly troubled by the poverty around him and the tyranny the Afghans had to endure. He thought that the Canadian military presence was making a difference and when he got home from that first tour, he decided to go back for a second one. This time, he wasn't expecting a thrill; he was going to help bring a decent life to people who couldn't do it entirely on their own.

Arnal's superior officers described the 25-year-old soldier as a strong leader who acted quickly in difficult situations with little or no regard for himself.

He left Winnipeg for that second tour of duty on Feb. 14, 2008. A month later, he started to keep a daily journal. This is one of his entries:

30 May 2008

*Contact! It took half the tour, but we finally got attacked.*

*It started at 10:15, I was at the door of our sleeping bunker when I heard a bunch of cracks overhead. At first I thought 'who is shooting?' That was quickly pushed out of mind a fraction of a second later when a whoosh from an RPG (rocket propelled grenade) flew overhead.*

*I bolted the five feet to my kit and threw it on. I was the first heading up into the south of where the gunfire was coming. I opened up with my C7, then got a volley of small arms, 'snap, crackle, pop' followed by an RPG, that had I been standing tall, would have nailed me.*

*I gave up using my rifle and focused on launching M203 grenades through the trees, over walls and around corners in hopes of killing the enemy that was behind cover. All the while having Kellogg's 'snap crackle and pop' dance overhead with their friend whoosh.*

*Thankfully, these guys can't shoot.*

*At one point, there was a lull. Just then, they opened up again from the east. I turned and faced the onslaught of lead and sent them a bunch of presents. Flying grenades! They quickly ceased fire from that position as we all shifted our fire to that new spot.*

*During this volley, I continued to hit the east spot as well as any escape routes I thought they might be using. I took an M72 rocket and fired. The south tower said I nailed right where they were.*

*A couple minutes later we got the ceasefire and it was over.*

*No one got hurt, huge success.*

Arnal maintained the journal until early July. A few weeks after he stopped writing, he stepped on an explosive device while on foot patrol. He was killed instantly.

In Sunday's Free Press, Arnal's mother talks about the terrible day she got the news, about how she is coping and about her plan to keep James's memory alive by trying to make a difference, as he tried to do, in a far-off and troubled land.

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