

Rowell, Roger Albert

Private

Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps

B 58075



Roger Albert Rowell was born on May 20, 1915 in Minesing, a small village near Barrie, Ontario. His parents, James Henry "Harry" Rowell (1885-1964), a widower and farmer in Vespra Township, and Pearl Priest Rowell (1895-1978) were married in Barrie on November 12, 1913. He had two brothers Eric and Keith and three sisters Florence, Beatrice and Agnes. The family attended the United Church of Canada.

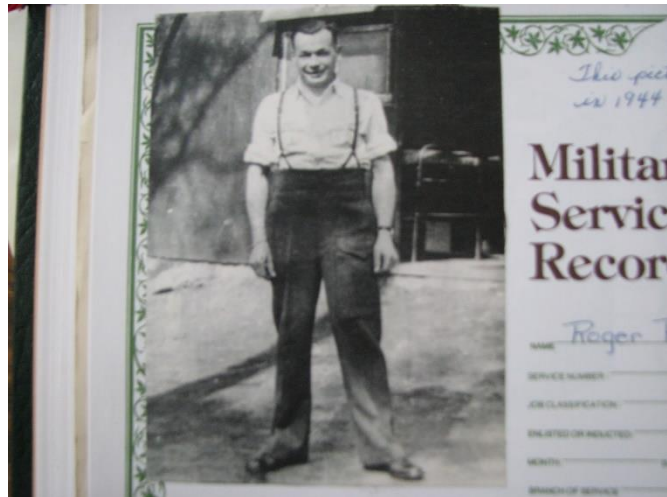
He moved south to Toronto, Ontario. After attending high school for two years, Roger Rowell worked as a truck driver and mechanic for King Paving Company from 1934 to 1937.



He worked as a salesman for G.S. Hubbard Soap Company from 1937 to 1941.

He enlisted in the Canadian army on January 24, 1942 in Toronto, Ontario. His personnel report stated that he signed up for the army because "most of his friends joined up." He was single.

His basic training was completed in Toronto. His medical records showed that he stood five foot eight inches and weighed 147 pounds. He had hazel eyes and brown hair. He enjoyed skating; fishing in both fly and bait forms and playing right field in baseball.



Private Rowell served as a storeman in the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps attached to the 2nd Ordnance Field Park unit. He was sent overseas and disembarked on May 3, 1942 in the United Kingdom. He was posted in Northwest Europe serving from April 17 to October 11 of 1945 in the Netherlands and Germany. After the war ended, he was assigned to the 1st Canadian Ordnance Demobilization Depot in his trade of storeman.



In the early hours of October 11, 1945, tragedy struck when Private Rowell was involved in a road accident and sustained fatal injuries with burns and fractures.

He died in hospital later that evening. He was 30 years old.

A military board of inquiry on October 12 determined that Private R.B. Brunette, along with Private R. A. Rowell, had driven a lorry on an unauthorized trip that resulted in the tragic accident. Normally, Private Brunette drove the vehicle in his duty of carrying rations to the military barracks at Nijmegen from Grave, the Netherlands.

But the two soldiers had gone out for the night to Turnhout, in Belgium, which was a 99-kilometre drive. After dinner and drinks, they headed back to their barracks. The accident occurred at 2:10 a.m. near the barracks at Grave.

"I must have become drowsy because the vehicle left the road and smashed in a tree on the left hand side of the road," testified Private Brunette at the hearing. "I was thrown clear of the lorry and landed in the field unconscious. When I came to, I saw my truck burning and some civilians getting Private Rowell free."

"FORM CMHQ 1000:42A PASSED TO CLAIMS OFFICER

At..... 1-0-45 On..... 12/22/45"

1/30 CMHQ 1000:42
AFA 3676 (Cdn Revision)
40/P & 9/337 (4778)

ROAD ACCIDENT REPORT

PART I—DRIVER TO FILL IN IMMEDIATELY AT SCENE OF ACCIDENT

Do not admit liability. Give your name and unit to other party and refer him to Canadian Claims Commission, 2 Cockspur St, Trafalgar Square, London.

Date of Accident **11 OCT 1945** Time **0210 HRS**

Place of Accident **MAPLE LEAF UP - Near GRAVE BARRACKS**

No., Rank and Name of Driver **D.143770 PTE BRUNETTE R.G.**

Unit **1 CDN ORD DEMOB DEPOT RCOC** Formation **ARMY**

Vehicle, WD number **CL 4238899** Make **FORD** Type **60 CWT**

Exact nature of duty **Not Authorised**

..... Journey from **TURNHOUT** to **GRAVE**

Work Ticket No. **--** Authorized by **Not Authorised**

Loaded or unloaded **Unloaded** Speed of Cdn Vehicle **Approx 30-35 M.P.H.**

Condition of Road Surface **Good** Speed of other Vehicle **N/A**

Visibility, (Clear, Foggy, raining, etc) **Clear Night** Density of Traffic **None**

Warning given, if any, and how **N/A**

LIGHTS. Left front **Yes** State whether full or dim **Full**

Right front **Yes**

Rear **Yes**

Was reflector displayed? **Yes**

Was the accident reported to the Pblce? **No** Where? **N/A**

WITNESSES NAMES ADDRESSES (Obtain signed statements and attach)

N I L

OTHER VEHICLE(S) PERSONS & PROPERTY INVOLVED: (BE CERTAIN TO OBTAIN NAMES OF DRIVER AND OWNER)

Registration No. Make Type

Name of Insurance Company

State whether collision coverage with or without excess

Name of Driver Address **C O N E**

Name of Owner

Nature of damage claimed, if any

Persons injured or complaining of injuries Names **B.58075 PTE ROWELL R.** Addresses

..... **On CM Staff of 1 CDN ORD DEMOB DEPOT RCOC**

Damage to other property

Owner Address

DRIVER WILL ALSO COMPLETE STATEMENT AND DIAGRAM OVER PAGE

Testimony was given by W. van Boekel who lived nearby at 22 Bosschebaan in Velp near Grave. He was awakened by the crash at about 2:15 a.m. and he heard "calls for help" as well as he observed the vehicle on fire. He went to the scene where he pulled Private Rowell "who groaned terribly" from the burning wreckage. He sent his wife away for blankets and a neighbour's son to notify the Grave barracks. Soon a Dutch Red Cross ambulance arrived at the scene and took the injured men to the hospital in Nijmegen.

- 4 -

SEVENTH
WITNESS

Translation of the Statement given by Mr W Van Boekel.

(See Appx "A" attached for Dutch statement)

"I am W van Boekel, living at 22 Bosschebaan in Velp nr. Grave.

At about 2.15 hrs in the night of Thursday the 11th of October 1945 I heard a crash after which calls for help. From the window of my bedroom I saw fire at about 100 metres distance. I dressed and went to the spot.

At about 15 metres from a burning truck I saw a soldier lying on the ground who made it clear there was still another soldier in the burning truck. I approached the vehicle and saw it toppled over on its side against a tree. Underneath the fender I saw two feet. As far as the heat permitted I approached the vehicle and succeeded in getting out the victim, who groaned terribly and from the words he uttered I only understood "kill". With the exception of some clothes around his breast the rest had all been burnt.

It was necessary to remove him further away from the truck as the heat was increasing. I sent my wife for some blankets and a pillow and a son of my neighbours went to the Grave Barracks, together with a driver of a truck who had parked his vehicle in the neighbourhood to stay there overnight, to fetch an M.O.

In the meantime a Dutch Red Cross vehicle arrived which took up the victim and his comrade, to go to a hospital in Nijmegen.

Before leaving however medical assistance had arrived who examined the victims.

The time between removing the victim from the truck and the arrival of the Dutch Red Cross was about 15 minutes. It took about half an hour until medical assistance arrived from the Grave Barracks."

Velp, 13 October 1945.

(sgd) W van Boekel.



The board of inquiry decided that Private Brunette, who recovered from serious injuries in hospital, was guilty of improper conduct and sentenced to six months of detention.

Private Rowell was buried in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave references **XV. H. 16.**

His headstone bears a cross image without an inscription.



Private Roger Rowell was awarded the France-Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the War Medal, and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

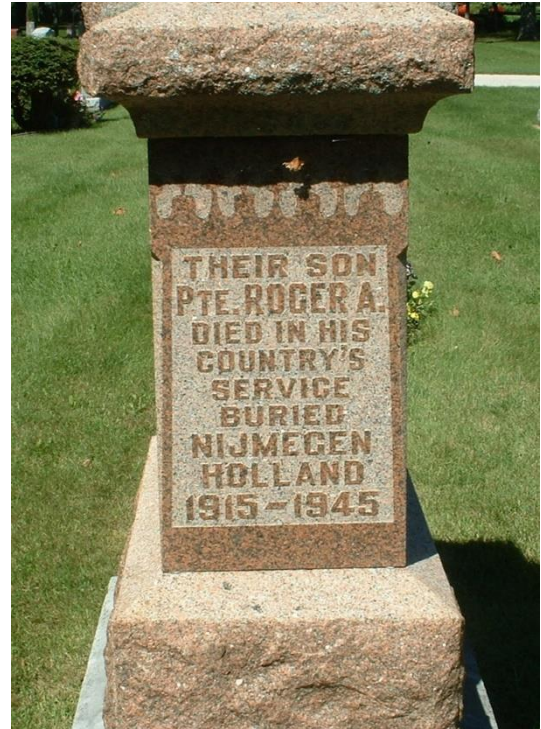


Biography: Jill McDuff, student from All Saints H.S., Kanata, Canada for Faces to Graves, courtesy of Vanessa Kirtz, All Saints H.S. Additional research and editing provided by Kurt Johnson.

Sources

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Library and Archives Canada
- Ancestry.ca
- Canadian Veterans Affairs Virtual War Memorial
- Pictures provided by Roger's nephew Terry Roger Rowell

Family headstone pays tribute to their son Roger Rowell



His name is listed on the cenotaph in Vespra near Barrie, Ontario.