

McKay, Melvin

Rifleman

The Regina Rifle Regiment

Royal Canadian Infantry Corps

L/106584

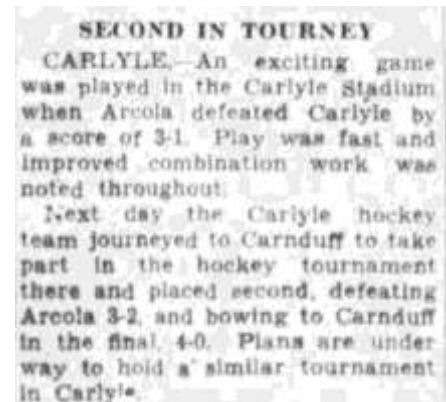


Melvin ("Buck") McKay was born 19 April 1925 at Belmont, a village southeast of Brandon, Manitoba. His father Roderick, a Canadian born son of Scottish immigrants, married his Icelandic mother Fjola Simonson at Stockton, Manitoba in 1921. They had two sons: Jack and Melvin, who later became known to his friends as "Buck". Roderick, who was Presbyterian and Fjola, a Lutheran, raised their boys under the United Church.



Roderick worked for Canadian National Railway (CNR) and moved his family to Carlyle, Saskatchewan in 1936 where he became the foreman for their coal dock operation. Buck's sport growing up was hockey and he was captain for the Carlyle team. He also enjoyed baseball and

playing billiards. Buck stayed in school until 1941, completing grade 9 at age sixteen. He then worked at different labour jobs and gained employment with CNR as a section man through his father. His older brother Jack joined the Canadian Army and became a trooper with the Armoured Corps. Buck also decided to enlist after turning 18.



Regina Leader Post January 1937

Buck attested 20 July 1943 at Regina. His medical examination described him as 5'7" tall, 131 lbs with blonde hair and blue eyes. During his interview Buck told the officer he read considerably, especially mystery magazines. He was interested in mechanics and followed his brother into the Armoured Corps. Buck was sent to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan for basic training and suffered a broken ankle there 13 August 1943. He was transferred to the Regina Military Hospital a week later and was finally discharged 11 November, receiving a further four weeks sick leave at home to convalesce.

The photograph below of Buck and some friends may have been taken at Carlyle around this time. Robert ("Babe") Gerald Robinson from Walpole had enlisted with the Canadian Army. His older brother Cecil was killed in Germany while flying a mission June 1942. George Tonnellier moved to Carlyle in 1941 and became a signalman with the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve in April 1943. Jacob ("George") Pontius was from the nearby Osage area and joined the Royal Canadian Air Force November 1943.



L. to R.: Babe Robinson, Buck (Melvin) McKay, George Tonnellier, George Pontius.

Buck returned to Prince Albert 15 December and finally completed his basic training the next spring. During his exit interview 27 April 1944 his officer remarked of Buck: 'Smart soldier, good possibility NCO (Non-Commissioned Officer)'. Buck was sent to Camp Shilo, Manitoba for eight weeks advanced infantry training in May and was cleared for overseas service. He entrained to Camp Debert, Nova Scotia 22 September and disembarked in the U.K. 20 October 1944 where he was assigned to the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit. Buck crossed the English Channel to Northwest Europe the next month and was taken on strength with the Regina Rifle Regiment (RRR) 12 December 1944.

The RRR, also known as the 'Farmer Johns' or Reginas, along with the other 7th Brigade battalions (The Royal Winnipeg Rifles and The Canadian Scottish) of 3rd Canadian Infantry Division were among the first Commonwealth infantry units to land at Juno Beach (Courseulles-sur-Mer) and suffered heavy D-Day losses. The RRR battled their way through Normandy and helped liberate Channel ports before engaging in the Battle of the Scheldt (the opening of the deep-water port at Antwerp).

The RRR and 7th Brigade were tasked with static operations near Nijmegen, Netherlands 8 November 1944 where much of the activity involved patrolling and sniping against a well-entrenched enemy. Buck joined them there as a replacement rifleman and was able to meet his brother Jack in Holland.



Personnel of the Regina Rifles preparing to attack enemy in Moyland Wood near Calcar, Germany, 16 February 1945.

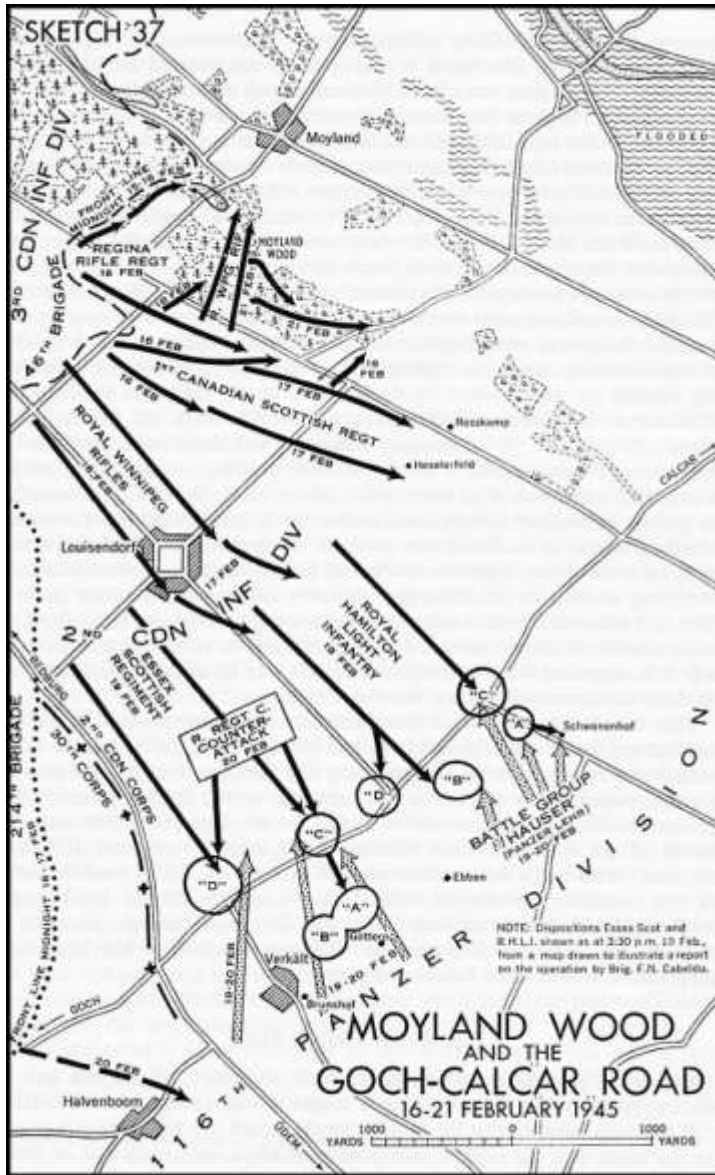
The RRR finally moved out with their 7th Brigade and 3rd Infantry Division 8 February 1945 as part of the First Canadian Army under Operation VERITABLE. They advanced through bombed out Cleve, Germany mounted on Kangaroo armoured personnel carriers and spent five days clearing the Germans from Moyland Wood 16-21 February 1945.

First The Regina Rifles and then The Canadian Scottish attacked but were stalemated and repulsed by determined German paratroopers. The Reginas attacked again on 18 February, making limited progress while suffering heavy casualties and battle fatigue amongst their troops. According to the RRR War Diary on that date, the shelling and fighting at Moyland Wood had been just as bad as anything encountered in Normandy.

The Canadian Scottish staged another unsuccessful attack on Moyland Wood 19 February, and it fell to The Royal Winnipeg Rifles to finally clear the Germans 21 February 1945. Buck McKay was with "B" Company when he was listed as "Killed in Action" at Moyland Wood 19 February age 19, although that may have been when his body was recovered.



Moyland Wood, Germany February 1945



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 1945



KILLED: Mr. and Mrs. Rod McKay, Carlyle, have been advised their youngest son, Melvin Melville McKay was killed in action in Holland. "Buck" McKay, as he was better known around Carlyle, was in his 20th year. Two years ago he enlisted, and in the fall of 1944 he went overseas, and was in action with the Regina Rifles when killed. A brother, Jack McKay, is on active service in Holland, and the two had met just a short time before "Buck" was killed.

Regina Leader-Post March 1945

Rifleman M. McKay was temporarily buried at Bedburg, Germany and later relocated to Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery grave reference **XI. H. 3.**



Photo courtesy lestweforget1945.org

The inscription on his headstone:

SO YOUNG AND BRAVE,
OUR BELOVED SOLDIER SON.
EVER REMEMBERED.
MOTHER, DAD & BROTHER

Melvin McKay's campaign medals:

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

Melvin McKay's name is listed with their WW2 fallen at the Carlyle, SK cenotaph.

Carlyle, Saskatchewan Cenotaph



McKay Lake, Saskatchewan was named after him as a geo-memorial site.



Biography by Jim Little, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources Consulted:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Veteran Affairs Canada – Canadian Virtual War Memorial

Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial <https://svwm.ca/casualty-display/?ID=A000009258>

Saskatchewan Legion Military Recognition Book 08: <https://www.sasklegion.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/SKCL08.pdf>

Ancestry public trees

Newspapers.com

Carlyle, Saskatchewan postcard picture <http://prairie-towns.com/carlyle-images.html>

Regina Rifles WWII information <http://www.reginarifles.ca/index.htm>

Reid, Brian (2010). *Named by the Enemy - A History of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles*

Regina Rifles Moyland Wood picture and War Diary
<https://www.junobeach.org/canada-in-wwii/articles/liberation-of-the-netherlands-and-capitulation-of-germany/regina-rifle-regiment-war-diary-16-18-february-1945/>

Moyland Wood Battle map and information
<https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/UN/Canada/CA/Victory/Victory-18.html>

Carlyle, Saskatchewan Cenotaph picture <https://www.sasktoday.ca/south/in-the-community/carlyles-royal-canadian-legion-honours-the-queen-5856246>

* Do you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact <mailto:info@facestograves.nl>

Melvin ("Buck") McKay and two of his friends from Carlyle are listed in the Saskatchewan Legion Military Recognition Book.

McKAY, Melvin "Buck"

WWII

Buck moved with his parents Rod and Fjola McKay and brother, Jack, to Carlyle, SK in 1936. His father worked at the coal docks for the C.N.R. Buck received his education in Carlyle. He joined the Regina Rifles of the Canadian Army. Melvin was killed in action.



PONTIUS, Jacob "George"

WWII

George was born on September 21, 1924 in the Osage area. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force on November 1, 1943 and trained at Fort Erie, ON as an aircraft assembly mechanic. He served in the military, but did not go overseas. He received the CVSM Service Medal & Can. War Medal. George was discharged in 1946. George passed away on December 25, 1991 at the age of 67 years.



TONNELIER, George

WWII

George moved to Carlyle in 1941. When he completed his High School he joined the R.C.N.V.R. in April of 1943. He served as a signalman on a minesweeper in the English Channel. George served on HMCS "Bayfield" and took part in the VD Day Invasion of France. He was discharged in November, 1945. After coming out of the Navy, he continued in the printing trade, at which he had become interested during his school years in time spent with Frank O'Neill in the Observer Office. George married Elsie Hermanson and raised one girl and two boys.

