

**Labelle, George Adrien**  
**21<sup>st</sup> Armoured Regiment**  
**Governor General's Foot Guards**  
**Royal Canadian Armoured Corps**  
**D 26301**



George Labelle was born on June 17, 1921 in Montreal, Quebec. His father died in 1928, nothing else was known about him. Mother Annie was also from Montreal and she remarried Charles Simmons. Mother died in 1942 in Quebec. The family was Roman Catholic.

George had five brothers, one of whom was a half-brother: the eldest was Elzear, born in 1919, followed by George and his brother Raymond, he was also from 1921 (twins?). Raymond volunteered with the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Service. Freddie was born next in 1923, followed by Roger in 1925. Half-brother Douglas Simmons was born around 1927 and was stationed in Ontario.

George left school at the age of fourteen. He attended school up to and including Grade 9, of which the last two years were High School. He spoke and wrote both English and French.

After school George went to work and had several jobs: five months as a waiter in a restaurant, also five months as a shoemaker's assistant, and several months as a farm assistant, where he broke his hand. In total, he had two years of experience on a farm. After this job, he tried to help in a laundry, but this adventure lasted only four weeks. For seven months George worked at St. Lawrence Wire Mills in Montreal, a company where they made steel wire around a so-called wire mill. But he did not want any of this anymore and volunteered for military service.

Montreal is Canada's second largest city and the capital of Quebec, located in southeastern Canada. George lived there until he enlisted. He was still single.

It was June 27, 1940 when he enlisted in Montreal and was assigned to the Canadian Grenadier Guards of the Canadian Active Service Force for his training as a Guardsman. George was just 19 years old then. In February 1941 he continued his training at Camp Borden and in February he had two weeks' leave. In January 1942 training continued at Camp Debart with the Canadian Armoured Regiment, the Canadian Grenadier Guards. In mid-March, George was a Trooper with the Canadian Armoured Corps.

George's stepfather was listed as his contact person and heir, but when mother Annie died, he named his eldest brother Elzear as his successor at the end of July 1942. In May 1944 this became his sister-in-law Anne, Elzear's wife.

In the meantime, George continued his training and was a Qualified Driver Class III Wheeled on 18 July 1942. In June, he was signed up for the One Good Conduct Stripe, a badge awarded after two years of loyal service with the Canadian Army Permanent Forces and worn on the left sleeve of the uniform. At the end of July, George had a week of special leave, probably because of the death of his mother. He also had a few days leave from Debart in September, after which they started to prepare for the crossing to the war in Europe. They embarked on September 26 and arrived in the United Kingdom on October 7, 1942. George was with the 16<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Brigade from December 10 to 16 of that year.



At the end of 1942 George got an evaluation: he was then 21 and a half years old. He was 5 ft12 tall and he weighed 168lb. At his first inspection in June 1940 he weighed 137lb, so military life had certainly served him well in that respect. George had a dark appearance, brown eyes and dark hair, he was well developed. He could drive a car as well as a truck and wanted to become a truck driver as well. In total they were at home with six brothers, one of whom was a prisoner of war in Dieppe, one was in the Navy and two brothers had been discharged from service for health reasons. As a hobby George collected stamps and he enjoyed football, softball, track sports, fishing and swimming.

In a report of February 1, 1943 George was described as a correct guy, he was calm, honest, big and strong. He liked working with guns and he seemed happy with his current job, he did not necessarily have to get promoted. He appeared youthful and stable, despite his many jobs in civilian life. He did lack the aggressive qualities for a Non Commissioned Officer.

From February 23 to April 21, 1943 George attended the Gunnery Course with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit, passing it. At the beginning of June of that year he was assigned to the Canadian Armoured Brigade of the 28<sup>th</sup> Armoured Regiment, and in October to the 21<sup>st</sup>. In early January 1944, George was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp for his dedication. Then in April he joined the 28<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Regiment with the British Columbia Regiment as Operator Gunner C. He was promoted to A/Corporal in the month of June and they were ready to go to France to the war. They arrived there on July 24, 1944. George was promoted to Corporal on September 1 with the Canadian Armoured Corps D Squadron 25<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Division.



At the end of October he was in the Netherlands with his regiment and was then Gunner Operator C with the Governor General's Foot Guards of the 21<sup>st</sup> Armoured Regiment.

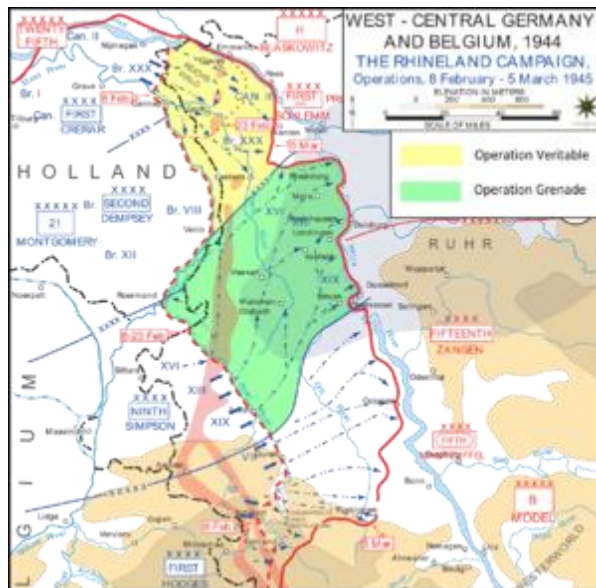
*GGFG Soldiers in 1944*

*Photo: militaryhistory-fandom*

## THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S FOOT GUARDS ROYAL CANADIAN ARMoured CORPS.

This regiment was a reserve unit of the infantry with both part-time and full-time soldiers and Sherman Tanks. They also had their own band and a ceremonial role at festivities in the traditional costume, including the Bearskin Hat (high black bear hat). In addition, it was a tank regiment that was being prepared for the battles in northwestern Europe. They took part in many battles, including the Battle of Falaise (August 1944) and the Battle of the Scheldt (October 1944). Most of them left for Great Britain by ship on September 23, 1942 and from there for France on July 22, 1944. They advanced from France via Belgium to the Netherlands and finally to Germany.

In the final phase of the battle, in late February, early March 1945, they participated in Operations Veritable and Blockbuster, in which the Allies marched together to defeat the enemy. When they were advancing towards Kalkar they were under heavy artillery fire. The conditions were bad, the Germans had dug deep trenches and the vehicles could only continue by road. It was one of the bloodiest battles of this war. The Governor General's Foot Guards lost 101 men and 284 men got wounded. They have their own Regimental Museum in Ottawa, housed in the Cartier Square Drill Centre. Here was also the centre of mobilization and training of the soldiers.



*Cartier Square Drill Hall in Ottawa Photo: GGFG History*

But George did not get that far; on January 19, 1945, cold with snow flurries and slippery conditions, he was killed by a very fatal accident. A good friend and teammate of George's was with him and some other soldiers in their quarters that day to get ready for a parade.

Guardman Bell had already cleaned his pistol (a Smith & Wesson 38) the night before, but wanted to polish the outside with a cloth. They were in the area of 's-Hertogenbosch that day. Guardman Bell was missing his index finger from the first joint and so it was sometimes difficult to hold things properly. The gun slipped from his right hand and he tried to grab





it, but he hit the trigger with his middle finger and a bullet hit Corporal Labelle in the stomach area. He immediately doubled up in pain and called out for help. They put him on the bed and someone went to look for the doctor. A medical officer arrived and administered first aid and gave him morphine. They took George to a 12<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance and a moment later he was taken in shock by an ambulance to the 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Hospital. The accident happened at 8.40 am, at 09.20 am George was in the ambulance and at 10.45 am he was in the hospital, where he was still receiving plasma, but unfortunately George died at 11 am. The cause of death was a Gun Shot Wound in his abdomen.

Of course his comrades were very shaken by this accident and Guardsman Bell was not be able to face trial until February 19. This was because the next day he himself was seriously injured in an explosion and he had to be taken to hospital. He was not to blame, but after he had recovered he had to answer to the military court after all. The witnesses were also heard and made a statement (see witness report). He was accused of being careless because he did not remove the bullet before cleaning the gun. Guardsman Bell received no pay for 28 days and 28 days of Field Punishment.

George Labelle was only 23 years old when he died and he was temporarily buried in the cemetery in Sint-Michielsgestel on January 26, 1945. On October 23, 1945 he was reburied at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **XVI. H. 14.**



*Photo: Frans van Capellen*

Corporal George Adrien Labelle received the following awards:

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



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

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

Consulted sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission  
Library and Archives Canada  
Veterans.gc.ca  
Footguards.ca/history  
Tracesofwar



*Cenotaph in Montreal, Photo: tracesofwar*



Witness report of the fatal accident of George January 19, 1945.

Witness

M102578 Gdsm Bell, E. 21 Cdn Armd Regt (GGFG) C.A.  
having been duly sworn states:-

"I am M102578 Gdsm Bell, E., 21 Cdn Armd Regt (GGFG) CA. At 0840 hrs. 19 Jan 45 I had removed my pistol from its holster to clean it. D26,301 Cpl Labelle, G.A., L107069 Gdsm Fuglstad, M.S. and B50,753 Gdsm Creor, J.J. were in the room at the time preparing for parade. D26301 Cpl Labelle, G.A. was about 5 feet from me. I had cleaned my pistol thoroughly the night before and was just going to remove any dirt on the outside of it. While I was rubbing it with a cloth the pistol slipped from my right hand and I grabbed for it and my second finger contacted the trigger firing the pistol. My index finger has been amputated from the first joint and it is difficult to hold some things and that is how I happened to strike the trigger with my second finger. The round that was fired struck D26,301 Cpl Labelle, G.A. in the stomach. We laid him on the bed and shortly afterwards the Medical Officer came and D26,301 Cpl Labelle, G.A. was given first aid and taken to the Regimental Aid Post."

Q.1 - Why did you not remove the rounds from your pistol to clean it?

A.1 - Because I was just going to rub off the outside of it and did not intend to touch any working parts.

Q.2 - Did you fire the round which struck D26,301 Cpl Labelle, G.A.?

A.2 - Yes.

Q.3 - What type of pistol did you have in your hand?

A.3 - Smith & Wesson 38.

Q.4 - Is the diagram marked Appendix A an accurate representation of the scene in your billet at 0840 hrs. 19 Jan 45?

A.4 - Yes it is.

~~The above is read back to the witness.~~

~~I hereby certify the above to be my statement.~~

*E. Bell*  
(M102578 Gdsm Bell, E.)

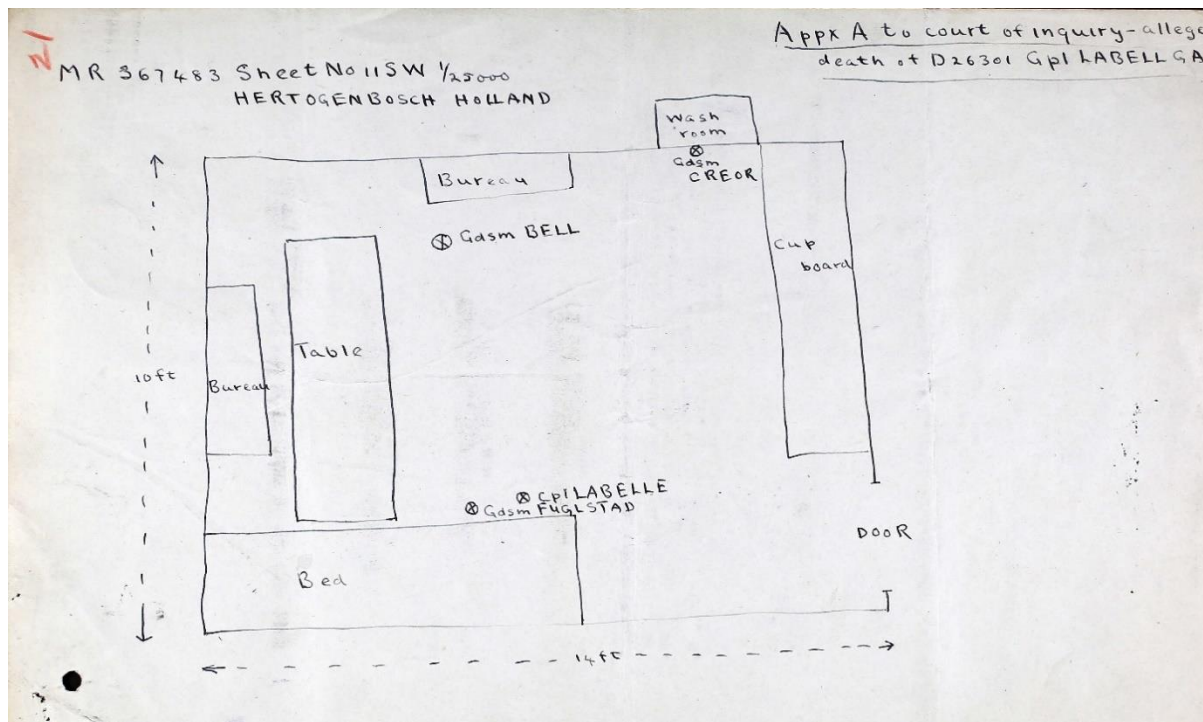
Witness

L107069 Gdsm Fuglstad, M.S. 21 Cdn Armd Regt (GGFG) CA.  
having been duly sworn states:-

"I am L107069 Gdsm Fuglstad, M.S. 21 Cdn Armd Regt (GGFG) CA. At 0840 hrs. 19 Jan 45 we were preparing for the morning parade. D26,301 Cpl Labelle, G.A. was standing about 1 1/2 ft to my right putting on his web belt. M102578 Gdsm Bell, E. was standing in front of me about 5 feet distant. We had taken his pistol from his holster and held it in one hand and a cloth in the other. I then turned to my left to pick up my gloves from the bed and heard a shot and on turning around D26,301 Cpl Labelle, G.A. was double up with both hands on his stomach. At this moment I heard M102578 Gdsm Bell, E. exclaim "Jesus Christ George!" D26,301 Cpl Labelle, G.A. instructed me to run for the Medical Officer which I did and on returning with the Medical Officer I found D26,301 Cpl Labelle, G.A. lying on the bed with his clothing loosened and blankets over him. The Medical Officer rendered aid and D26,301 Cpl Labelle, G.A. was removed to the ambulance at 0920 hrs."



Schedule as attachment of the witness report about the situation on sight



Page of his Soldier's Service and Paybook

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(XIV) PARTICULARS OF DENTAL TREATMENT

Date	Re-quired	Com-pleted	SPECIFICATION Use authorized Abbreviations and Symbols	Signature of Dental Officer
21/9/44	✓		2X-16F	P. J. Barnston Maj
29/9/44		✓		P. J. Barnston Maj

(1) SOLDIER'S NAME AND DESCRIPTION ON ATTESTATION

Regtl. No. D. 26301

Surname (in capitals) LABELLE

Christian Names (in full) George Adrien

Date of Birth 17 JUNE 1921

Place of Birth MONTREAL Que.

Trade on Enlistment LABOURER

Nationality of Father at birth CANADIAN

Nationality of Mother at birth English

Religion R.C.

Enlisted at MONTREAL Que.

Date 27 JUNE 1940

Particulars of former service (if any) i.e. Regtl. No., Corps and period.

Signature of Soldier G. A. Labelle

Signature of Officer L. Macdonald Lt.

Place MONTREAL Que. Date 27 JUNE 1940

T/A Labelle. D26301  
George Adrien