

**Asselin, Joseph Robert Royal**

**Captain**

**Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal**

**Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**



Joseph Robert (Bob) Royal Asselin was born in Ottawa, Ontario, on May 19, 1919. He was the son of J. Ferdinand and Dona Asselin, of 118 Charlotte Street, Ottawa, Ontario. He had three sisters, Constance, Jacqueline and Pierrette and a brother Laurent who died in an accident when he was 4 years old.

Bob attended the Brebeuf school and was a member of the 1939 senior city Champions Lacrosse team. He then attended the University of Ottawa where he completed his Bachelor of Arts degree. At university, he played rugby and hockey. While at the University, he was part of the Canadian Officers Training Corps. He was fluent in both English and French and was a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

According to his military documents, when he enlisted he was five feet and six and a half inches tall, weighed 138 pounds, had blue eyes and black hair. When he enlisted he was working for A.J. Freeman limited, where his father worked, as an office clerk for four months. It was stated on his Occupational History form that he had worked for two months doing mixed farming in Quebec and that he wished to remain in the military after the war.



Joseph Robert Royal Asselin enlisted in the military on November 6, 1941 in Ottawa, Ontario with Le Regiment de Hull as a Second Lieutenant.

From Ottawa, he was sent to the Brockville Officer's Training Centre and then to the Advance Training Centre in Farnham, Quebec where he was promoted to Lieutenant.

In March of 1942, he was sent to Valcartier to join the Regiment de Hull. In June of 1942 he was assigned to Le Regiment de Hull when he was sent to British Columbia.

While in British Columbia, he was stationed in Nanaimo, Otter Point and Colwood. On June 23, 1943 he was sent to Fort Ord in the United States. He was then appointed as an acting Captain. On July 12, 1943 Captain Asselin left for Kiska, Alaska as part of the Kiska force until January 18, 1944.



**OTTAWA OFFICERS OF HULL REGIMENT IN KISKA.**

Participating with their unit in the Kiska operations were, left to right, Capt. Paul Farley, 30 Russell avenue; Capt. A. Tessier, Capt. R. Rochon, 72 Sweetland avenue, and Lieut. Robert Asselin, 118 Charlotte street.—(Canadian Army photos.)

## Two Mayors Join In Welcome For Dollard Menard

The mayors of Ottawa and of Hull this afternoon joined with officers of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of Le Regiment de Hull in extending a cordial welcome to Lieut.-Col. Dollard Menard, D.S.O., officer commanding the 1st Battalion, on his first visit to the city since the Hull unit returned from Kiska Island.

As he stepped from the train at Union Station, the tall Col. Menard, a hero of Dieppe, was greeted by Mayor Stanley Lewis, Mayor Raymond Brunet and Lt.-Col. Marc Lavoie, commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion (Reserve). He was accompanied by his wife. Col. Menard spoke highly of the Hull officers and soldiers whom he led in the invasion of Kiska Island.

Other high ranking officers at the station to greet the visiting officer included Col. J. H. Chaballe, Lieut.-Col. W. A. Croteau of Le Regiment de Chateauguay, Lieut.-Col. P. V. Morin of Les Fusiliers Mont Royal, Lieut.-Col. A. L. Normandin, Ottawa area recruiting officer, and Major Henri Emond of army headquarters.

Col. Menard also shook hands with a group of his officers who accompanied him on the Kiska expedition. They included Capt. Lucien Boudreault, Capt. George Haddy, Capt. Robert Asselin, Capt. A. Masson, Capt. the Rev. A. Tessier, O.M.I., padre of the 1st Battalion, Lieut. Henri D'Aoust, Lieut. Gaston Laurier and Lieut. F. Robillard. Several officers of the 2nd Battalion were also at the station to greet Col. Menard.

A civic reception was given at the Hull city hall this afternoon in honor of Col. Menard. This evening a dinner will be tendered him by the city and the Hull Regiment. Following the dinner, Col. Menard will review the 2nd Battalion at the Hull armories.

< Here you'll find Capt. Robert Asselin



Acting Captain Asselin then travelled to Debert, Nova Scotia on May 19, 1944 and left for Europe on May 26, 1944. He arrived in the United Kingdom on June second, 1944. In September, he was promoted to Captain. On September 28, he left for France from the United Kingdom. On November 5, 1944 he was transferred to the Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal regiment.

Captain Joseph Robert Royal Asselin was killed on February 25, 1945 at the age of 25. The senior officers of the Fusiliers Mont-Royal Regiment conducted an official inquiry into his death. The board determined that while on duty at 1:25 pm, Captain Asselin was accidentally killed when a Private was cleaning his Bren gun and the officer was killed instantly.

He was initially buried in a temporary military cemetery at Bedburg, Germany. He was then later moved to Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery where his headstone can be found at **X. G. 10**.



Inscribed on his headstone are the words:

ICI REPOSE LE FILS  
DE FERDINAND ET DONA ASSELIN,  
OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA

Capt. Robert Asselin was awarded the:

- 1939-45 Star
- France and Germany Star
- War Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp



## Capt. R. Asselin, Grid and Ice Star, Killed In Holland

Capt. Robert "Bob" Asselin, only son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Ferdinand Asselin, of 118 Charlotte street, and former rugby and hockey star at the University of Ottawa, has been killed while serving with a French-Canadian regiment in Holland, his parents have been notified. He was 26 years of age.

A veteran of the Kiska campaign with the 1st Battalion of the Hull Regiment, Capt. Asselin went overseas in May, 1944, and fought through the campaigns of France, Belgium and Holland.

Born in Ottawa, he attended Brebeuf school and the University of Ottawa. At the university, he became known as an all-round athlete and starred in the Interscholastic Rugby League as well as on the college hockey teams. He was one of the first members of the University of Ottawa contingent, Canadian Officers' Training Corps. He took his officer's course at Brockville and Farnham.

He was in the reserve unit of the Hull Regiment when it was mobilized. He accompanied the unit to Valcartier and then to the Pacific Coast. He was carrier platoon commander on the Kiska expedition.

Returning to Ottawa, he was posted overseas and proceeded to England with the 1st Battalion, Hull Regiment.

Surviving are his parents, J. Ferdinand Asselin, departmental manager at A. J. Freiman Ltd., and Mrs. Asselin, and three sisters, Constance, Jacqueline and Pierrette, at home.



Capt. "Bob" Asselin

## Election Meet Held By CCF in Toronto

TORONTO, March 5.—(CP)—The Ontario section of the CCF announced today an election committee conference was held in Toronto Saturday to discuss plans of the national steering committee and to co-ordinate the work of the Ontario organization with that of the national committee. The statement said more than 150 delegates attended from 65 constituencies.

J. W. Noseworthy, CCF member of Parliament for York South, announced that Capt. Douglas Smith of the Canadian Army is the party's candidate in the federal riding of Simcoe East.

*Fortune favors regular readers of  
Citizen Classified Ads.*





## Lacrossè League Trophy In Memory Of Bob Asselin

A new challenge trophy commemorating the heroism of the late Captain Robert Royal Asselin will be awarded the winners of the Senior City Lacrosse League's first post-war season, it was announced last night by Connie Legault, acting convener.

Plans to start the local "open box-lacrosse" season in the middle of May are progressing favorably, the convener revealed, with six teams ready to go into action. The teams are: Rene Paquin's Strathconas, John Park's West End Pirates, A. R. Stewart's Centrals, Buck Lalonde's RCAF Flyers, Edgar Bazinet's Notre Dame and Romeo Morrisette's Ste. Anne's.

Both Bob Asselin and Acting Convener Legault were among the 1939 senior city champions who served with distinction overseas. The late Capt. Asselin was killed in action last year while serving with the Fusiliers Mont-Royal, a Montreal infantry unit, while Connie Legault, as an officer of the special U.S.-Canada Para-

troopers, won the Silver Star as the hero of Mussolini Bridge.

### Junior Loop Busy

Junior league officials report they have already rounded up four teams with prospects of one or two others joining before the season gets underway. The four teams entered to date are: A. R. Stewart's Centrals, Jack Park's Pirates, Bert Morrisette's Ste. Anne's and Roy Gallagher's Burghs. Team managers will meet at Ste. Anne's Hall, St. Patrick street, next Monday night, to complete official documents.

A. R. Stewart hopes to line up several outstanding high school athletes from St. Patrick's College, Glebe Collegiate, Technical High School and other secondary schools, for his Central club.

SAINT JOHN, NB, April 2.—(CP)—Saint John Trojans outclassed Halifax YMCA 58-24 tonight, won the Maritime junior basketball championship and qualified to meet Montreal YMHA at Montreal Thursday and Saturday in the Eastern Canadian finals.



## FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian  
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story written by Vanessa Kirtz, teacher at All Saints H.S. in Kanata, Ontario.

Additional research and editing provided by Kurt Johnson.

\* Do you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact [info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl)

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission  
Library and Archives Canada  
Veterans Affairs Canada

The Canadian War Museum article

Pictures and letters provided by Melissa Bellingham, great niece of Bob Asselin

Newspaper article from the Ottawa Citizen and Ottawa Journal

Photo of headstone taken by Des Philippet



A touching biography written by his sister, Pierrette Asselin LeBrun:

Bob and I

Today is Remembrance Day, November 11<sup>th</sup>  
1999.

It is evening and all day I have been thinking of my brother Bob. I have four children but none of them knew him as he was killed in the Second World War on February 25, 1945. He was only 25 years old.

I am not a writer so I will try to introduce him to my children by telling stories about him.

The earliest I can remember is lying very still next to him in McDonald Park where we lived in Ottawa at 118 Charlotte Street. He has invited me to participate in something special. We have picked a good spot on the open grass and he has placed in his ears and nose and between his teeth some peanuts. He keeps telling me to be very still and quiet. Before long to my amazement he has three squirrels

nervously climbing on his chest and they are taking the nuts from his teeth, nose and ears. I can still remember that special feeling. My brother and I are what you today call "bonding". He was also my Godfather.

One summer he brought home a kitten that we named "Whitsy" I just adored this cat. We used to sit him on a blanket and slide him between us. He must have liked it because he would sit on this blanket and waited till Bob came home from the University of Ottawa and we played. The cat would sit on the dining room table and would put his paw to hold down the page that Bob was studying. One winter night he took him outside and a passing car honked his horn and the cat jumped out of his arms and was killed. I thought he was lost and I searched for him till Bob told me what had happened. I can still feel his arms around me and us crying together/

I had long pigtails and he would lift them up and give me real wet kisses. I would scream with disgust. But came the day when he did not do it and I thought



he no longer loved me. After I told him he made sure I always had wet kisses for my neck.

In the month of August we always went to a cottage in Val des Bois. As I adore this big brother and wanted to do everything he did including swimming, he decided to teach me. He asked if I wanted to go for a boat ride. Not too far from shore he lifted me out of the boat and put me overboard. He saved me before I drowned. Needless to say he was chastised by my father. Two days later he asked if I wanted to go for another boat ride. Again he put me over board but this time he started to row away. On that day I learned to swim.

One day he brought home a girlfriend. He invited her into the "Parlor" as we called it in those days. I had been playing behind the chesterfield. It turned out to be my first education on sex. Unfortunately I began to giggle and that put an end to his romantic antics. On that day he did not think I was so cute.

He was very athletic. He played hockey and

football for the University of Ottawa. He joined the ROTC and shortly afterward war was declared. He became a Captain and was also a Commando. He was part of the invasion of an Island in the Pacific Ocean called "Kiska" in the Aleutian Island. He returned home and we had the biggest party I have ever seen. We even rented a Juke Box. Some so the tunes of that era were "Smoke gets in your Eyes", Drinking Rum and Coca Cola" and of course his favorite "Stardust". Then before we knew it he was off Overseas where the war was. We received letters from England, France, Belgium and Holland. My sister Connie and my mother and I would send him care packages containing apples dipped in wax to keep them fresh also homemade fruitcakes soap razor blades and we wrote loads of letters filled with love. In one of his letters he asked me to send him one of my favorite dolls and in return he would send me a doll from children he had met. It would be like an exchange. That Christmas I had received a Shirley Temple Doll so off to Holland she

went. This doll had real hair and an organdy dress and black patent shoes with stockings with lace trim and several petticoats. So I waited and waited for this Dutch doll to arrive. When it finally arrived and I opened it I found a broken and dirty old doll. Being a spoiled brat I could not understand why he had sent me such an awful looking doll. My sister Connie told me I should be ashamed of myself. She then explained that these children were in wartime and starving and still they had sent me their best doll. I still have this doll and it is my most treasured possession. Not too long ago I had the privilege of sharing this story with Connie my daughter and her daughter Melissa and grandson Matthew. Bob sent us pictures of these young children. You will find these pictures in the album I have put together for posterity. The Hook family had given their home to the army as their headquarters. He would gather rations from his men and gave them to this family. There will be more to this family later on in these writings.

There was a time during the war when telegrams were the most terrible thing to receive.

February 28, 1945. It was my birthday. I woke up full of joy and excitement. It did not last long for as I came down the stairs, Mom and Connie and Jackie were reading the telegram that informed them of the death of my "Biggest Hero". He was killed on February 25 by friendly fire. He had a "batman" an aide who was cleaning his machine gun. He accidentally hit the trigger and hit Bob in the back. He died instantly. There was a trial but it was an accidental verdict.

There is a custom in Holland. Families adopt a grave and keep it well tended and place flowers on the graves. Bob's grave was adopted by the Hook family. One day my father received a letter from the eldest daughter named Maria. My father corresponded with her for many years. After my father died my sister Connie took over. Somehow the writings stopped. One day I found Maria's address

so I decided to write her. She answered my letter and we became friends. Her brother Nico came to Canada and he and I became friends. He spoke a little English but I spoke no Dutch so I bought an English to Dutch book and we were able to communicate. Eventually he moved to Oshawa and then he returned home to Holland. Throughout the years, the family always wanted to go visit his grave but no one ever went until:

In May of 1965, Dad was being sent to England on special assignment for the "Ford Motor Company. My mother was visiting Windsor at the time and asked Dad if he would go to Holland and visit Bob's grave and that she would pay for his travels. Dad made her a better offer and said that if she would take care of Susan and Dianne and his mother took Michael and Connie he would fly me over at the end of his work for Fords. A few days later Ford informed Dad that a company cannot separate spouses for more than 60 days and that they would fly the wives over for a month. It was decided that we could not

turn down such an opportunity and my Mom and Grandma LeBrun would take care of the children for the time needed. In August I took the kids to Ottawa and they were excited to be with their Grandparents. I had written to Maria telling her I was coming to visit and she invited us to stay with them. By this time Maria had married and lived in a town called Oeffelt. Maria and her husband Jacques Haerken took us to visit Bob's grave. When in the cemetery what astonished us the most was the silence of the wind that rustled among the thousands of graves with white crosses. The age of these men were from 19 to 27 years old taken at the prime of their lives. Bob was only 25 years old. While visiting with Maria, she told us many wonderful things that Bob had done for their family. He had been a hero to them all. Also I found out that had he not been killed Maria would have become his wife.

I still have three of his letters. I re-read them not too long ago and had myself a good cry. I had forgotten so many things about him. He used to call me his sweater girl as a compliment to a pin-up girl



and always signed his letters from your brother who loves you a lot. I am enclosing this address in case some day someone ever wants to go back in history they would have something to refer to

Maria v d Hook Haerkens

Jacques Haerkens

Doorsstraat 7

Oeffelt Netherland

5441 A. .

In the 1980's Dad and I became friends with a Dutch couple who came to Canada . They became tennis buddies and very dear friends. When they returned home to Holland they also went to visit his grave. There is a picture of Catrien Keyser at his grave in my memory album. When we were in Holland we also took movies. You will find these in the film box.

My mother ' s sister Gloria Ouellette had a son by the name of Roger. Now Roger would follow my brother everywhere he went. He even joined the R O T C. When Bob went to Kiska, Roger followed him out West. Then he followed him overseas. They

always seemed to miss each other by a few weeks. He was stationed in Italy and they had made plan to finally meet in Holland. But then Bob died. I remember my aunt telling my Mom she sure hoped Roger did not follow him this time. A few weeks later the dreaded telegram came informing my aunt that Roger had indeed followed Bob even in death. He had been summoned to report to his superior and having just come back from duty decided to clean up. He put a can of water to heat and when he opened the lid it exploded. The can had been wrongly labeled. [It contained gasoline]

So it is on this 11<sup>th</sup> of November that I sit and put on paper the remembrance of two fine young men who gave their lives so that we can live free. These reflections are for my children and grandchildren to know that in their family history they may keep Bob and Roger alive in their minds and hearts.

In memory of Captain Robert Asselin  
Captain Roger Ouellette

*p s :*

*My brothers in law Errol Malouin and Eugene Scopic also served in World War Two.*

*Memories by*

*Pierrette Asselin LeBrun.*

