

Boulet, Joseph Eugene

Lieutenant

**Royal Hamilton Light
Infantry**

**Royal Canadian Infantry
Corps**

B 56149



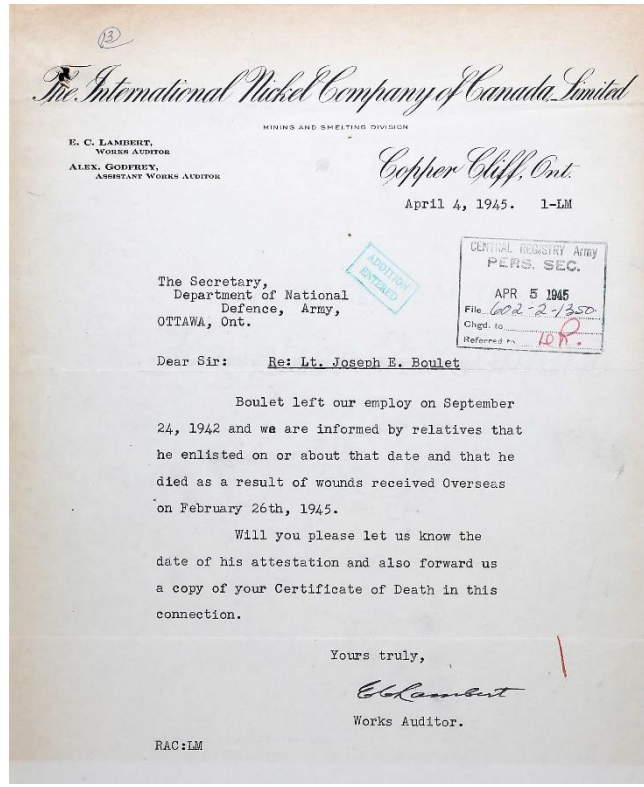
Joseph (Joe) Boulet was born on November 19, 1912, in Fort William, Ontario. He was the eldest son of father Joseph Amie, born in 1890 in Fraserville, Quebec, and mother Mima Mae Moore, born in Duntreen, Ontario, in 1892 who died on August 30, 1969. They got married in Sudbury in August 1912 and went to the Church of England. Father was a cashier by profession. Joe had two brothers. Born in 1920 or 1921, James William also served overseas with the L.S.R., Lake Superior Scottish Regiment. Brother Ephraim died at a very young age, he was only thirteen months old. Later, the family moved to Guelph, Ontario.

Fort William is a city in northwestern Ontario, at the entrance to Lake Superior, in southern Canada. Guelph is located in southwestern Ontario, where initially many British immigrants lived.

Joe spoke English and he went to school until he was 24 years old. By then he had completed five years of High School at the Agriculture College in Guelph and then five years of College Degree B in college. After graduating, Joe joined International Nickel and Co. for five years as Millman in Sudbury. He did not want to return there after his military service, because he had also gained four years of experience on a farm and then possibly wanted to start a fruit farm.

International Nickel Company had been mining several metals since 1901, most of which were nickel and copper. It was one of the largest mines in the country and supplied a great deal of nickel and copper to the Allied forces during the war.

In the meantime, Joe had volunteered to join the Non-Permanent Active Militia of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps at Fort William. He was there from 1928-1930 with the 4th Field Ambulance. In 1930-1931 he was in Guelph at the Canadian Officer Training Centre through the Ontario Agriculture College.



While studying at the Agriculture College, Joe met his wife Elizabeth Ross from Guelph. Born in Toronto in 1913, she died in March 2002. Joe and Elizabeth got married on April 6, 1940 in Guelph and they had two daughters, Jane Ann, born October 6, 1941, and Margaret Jessie, born April 24, 1944.

Joe volunteered for service on September 27, 1942 in Toronto, Ontario. He was then 29 years old and was classified as an R Wing Driver with the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. The inspection report stated that Joe had dark brown to black hair, he was 5 ft 9 tall and he weighed 166 lbs. He had five years' work experience at INC and was a specialist in Agriculture. He was wearing or had worn glasses and in 1927 Joe had an appendectomy.

In October he was transferred to the Canadian Army Basic Training Centre in Cornwall. On December 14, 1942 there was another evaluation in Cornwall and Joe told that he could not find work in his profession and therefore went to work as a Millman at INC. He liked to organize orchestras, bands and sporting events. He was well-built, intelligent, a good learner, ambitious and eager to join the military. He would make a good soldier and he deserved promotion and had potential as an officer. He was now a Non Commissioned Officer. Recommendation as Storeman Technical Training of the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps.

From 1 January 1943 he was A/Lance Corporal and already on 9 February he left as Sergeant for District Depot 3 A in Kingston. On February 18, he was promoted to Cadet and then worked in the Quebec Regiment's Officer's Mess in Three Rivers. Joe successfully completed his training on March 1, 1943 and was then 2nd Lieutenant. He was transferred again, this time to the A 10th Advanced Training Centre in Borden, Ontario, and was Lieutenant of the Canadian Army Infantry on June 19, 1943. As of July 21, he was Qualified Driver Class III (Tracked) and a few days later he went to the No #23 Basic Training Centre in Newmarket, Ontario.

Joe was on leave from September 6 to 19, 1943 and moved to 86 Yarmouth Street in Guelph. In November of that year, he was transferred to the Refresher Wing of the Officer Training Centre in Brockville, Ontario. From December 22, Joe was on special leave before reporting to the 1st Transit Camp in Windsor, Nova Scotia on January 3, 1944. As a Lieutenant, Joe left by sea for the United Kingdom and arrived there on February 24, 1944. He was then assigned to the 3rd Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit and a little later to the 2nd.

Joe continued to develop and followed the 1201 course of the 5th Battle Wing (Carrier) at the Canadian Military Head Quarters. This training lasted until April 7, 1944. On April 24, 1944, his second daughter, Margaret Jessie, was born in the General Hospital in Guelph.

Joe was taking the Canadian Reinforcement Unit's Course 10 (Wireless) in May. For his volunteer efforts, Joe was nominated for the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp on April 17.

On June 14, 1944 he went to the 11th Battalion of the 2nd Canadian Base Reinforcement Group and on July 26 to the 13th Battalion. The day had come for Joe to leave for northwestern Europe, arriving in France on July 30, 1944. He was then with the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade.



Joe became a Lieutenant in the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry on November 3, 1944. This was a reserve infantry regiment from Hamilton and belonged to the 4th Canadian Division. There was a museum in Hamilton.

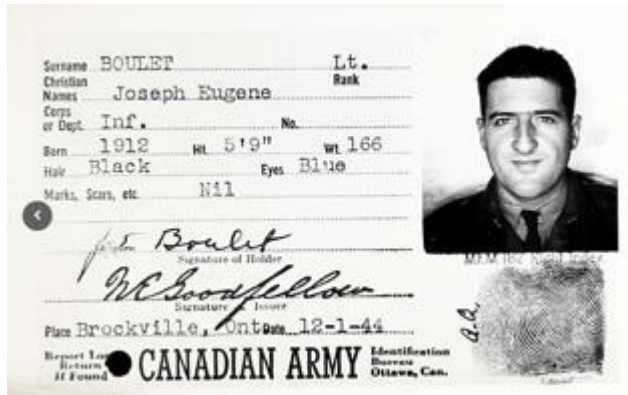


Photo: Boulet Family

The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry was ordered to cross the border from the Netherlands into Germany on February 14, 1945, towards Kalkar and Xanten, Germany. The regiment made slow progress on the road between Goch and Kalkar, because the roads were often flooded due to dike breaches. The road also ran along the Hochwald, where heavy fighting took place. They managed to capture a high point along the road near Louisendorf and repelled several attacks by the German forces. On the morning of February 20, the situation was critical with another attack, but aided by the tanks of the Fort Garry Horse, they managed to stabilize things the next day. The RHLI had no fewer than 125 people killed in action. They moved on towards Xanten to push the enemy back even further.



On the night of February 26, Joe's company had a position on either side of the Goch-Kalkar road. That night, another enemy counter-attack, supported by tanks, took place. Joe was walking around in his platoon cheering on the men when he was hit by a grenade from one of these tanks. He was immediately evacuated and taken to the hospital in St. Michielsgestel. There he died that same evening at 10.30 pm, after every attempt had been made to save him. He had received a blood transfusion, plasma and had underwent surgery. To no avail.

Joseph Eugene Boulet died on February 26, 1945, he was 32 years old. Joe was temporarily buried at the military cemetery in St. Michielsgestel, Netherlands, plot 1, row 5, grave 5.

On October 23, 1945 Joe was reburied like many of his comrades, at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **XVI. G. 7.**

Text on his tombstone:

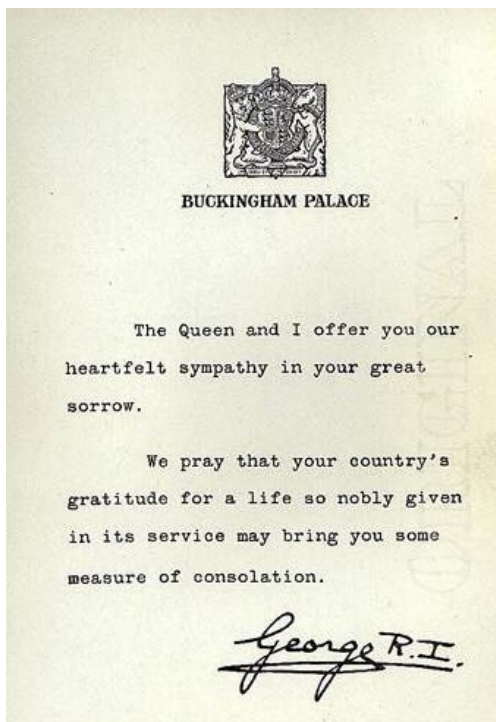
GREATER LOVE
HATH NO MAN THAN THIS,
THAT A MAN LAY DOWN
HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS

Joe received the following awards:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France and Germany Star
- War Medal 1939-1945
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal With Clasp



Photo: Else Schaberg, Faces To Graves



The Memorial Cross was sent to his mother Mima in Fort William and to his wife Elizabeth in Guelph. Elizabeth later remarried with Mr. Robinson.

Collection Boulet Family.



FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story: Liesbeth Huisman-Arts, Research Team Faces to Graves.

*Do you have a photo or additional information of this soldier, please contact info@facestograves.nl

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Library and Archives Canada
www.mta.ca/library/courage (index: The
Veterans - J.E. Boulet)
Veterans.gc.ca
Jane Ann Boulet, Joe's daughter
RHLI Museum in Hamilton



From: Guelph Newspaper

From March 1944 to February 1945 Joe wrote a number of letters home, there was also a letter from W. Denis Whitaker to Joe's wife, Elizabeth, after his death, these are partly on:

<https://www.mta.ca/library/courage>

Below is a brief summary of these letters:

"March 5, 1944: we arrived safely, though I can't say much, we had an uneventful journey and didn't get seasick. The journey got rougher and rougher, but we had no problems. We only get breakfast at 10am and dinner at 8pm, no drinks and only soft drinks at the bar. We have not seen our suitcases, they are somewhere in England. The coffee is horrible. Arrived in England at 5 Wing CTS, not noticed the big attack by planes. We were in the north of England and knew nothing about it. The citizens hardly dare to speak about the bombing of London.

March 20th, 1944: #2 CIRU; quite stiff physically, they try to replicate combat conditions as closely as possible to see how you react. I work four nights a week and at least we have plenty of bathtubs and hot water. My left shoulder feels like a pincushion after all the injections, I still have a bad cold and the only cure, they say, is to return to Canada.

April 17, 1944: not yet lost weight, the food is not too bad, little variety and often only white bread, jam and sweet pastries.

May 23, 1944: Last week I had to train with 42 men, a weak bunch, perhaps because they are not infantrymen. Saw a few acquaintances in the camp. Cannot travel, maximum 20 miles from camp. Hope to visit your people in Scotland. Take care of yourself and the little ones, hope Jane is okay, she's too cute a kid to sulk.

June 3, 1944: still very cold and coughing, will come here because of the humid weather. Yesterday we had meat, cheese, crackers, divine Fudge and a can of beans in our cabin. And hot chocolate.

June 23, 1944: Sunday night a bomb fell about four miles from here, no one was hurt.

July 9, 1944: Not much changes, glad our boys are doing so well in Italy.

August 5, 1944: #2 CBRG; moved a little more to the front lines yesterday, but moved that too, so doesn't matter much. Jerry bombing the night before last, no damage to the troops.

September 15th, 1944: HQ 4 Cnd. Inf. Nde; more and more land is being liberated and perhaps the war can end sooner. What role will the Canadian military play when this show is over.....

September 25th 1944: would like you to give me a new flashlight and batteries, left one when moving and can't go back. I now use a Jerry light but the batteries run out in a few days, will send them home as a souvenir...

October 6, 1944: we are still roaming somewhere in Europe, the general situation looks good and we follow the news from an English newspaper two or three days old. You folks back home know more than we do.

October 22, 1944: Things picked up again and we are as busy as the devil or even busier. With my driver lying upside down in our jeep and all the clothes were scattered, fortunately not injured and afterwards we laughed. Taken out of the hole with a carrier.

Nov 3rd, 1944: Royal Canadian Light Infantry D Company; time flies, I've been in action for three months now and thought it would be over already, but that doesn't seem like a long time yet. Hard to say what the harsh winter will do to people. Only after a week on again, busy as hell and constantly moving. Not much to write.

November 12, 1944: I'm doing reasonably well and I'm not sticking my neck out more than absolutely necessary. At the moment I don't want to go to Japan, when this is over, please settle down and live quietly with a bottle of good beer, which is not available here. Currently in the basement of a building and made a kind of light with a string and oil. It's cold and now understand what the last war was like in the mud and the rain and the melting snow.

November 19, 1944: changed position, we have a fire in a bucket and I am waiting for a kettle of water to warm up so that I can shave and wash, because that was already two weeks ago.

November 22, 1944: The war continues but maybe it will end one of these days and Johnny will come home again. The front is actually the best place to be unless the Jerry cuts supply routes and communications. I hope the package comes home safely and you like it, even if it doesn't look very luxurious.

December 3, 1944: Incarcerated as an officer on duty, so has to stay up all night. But I've been busy all day chopping logs for a roof over my head to keep out the rain. I'm pretty tired afterwards.

December 12, 1944: You should see my current home, self-made and underground. Installed a kind of stove yesterday, with a sewer pipe as part of the chimney. The only problem is that you have to go outside when the fire is on, that's how hot it gets.

January 9, 1945: They are now recruiting for the South Pacific, but I haven't heard anything official yet, besides I'm too old for it, so no problem. Entitled to seven days leave in England or Paris, rather go to England where they speak my language.

February 15, 1945: We are making good progress and quite a few prisoners taken, the Russians also continue to advance, so perhaps the end is soon in sight. After hostilities have ceased, it may be a while before we get home. Depends on whether the Canadian army joins the army of occupation. No one can say."

This was the last letter Joe Boulet wrote to his wife Elizabeth.

Below is a short version of W. Denis Whitaker's letter to Elizabeth on March 15, 1945:

It is with a feeling of deep regret that I am writing to you with regard to the passing of your husband, Joe. I extend to you my sincerest sympathy in your great and irreparable loss. I feel partially responsible for this

calamitous occurrence as it was myself who requested that Joe be transferred from the 4th Brigade to this battalion. From the day of his arrival he proved himself to be an extremely efficient officer. His strong and winning personal quality gained the respect, confidence and admiration of all those serving under him.

On the night of 26 February, Joe's company was holding a position astride the Goch-Calcar road. For over a week the enemy had been counterattacking relentlessly but each time they were driven off. On this night they came in again supported by tanks. Joe was moving about in his platoon encouraging his men when he was hit by a shell fired by one of the tanks. He was immediately evacuated but later died in hospital. He lies buried at St. Michielsgestel, Holland in the military cemetery.

I fully realize how deep your grief must be. However it may be some comfort to know that your husband died fearlessly for a just and good cause. His indomitable courage was at all times an inspiration to the men of his platoon.

Please do not hesitate to call me for any further information you may desire or if at any time I may be of service to you.

Again I offer to you my sincerest sympathy.

Yours sincerely, W. Denis Whitaker

C.N.T. 6123.

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Full-Rate Message	
Day Letter	D L
Night Message	N M
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a full-rate message. - Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

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PHONE 93

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DIRECTOR OF RECORDS.

821A MAR 7.

Collection Boulet Family

