



## Corporal Ainsworth Dyer

**Born:** July 29, 1977 – Montreal, Quebec

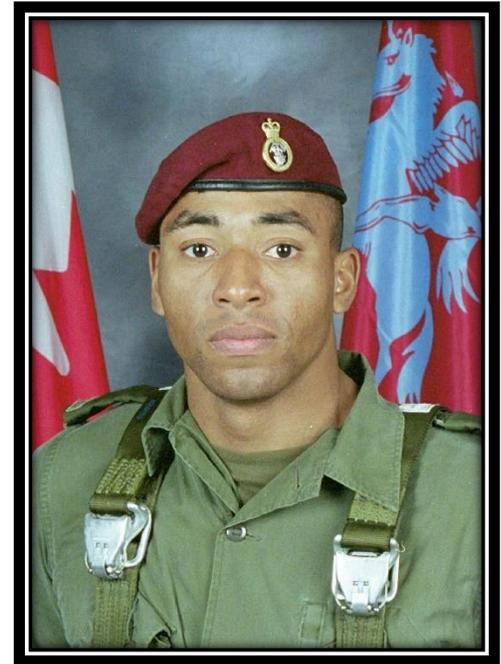
**Deceased:** April 17, 2002, Afghanistan, Age 24

### Military Service

3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry

### Cemetery

TORONTO NECROPOLIS; Ontario, Canada



Born July 29, 1977 in Montreal, Québec, the son of the late Paul and Agatha (nee Dawkins) Dyer, Ainsworth Dyer grew up in Regent Park. Raised by his strict Jamaican grandmother, he had a strong sense of right from wrong. He enrolled with the Militia's 48th Highlanders of Canada as an Infantryman in February 1996 and transferred to the Regular Force in October 1997. After completing Battle School, Cpl. Dyer was posted to the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, 3rd Battalion (3 PPCLI) in the spring of 1998, where he served as a Rifleman and deployed with 3 PPCLI on Operation Palladium to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2000. Corporal Dyer died as a result of a friendly fire incident on April 17, 2002 during a night-time training exercise near Kandahar, while serving in Afghanistan. Cpl. Ainsworth Dyer was one of four Canadians killed during a "friendly-fire" incident. Their deaths were Canada's first during the war in Afghanistan, and the first in a combat zone since the Korean War.

Ainsworth Dyer was a man who loved his country and died to keep us free. We are all better for having known him. He was a mountain of a man who truly made your heart dance. He ran the race and ran it well.

Ainsworth Dyer knew his calling. By age six, he had already announced he would be a soldier when he grew up. As an adult, he explained that if he died in service, this was as it was meant to be, what God intended. Although he loved living and everything about it, he was willing to sacrifice his life for his calling.

Ainsworth was born in Montreal into a tight-knit family. He was a big person – 9 lbs. 11 oz. at birth, and 6'4" as an adult – and had a large personality. He was full of life, full of love, and full of joy. He was kind, faithful to his religious beliefs and principles, and according to his army colleagues, had an unparalleled strength of heart. He was charismatic, a natural leader, and determined. He had a loud and funny laugh, and a trademark sense of humour.

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“Ains,” as he was known, was athletic. Running races was a passion and he often won. One time he broke his ankle mid-race. The injury prevented him from winning the contest, but sheer determination enabled him to finish it. He was also a great football player. The Regent Park, Toronto, high school he attended has named an annual award after him.

Ainsworth’s first experience protecting the public was during his teens, when he worked as a security guard. At age 18, he enrolled as an infantryman with the 48th Highlanders of Canada, and at 20, he transferred to the Regular Force. After completing Battle School in spring 1998, Cpl. Dyer was posted to the 3rd Battalion of Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry in Edmonton, AB. He developed into a mature and responsible soldier, while maintaining his sense of adventure. He conquered the skies and became a paratrooper. He also trained for the Mountain Man military fitness competition, which involves a canoe portage, a 31.6-km footrace, and a 10-km river paddle. In 2000 he was deployed as a rifleman to Bosnia-Herzegovina on the Canadian peacekeeping mission Operation Palladium. After serving there he was deployed to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

While in Edmonton, Ainsworth met and fell in love with a young woman. They attended church together, where he was a favourite among the Sunday school children. Before shipping out to Afghanistan, Ains obtained permission from his sweetheart’s parents to marry her then proposed to her on bended knee on the then-unnamed footbridge that spans the broad North Saskatchewan River. She immediately accepted.

The footbridge over the North Saskatchewan River between Rundle and Gold Bar parks holds special meaning for the Von Sloten and Dyer families, as that was the spot where Ainsworth proposed to his girlfriend Jocelyn Van Sloten before shipping out to Afghanistan. Instead of celebrating a wedding, Aart Van Sloten began building wooden crosses for every soldier killed in the war-torn country. They held a ceremony, reading out the names of those who died in Afghanistan and placing a cross in their honour.

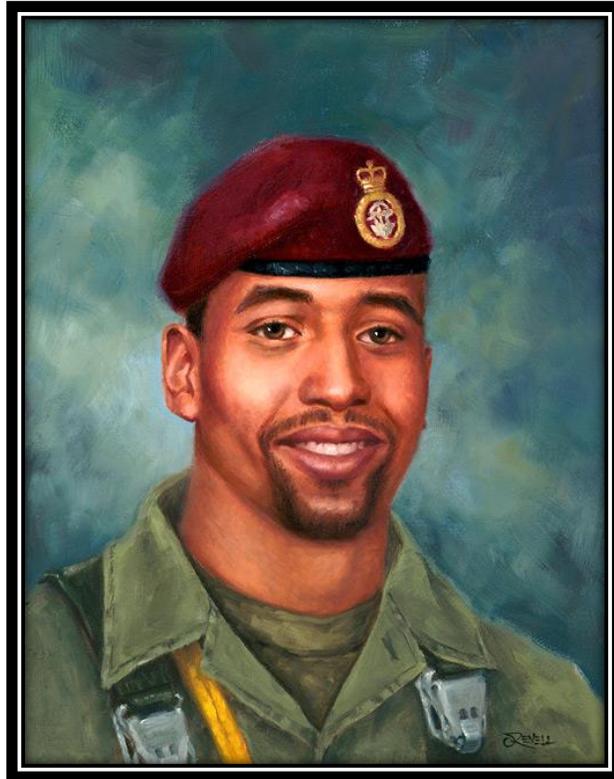
The ceremony began small; just a few friends and family. But every year it has grown, as more families and friends come to remember their loved ones, and more members of the public come to pay their respects.

A plaque bearing the names of Sgt. Marc Léger, Cpl. Ainsworth Dyer, Pte. Richard Green and Pte Nathan Smith lies on a floodlit memorial beside the Canadian headquarters at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. Corporal Dyer was commemorated in February, 2003 on the Rakkasan Memorial Wall at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

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#### Words from friends:

*"You go on exercise and it didn't matter if it was minus 40 and we were hungry and hadn't slept in days; he'd be like, 'Hey, guys, it's not that bad,' and, you know, cracking jokes," said Daryl Bonar, a former soldier who served in the same unit as Cpl. Dyer and the three other young Canadian soldiers who were killed this week."*

*"The guy kept it real; there was nothing fake about this guy at all. He never had a bad thing to say about anybody."*

*"Cpl. Dyer was as committed as they come; he once completed the military's arduous Mountain Man race with a broken foot. The race involved a long run with a heavy pack sack, portaging a canoe and a final sprint. He was so determined to finish that he crawled across the finish line"*

*"He came in, and you were just like, 'This guy's amazing.' It's like getting a grade-A student, and you know it, you don't have to give him any homework or anything because he just does it, because it's just part of his way of being, you know,"*

We are proud to say that one of the 117,000 trees that will be planted as part of the Highway of Heroes Living Tribute will represent the sacrifice that **Corporal Ainsworth Dyer** made to serve and protect Canada.

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