

**Audet, Rodrigue**  
**Private**  
**Regiment de la Chaudière**  
**Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**  
**E 29431**



Rodrigue Audet was born on July 12, 1920 in St. Magloire, Quebec, Canada. His father Adélard Audet was from Quebec. On November 26, 1913, he married Léonie Nadeau in Montréal. They were Roman Catholic. Rodrigue had four brothers: Antonio, Armand, Bertrand and Adrien, and three sisters: Gertrude, Rachel and Lucille.



*The Audet family, Rodrigue in military uniform.*



*On this note the names of the family members.*



*The house of the Audet family.*

Rodrigue grew up with French as his mother tongue and went to school for eight years. Then he went to work as a day labourer on his father's farm. On May 6, 1941 he enlisted in the army. He was twenty years old and single then. His physical description stated that he had brown eyes and red hair.

He also had a scar on the outside of his left foot. He was not very tall, just under 5 ft. 4 and his weight was 127 pounds at the time.

His job in the army was to clean up and keep the hospital ward clean. On July 28, 1943, another intake interview took place. Rodrigue was in good health at that time. He didn't like sports, but he liked modern music. He also read a lot and went to the movies two to three times a week. He especially liked westerns. The report went on to say: *"Smokes a lot, drinks a little. Has a pleasant, happy disposition. During his time in the army, he gained 20 pounds."*

On May 3, 1944 he had another interview. This showed that he was really only suitable as a hospital assistant or stretcher carrier; he had no fighting spirit. In July 1944 he nevertheless attended military training. Rodrigue did well on the parade ground. He could march well and seemed a good fighter with the bayonet, the report said. He could use more stability in his physical training, in field training he needed more practice and he was a mediocre shooter. He came across to his trainers as a good soldier with a pleasant character. They saw in him a possible future leader.

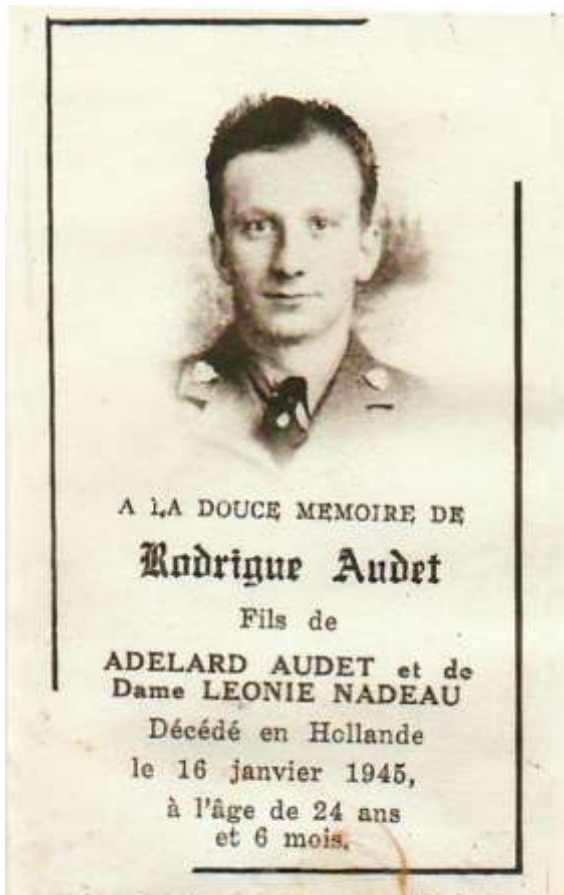
On July 20, 1944, Rodrigue left for the United Kingdom, arriving a week later. On August 11, he crossed over to Northern Europe. It didn't end well for him there.

On January 16, 1945 Rodrigue died on the battlefield in the Netherlands. He was 24 years and six months old then. His belongings at the time were a pocket knife, wallet, photos, prayers and souvenir notes.

He was buried in a temporary Canadian cemetery in Nijmegen, in the Goffertpark. Later Rodrigue Audet was reburied at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **II. B. 3**.

Awards Private Rodrigue Audet:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France & Germany Star
- War Medal 1939-1945
- Canadian Volunteer Medal with Clasp



On February 2, his family received an official letter about his death. On February 15, his family indicated in writing that they wanted to know more about the death of their son. They also asked if they could organize a religious memorial service for him. His mother wanted very much to have some clothes from him as a keepsake. They were not informed in more detail about his death.

On May 19, 1947, the family unexpectedly received a letter from a "seventeen-year-old unknown girl" from the Netherlands. Hanny Schell, who lived at 64 Piet Heinstraat in Nijmegen, wrote that she had adopted Rodrigue's grave. She gave a description of the cemetery and the surroundings and told them that it was a beautiful place on a hill. She could look into Germany from the top.

Hanny regularly placed flowers at his grave and had a number of questions for the family. What faith did Rodrigue have? Was he married? What languages did they speak?



On July 17, 1947, they wrote a letter back to Hanny, with the opening words "Dear unknown friend". They thanked her and said that Rodrigue was a good, devout Christian. He was supposed to get married in August 1944, but this did not happen due to his departure for Europe. They would love to come to his grave once, thought about him every day, and had a hard time believing that his body was so far away. Hanny was asked to send them as many photos as possible of his grave, the cemetery and her village.

*Hanny Schell brings flowers to the grave, 24 August 1947.*

Hanny suspected that Rodrigue died near Leuth, a village near Nijmegen. He was the only one of his regiment who died on that date.

Gertrude and Lucille. Afterwards they wrote to each other occasionally, but after 1985 Hanny got her letters back.





*Antonio, Gertrude, Lucille and Hanny at the grave.*

The family was unable to make the trip to the Netherlands. Later Hanny had a brief meeting at the grave with brother Antonio and sisters

*Mei 1985 40 jaar herdenking*



*Hanny, May 1985, 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Liberation.*

*Mei 1995 50 jaar herdenking*

*Hanny May 1995, 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.*





*Hanny made a scrapbook of 'her' soldier.*



*She continues to lay flowers at Rodrique's grave until late in life.*



Life story: Tefke van Dijk, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Library and Archives Canada
- Letters and pictures through Mrs. Hanny Schoonwater-Schell



*Photo: Alice van Bekkum.*