

THE MEMOIRS OF RIFLEMAN BILL ROSS.

SERVING DURING 1944 AND 1945 WITH

THE QUEEN'S OWN RIFLES OF CANADA.

NORMANDIE BEACHES ON D-DAY,

THROUGH FRANCE, BELGIUM, HOLLAND AND GERMANY.

During our trip to The Netherlands this April & May to commemorate the 55th. Anniversary of the liberation Holland, the end of the war, and to dedicate memorial Plaques in Honour of our fallen comrades, We received a number of requests to write our memoirs of what took place during the liberation of Holland.

As we have been silent too long after all these years, I thought it would be very difficult to overlook the arduous, murderous and bloody battles that took place from Normandy to Holland.

There were eight of us who joined the regiment just one month before the invasion as we only arrived overseas in March. We were training on the outskirts of Aldershot when the Sergeant Major requested eight volunteers to go to a regiment. Our tent volunteered so McCullough, McNab, Bob Nicol, Phillips, Seymour, Shepherd, Smole and yours truly, Bill Ross, ended up in a camp in Chilworth which was full of American paratroopers who had just arrived from North Africa. They were using our camp as a transit as the regiment we were joining were off practicing the last invasion landings. The Americans left and the rugged Queen's Own Rifles showed up to meet the eight greenhorns. We were separated With McCullough and McNab going to A co'y Bob Nicol went to B co'y, Phillips, Seymour and Ross went to C co'y Shepherd and Smole went to D co'y.

I went to 14 platoon of C co'y, Lt.Harris was our officer, Bill Murray was Sergeant, Cpl. Fletcher was our section leader and the Company Commander was Major A.O. Nickson with Capt. W.D. Stewart our 2I/C. Being new to the regiment we never did get a chance to meet all the guys or know their names before going into action. Once we went into action then your rifle section or platoon and the rest of your rifle company were your closest friends.

Bob Nicol and I chummed around for a couple of weeks, going down to Southampton on the week-ends to dances at the Guild Hall and having a little social life, plus sightseeing the region around the centre of town, we managed to visit a few pubs.

The camp was sealed and no further leaves could be had about two weeks before the planned invasion. Our days were taken up with lectures of the invasion plans, plus seeing mock ups of the German fortifications, area views and distinguishing land marks of our landing objectives which were all in code names. Each rifle company and each platoon down

to each section were given instructions of what they must do to achieve success in gaining their objectives.

As mentioned earlier, our camp was under canvas on the outskirts of Chilworth and at night we were subject to German aircraft flying over on reconnaissance flights and as they flew over the ack-ack guns would fire at them while searchlights swept the sky. We had slit trenches by our tents and being a greenhorn I thought it funny to see a group of guys standing in their underwear with steel helmets on watching the guns in action and yet shrapnel was falling around from the ack-ack shells.

It is now June the 2nd, A and B companies had left earlier to board their LSI (Landing Ship Infantry) Then we departed on trucks that drove us to Southampton and our company boarded LSI H.M.S. Duke of Wellington, which would also take on British bicycle troops. When our ship was loaded with personnel, we moved out into the estuary of Southampton to await the assembly of the invasion fleet. I recall the crew of the ship had painted the water tanks prior to our embarking and the water we were to drink had a very strong odor and taste of lead paint. On Saturday morning, the ship went back to port to flush the water tanks in hopes that the water would be more drinkable.

On Saturday, when standing along the rail of the deck, we had an opportunity to see Winston Churchill and Gen Jan Smuts of South Africa as they went by in a motor launch inspecting the invasion fleet. The invasion had been scheduled for June 5th, but due to extremely bad weather, the invasion was rescheduled by the high command.

We were billeted in Dieppe hold of the ship, and the crew informed us that they had participated in the Dieppe raid in 1842, where the 2nd Canadian division suffered so severely in losses of men and equipment. The Cdn. Black Watch were aboard and were in the process of priming their grenades when one accidentally fell with the detonator in and exploded, causing casualties, which is why this hold was named Dieppe. I mention this because when we were informed that the invasion was on, we proceeded to the deck by sections and two of us went into a concrete block house on the deck accompanied by a corporal, and we primed our grenades. So if an accident did occur there would be no great loss of lives or injuries. This was a lesson learned from the events of Dieppe.

When it was announced on Monday evening that the invasion was on, we were informed of our objective by name, which was Bernieres-Sur-Mer. We reviewed our landings and checked our equipment, wrote letters to home and settled down for the channel crossing. Our ship left the estuary later in the evening than a lot of the other slower vessels and it was quite a sight as we sailed forward between the silhouette of the many other ships of all shapes and sizes. When I think of it, it was a marvel of planning and navigation to have over 6400 ships sailing over a fifty mile frontage swept by mine sweepers, protected on the right and left flanks by a variety of naval vessels and scheduled to arrive at their specific coastline objectives at the designated hour of the landings.

We had a very early morning breakfast around 4 AM. an early morning prayer, and put on our equipment which varied between 50 and 75lbs. Had a shot of the navy rum and then headed for our boarding area on LCAs

(Landing Craft Assault. We were lucky in that we were able board the assault craft at deck level and then lowered to the water rather than use a scrambling net. We circled around the ship until the rest of the assault craft were loaded and then proceeded to the shoreline of five landing craft of C company and supporting troops. Orders were given to circle around again as the landing had been delayed as the supporting tanks for A and B companies were late, but as time was of the essence A and B companies received orders to land without tank support. During this delay, the navy guns had been plastering the defenses along the beach and as the lead companies approached the beach, volleys of rockets were fired from flat deck ships to help neutralize the mine fields and beach obstacles. We are now moving in, the sea was rough and sea sickness was starting to have its effect on some of us; the German field guns are ranging in on us as we approach, plumes of water are shooting up in the air, there was an RAF fighter aircraft flying at low level over the beach who was hit by our rockets and crashed. I don't know if he survived.

We are now at the beach, our landing craft was on the extreme left of our landing location just in front of the big house. (Now established as La Maison Queen's Own Rifles.) We disembarked in water up to our armpits and made our way up the beach. During the run up the beach up to the seawall, my lance corporal of the Bren gun group spotted a mine in my path and warned me, which saved my butt. There were a number of tanks landing at the same time and we used them for cover as the snipers were still very active and Sgt. K.D. Jamieson was shot through the throat. However, A and B companies had done a tremendous job of silencing the major beach defenses. Our section was supposed to go around the right perimeter of the town of Bernieres-Sur-Mer but we were cut off from the rest of the company so went on to the right of the railway station and found the road going up toward the church. There was a sniper firing down the railway tracks which we managed to bypass and went by the church and chateau to the outskirts of the town where we took up defensive positions to await the arrival of tanks and the Regiment de la Chaudiere who are to go through us to the next objective.

We were sitting along the verge of the roadside overlooking the hay fields and we could hear our tanks moving into an apple orchard about 200 yards behind us to the left of the road, then several more tanks appeared from around a wall of the chateau behind us on the right of the road and the Chaudieres started to appear. There were three tanks in the field to our right when all hell broke loose as there was a German 88 anti tank gun in front of us at about 1500 yards which opened fire on the tanks in the field to our right and two of the tanks were hit within minutes. Our Col. Jock Sprague yelled to our mortars to fire and drop smoke, the tanks started to blow up from within, a wounded tank man was screaming as he burned alive, parts of the tanks started to fly around, we rolled down to the ditch for further protection. A German machine gun opened up on our position wounding an artillery officer behind me as he was trying to spot the German anti-tank gun. Our mortar platoon silenced the gun and a tank with a section of riflemen went forward and silenced the machine gun and took a number of prisoners in a German communication trench on the right of the road. Things quietened down and the Chauds and tanks moved forward to the next objectives which were Beny-sur-mer and Basly. We had mounted on the rear of tanks to make an armoured push through the Chaudieres at

Basly but the road was so congested with traffic that we got off the tanks and went forward on foot.

As we went through Basly on the way to Anguerney, the Germans started shelling us again and our officer Lt. J.P. Harris was hit with shrapnel in the arm, another rifleman went into shock and never survived. We pushed on and we came under machine gun fire from the right as we dived to the roadside for protection. The machine gun must have been firing on a fixed trajectory as we got orders to move on as the bullets flew over us. We entered Anguerney and more action as we took four prisoners from a farm yard. One was in farmer's clothes but with German boots on, an elderly women came out screaming, "my son, my son." I told her, in French, that he had German boots on but again she cried, "my son my son." I told her to take him in the house and get the German boots off and stay in the house. She kissed my hand and thanked me "merci, merci." Bill Murray our sergeant, sent Rfn West over and he took the three prisoners to the beach. We continued on to the outskirts of the town and then were given instructions to move beyond the town and take up defensive positions by a crucifix at the side of the road about 1000 yards south of the town. Our section was given the position to dig in at the left of the crucifix and Rfn Pringle and I were given the extreme left position. We just started to dig with our entrenching tool when suddenly a German machine gun opened up on us from about 300 yards in a small woods to our left frontage. All we could do is eat dirt and lie behind a hedge where we were digging our trench. The bullets were flying over our backs, the Cameron Highlanders support machine gun fired over us to silence the German fire and our prayers were answered. Needless to say we dug a little faster to get our slit trench finished. We had just finished our trench when three Germans came across the field from the direction of the machine gun with their hands up. I held my rifle on them while Rfn Pringle led them into our lines. One had been hit during the exchange of fire and they felt surrendering was the best thing for them to do.

As night was fast approaching, Major Nickson sent another rifleman to a listening position about 400 yards in front of us. Most of the night we were on stand-to as we expected to be counter-attacked. There was action behind us with our other two platoons at different intervals of the night. Further behind us, the Chauds had a battle with the Germans. Our D co'y. had advanced further to their objective at Anisy and dug in which was one of the deepest penetrations of the beachhead on D-Day Of the allied seaborne landings. This basically was our effort on the first day of the invasion and there are many other stories could be told by the riflemen of the day.

After stand to on the D-Day+1, things appeared reasonably quiet except that we had a number of our tanks join us in the field to the right of the road and crucifix and we were also joined with a 6 pounder anti-tank gun which dug in and cleared a field of fire through the hedge about thirty feet from Pringle and I. The gun crew was from our regimental support company and later in the day another 6 pounder gun crew came up and dug in to strengthen our position.

The tanks started firing on targets beyond Anisy so we realized something was happening to the south of us which we were to learn later was the North Nova Scotia highlanders attacking. The gun fire became more intense and the tanks left us in a hurry as we later learned that

the Germans were counter-attacking so there was a lot of uncertainty. We had been satisfying our hunger with small portions from our 24-hour pack as we were not receiving any meals at this time, I had lost a tin of bully beef the previous day which I had stuffed in with my entrenching tool and must have fallen out when I was diving for safety. One of the sergeants from the 6 pounder crew came over to the slit trench and gave me a tin of ox-tail soup from their Compo rations which was very much appreciated to say the least. Later that day 10 of us were selected to go on patrol and make contact with our D company at Anisy. Up the road in the direction of Mathieu we made contact with a British scout car and we then headed along railway tracks towards Anisy, keeping vigil every step until we made contact with our guys who just had a skirmish with a German patrol and had taken some prisoners. We returned to our lines by a different route and made ready for stand-to in the event of patrols or stronger forces approaching our positions.

The D-Da+2 was reasonably quiet, Capt. Stewart gave me permission to go back in the village and wash up as we hadn't seen water for two days. A young French boy came riding down the road from Anguerney to pass our lines and I had to stop him. He was going for bread but we couldn't allow him to pass through and I was told to take him back in town to brigade headquarters for further questioning. As we walked through the street, we passed his house with the mother leaning out the window calling me all the names under the sun. I left him at the headquarters and assume the young lad was released and allowed to go home later on.

When I think about it now, we were very, very fortunate that we were never counterattacked at this time as over on our left, the British from Sword Beach were being counterattacked by the 21st. Panzers from the German-held corridor to the beach between the British and ourselves. Had the Germans decided to swing left and attack us I doubt if I would be writing these memoirs. At the same time, the rest of the Canadian front was being counter-attacked and the fighting was very severe. The Canadians and British held the lines but as we were to learn later, many Canadians who had been taken prisoner were deliberately shot by their captors, the 12th. SS Hitler Youth.

On the fourth day, we were boarding trucks to move to new positions, low flying Messerschmidts swooped over us as we dived for safety. Fortunately we were not their targets so we were transported to Bray to reinforce the Regina Rifles position following a counter-attack on their lines. In this area, we were to stabilize the front and here again we were delegated for more patrol work.

Our platoon was selected to go on a scouting and fighting patrol to determine the German positions on the outskirts of Rots. As we went through the field, our new platoon officer, Lt. Jackson instructed us to crawl in single file through the hay fields and over a ridge. The Germans spotted us as we went over the ridge and opened fire with rifles, rifle grenades, trench mortars and machine guns. As we could go no further ahead without incurring severe casualties, our officer instructed us to crawl back as best we could. At this point, we had four casualties. Two riflemen had been killed and Cpl. Burroughs had been wounded. Rfn. W.G. Edmonds picked him up and ran him to safety but was also wounded in the process. Rfn. Edmonds was later awarded the Military Medal for his very brave deed.

The rest of us were able to crawl to safety over a great period of time. The only time we could crawl without detection was to wait until the wind blew the hay and move through the hay while the wind was making movement. In this way the rest of the platoon were able to return safely and without further casualties. As we were returning to our lines, an American Thunderbolt flew over our heads and he was in trouble with smoke streaming from his tail and crash landed in fields not very far from us. I guess this is one of the occasions when news reports state the front was quiet with routine patrol work on several fronts but to those on patrol, it was a lifetime.

Our positions at Bray were in the same field as self-propelled 105 howitzers mounted on tank chassis. Unfortunately our slit trenches were in front of the guns so when they fired we were subject to the muzzle blast and concussion and they fired quite often. Each day, squadrons of American Flying Fortresses flew over us on bombing raids. As they crossed over Carpiquet airport, the German anti aircraft guns fired on them and in turn the SP field guns opened up on the Germans to silence their guns so it was pretty hard on our ears with this type of action.

By coincidence, one day a tank moved into the same field and a head came out from the top of the tank with a familiar face, a high school buddy of mine who had been up forward spotting the German ack-ack guns at the airport and relaying their position to the SP guns. I don't know if Tom Stalgitis survived the war as I have never run into him since.

June 11th started off as a very nice day. All was quiet, a time to clean up, clean our weapons and have a moment of leisure. About 1100h we received orders that we were going into attack with the 1st Hussars tank regiment and we were under their command. The plan was that D company would lead the attack sitting on the back of tanks, followed by A company who would pass D company at Le Mesnil Patry and consolidate beyond and then we of B and C companies would push through them to an objective about 5 kilometres further called Cheux.

The start line would be from the Regina Rifles position at Norrey en Bessin and was scheduled for 1300h without reconnaissance or artillery support. The plan was ill-conceived. Originally scheduled for the 12th, it was hurriedly advanced a day when our regiment were only notified just two hours before the start with very little time for us to know the complete details before starting the attack. The tankers had new crews and new tanks to make up from earlier losses and they had difficulty in communication on their wavelengths which the Germans monitored and were able to take advantage of. The actual attack did not start until after 1400h. The tanks were supposed to stop and let the riflemen off at the start line but they roared right by for about 300 yards and then all hell broke loose as the tanks were among German positions and our fellows were targets on the back of the tanks and hand-to-hand fighting took place. Some of our fellows got into the town and caused havoc among the German positions, several suffered wounds including Lt. Bean. Sgt. Scrutton gathered the group onto the back of a tank and rode back through a field of fire to safety but not before two more riflemen lost their lives. All this was happening when we were sitting on the back of tanks awaiting the orders to advance. We are given orders to get off the tanks and dig in as indications are a counter-attack is expected and shells started bursting in the field beside us. Things eventually quietened down and I can remember 12

rifleman from D company coming into our position, head and shoulders down from the horror that they had just survived.

Our D company casualties were 55 killed, 38 wounded, 11 taken prisoner of whom six were to be murdered by the Hitler Youth troops. Five survived P.O.W. camp. The company had a strength of 135 men before the attack. The tankers had 80 casualties, lost 37 tanks, and some of the tankers were taken prisoner and were murdered. One tanker feigned dead for three days and managed to escape and live to tell the story. While this attack would appear to have failed, when it was realized the possibility of a counter-attack was forming up to attack the beachhead, calls were made to the artillery and naval guns for fire which was devastating and subdued any of the German intentions in that area which remained calm for a little while until Montgomery landed more divisions to broaden the beachhead.

Several days later, The Queen's Own moved up to Bretteville and Norrey-en-Bessin where we took over Regina Rifles positions at 0100h. The guys we relieved said we could have the "so and so" place. The next morning at first light we saw why, for about 200 to 300 yards to our left front were three German tanks that they had knocked out. We had two slit trenches here, one for a fire position and another in a little ditch behind to jump in should tanks break through. On flat ground the tanks would ride over the slit trench and swerve its tracks to bury anyone in there. In this position, there was a chateau behind us, surrounded by big trees, there were pigeons in the woods and their cooing at night made it very eerie especially during stand-to at night and in the early morning.

Our company did reconnaissance patrol work at night to determine the German positions as Gen. Montgomery was planning the next attack called Epsom and our positions were to be the start line. Cpl. Bill Winney, two other riflemen and myself were on the first patrol going out at 1100h and not scheduled to return until 0400h. We went out a considerable distance and came across a German slit trench. We went a little further and someone in front ran through the hay field, we dropped to the ground and took defensive positions and listened, we moved over to the left of a road and lay in deep clover. Bill Winney pulled a bottle of wine from his tunic and we all had a swig and then we kept up our vigilance until it was time to move back to our lines and report. As we approached our line, we were challenged for the password and then cautioned of the mines our fellows had put out on the road. I fell asleep by my slit trench and it started to rain. My comrades covered me over with a ground sheet and let me sleep. The following evening, another patrol went out and this group of riflemen got as close to the Germans to hear movement. They illuminated the sky and opened up with machine gun fire, fortunately, none of our fellows were hit and I know three of them lay behind a dead cow for protection. Some of the fellows returned around 0300h and others who had lost their sense of direction had to wait until they could see the silhouette

Of what was left of the church tower in Norrey before they could crawl safely back to our lines. The next night, we were scheduled for more patrol activity, however, before the patrols went out, the Germans shelled us for nearly two hours, one of the heaviest shellings we were to encounter throughout the war. The concentration was so great that we

thought we were going to be attacked as they also opened up with machine guns at intervals. Rfn. Harry Moon, number 2 in our section bren group was hit with shrapnel in the back, our company runner in headquarters was killed, three British officers who were up with us preparing for Epsom were also killed. My web on top of the slit trench had numerous holes in it. It was a terrifying night to say the least and we were very grateful when the shelling stopped.

The next day our company was relieved and as we were going back to Brettville in single file, a dogfight was taking place above us between a Messerschmidt and three spitfires and you can guess the results. The German pilot bailed out and was floating down in his parachute trying to maneuver away from our lines but to his misfortune he was shot on the way down as our boys were now aware of what happened to some of our boys who had been taken prisoner and then murdered. We continued on our way to Brettville and took over positions from our D company, and would you believe it, the Germans lifted their range and we came under fire again in our new positions, but fortunately no one was injured.

Our battalion was relieved on the 27 June and we went over to Cairn in a reserve position and our platoon had a choice spot of sleeping in a graveyard by the church. We still had to maintain our vigilance at night and riflemen were paired off to take two hour intervals of stand-to and patrol around the grave yard. Rfn. Kneller and I drew the 0200h-00400h shift. We didn't dig a slit trench in this position as we thought we were a reasonable range from the German positions. The fellows on duty woke us for our stint and we were a little slow moving when the officer Lt. Jackson came over to check up on us as we were pulling on our boots, he give us hell and that afternoon he disciplined Kneller and I by sending us up in the church tower for two hours for observation. It was from this position on D+22 that we were able to get our first shower and a change of clothes. I can recall that our section walked over on the crest of a hill and we must have been visible to the Germans as they started to drop mortar bombs on us. We ran down into the valley and continued on our way to the showers and fortunately, no casualties. It was great to have a shower and get clean clothes after 22 days in slit trenches and mud. We returned to our positions in the grave yard at Cairn safely.

On the 3 July the regiment moved over to Marcelet in preparation for the attack on Carpiquet and the airport which was strongly held by the Germans. The regiments in the assault would be the Winnipeg Rifles on the start, followed by the North Shore and Chaudieres and then The Queen's Own pushing through to the airport hangars with the tank regiments and Ottawa Cameron Highlanders in support. The artillery would fire a tremendous creeping barrage about 200 yards in front of each wave of infantry, lifting the range about every 10 minutes as the assaulting regiments advanced. The Germans replied with counter fire ranging in on our starting lines so it was very nerve wracking.

As we were preparing to move forward in single file for the attack, Cpl. Dave Fletcher, our section leader told me to go number two on the bren gun so I changed places with Jon Mittler who had just come up as a replacement for Harry Moon who was wounded at Norrey. Jon took my place about five feet in front of me and I moved back with Rfn. Sauchuck and we went through the Chauds into attack. I lasted less than 15 minutes with the bren group as a number of high velocity 88 shells whizzed in

and burst amongst us and the blast and concussion was terrific. I felt my face and heel burning and my left leg was stinging, the blast was like a slap in the face and I felt as if I was being lifted as I dived for the shelter of the edge of the road. Cpl. Fletcher came back to check on us and he recognized that I had been hit. Fortunately my wounds did not appear too serious and I managed to hobble down the road to the Chaudiere first aid post where the Padre's medical team fixed me up and sent me back on a stretcher placed on their Jeep with a few other guys that had been hit. They took us back to a field dressing station and then later on, to a field hospital down by the coast. That evening we were transported to a kindergarten school where we tried to rest but the German bombers came over to the invasion coast to drop mines and bomb the coast.

The next morning we were placed aboard amphibious ducks and drove through the streets, down the sands of the beach and driven out to a hospital ship which lay to about a mile from the beach. The stretchers were hoisted aboard through a side opening of the ship with the amphibious duck floating up and down during the handling, lucky for us the guys knew what they were doing. We landed at Southampton and the most serious cases were taken directly to the hospital and the rest of us were put on the train for Epsom. We were met at Epsom by nurses and a number of buses which had the seats removed and hooks had been installed to support stretchers and we were carried on and hooked in. During the process of being loaded unto the buses, there was an unfamiliar noise in the sky with a flame shooting out the rear, to which we asked what the hell is that? Quite calmly, the nurse replied oh, that's a doodle bug, which was Germany's V1 or buzz bomb loaded with TNT and when it hit the effects were very devastating. We were to see and hear more of them during the next few weeks we were in England.

The first night at the Epsom hospital, I just dropped on the bed in my dirty battle dress only to have the nurse get me up and strip down more or less. The next morning another nurse came and got me some shaving gear so could get the dirty stubble off my face and she picked out some of the small pieces of shrapnel from my left leg which were on the surface. I was transferred over to the Canadian field hospital at Horley and checked over by the doctor and surgery was scheduled to take the shrapnel from my chin. The shrapnel in my heel came out when they pulled off my boot as it was a sizeable lodged in the leather of the boot and the flesh of the heel.

The buzz bombs flew over the hospital quite often and we had a chance to see a very courageous act by a Spitfire pilot flying parallel to a buzz bomb and he was trying to tip its wing to change its direction of flight away from London. Some of the buzz bombs landed and exploded not too far from the hospital. There was balloon barrage all around the hospital and in the direction of London.

Once we were able to get mobile around the hospital, another Montrealer, Harry Keating, and I took off on daily ventures to Reigate and Red Hill to a show and church canteen, met a couple of ATS girls who bought us a beer as we were in hospital blues and the pubs could not sell beer to men in the blues. The girls were very friendly and we managed to meet on another occasion. Harry and I also managed a train ride to Brighton to visit the town and also (British boxing champion) Tommy Farr's pub. We met our nursing sister there with her boyfriend

and she asked what we were doing in Brighton without a pass. We arrived late at the hospital and the night nurse was wondering where we were. The Major was around checking beds and she said she thought we were probably having a shower. The Canadian nursing sisters were great. We made the nurse tea and toast and Harry and I finished the large bottle of beer we had bought in Brighton. After that, I guess they figured we were ready to return to the regiment.

I wanted to go to Scotland to visit my aunts and uncles near Loch Lomond and also in Dundee so I received a 10 day pass and travel documents with orders to report to Duke of Wellington barracks on termination of my leave. I had a very nice time on leave visiting places very familiar to my mother and father like Dumbarton, Renton, Alexandria, Balloch, a boat trip up Loch Lomond, and my leave was over when I learned that there was a British Wren (Women's Royal Naval Service) training centre in Balloch. I guess I missed the boat.

The barracks at Aldershot were cold and barren, the town being an old army base was accustomed to a variety of troops, visited a few pubs in the area until a new draft was made up to return to France which was early in September. We crossed the channel on a ferry boat and docked along side the mulberry docks and walked down the gang plank and along the Mulberry docks to the shore line and over the sand banks into Arromanches. We were transported to a depot just south of Lion Sur Mer which, looking back at D-Day, was part of the corridor held by the 21st. Panzer division on our front.

We spent a few days there doing more infantry training while awaiting more reinforcements to join us to complete our draft to the regiment. It gave us a chance to explore the area including the beach where we went in for a bare buff swim and later on found a cafe which had Calvados. It cost 15 francs for a thimbleful shot, to help spike the French beer and provide us with the energy to stagger back to the field depot about four miles away. There had been a storm in the evening before we left for camp, on the way back we came across the traffic all jammed up with a fallen tree, the British guys were trying to dig it out at the roots. One of our guys being a lumberjack (from Canada, eh) said, give me the axe and chopped the tree in the centre and then told the guys to move both ends off the road. Mission accomplished, road cleared and the traffic began to move again. We continued staggering our way back.

Our draft was ready to move out and try and catch up to the regiment, A new officer, Lt. Lea, was in charge and we had British transport providing the trucks. Falaise Gap had been closed and the big push eastward was taking place across France. As we were passing through, the French people were out cheering us on, the trucks had stopped and I spoke to lady who had some stew in the house which I offered to buy but I had to borrow 25 francs from Lt. Lea. My mess tin was full as the trucks began to roll and the driver would not stop. I passed up the mess tin and the guys hauled me aboard as I cursed the driver upside down. The mess tin was passed around for everyone to have a mouthful and to this day I still owe Lt. Lea a dinner as I have been unable to meet him since the war. He was a fine officer and gentleman who unfortunately was wounded and taken prisoner during our fighting on the flats by the Waal river below Nijmegen.

We finally caught up to the regiment at La Cappelles on the outskirts of Boulogne as they were making plans to attack and gain access to the French port. We were being separated to go to the different rifle companies, and I thought I would be going back to C company. But as luck would have it the RSM informed me that I was going to 3 platoon which was the mortar platoon as my service indicated my training with 3 inch mortars and the regiment needed mortarmen. I met up with the guys from number 1 section of the mortars, headed up by Sgt. Jack Selley, Red Weatherston, Ross Hahn, and our carrier driver, Bob Catlow. The other mortar section of our group was headed by Sgt. Blackie, Pinkney, Dick Gray, Gus Gow and carrier driver Tom Wilson and they were all great guys to be with.

The other mortar sections were up in firing positions waiting for the assault on Boulogne while we were in reserve. A number of our section went forward and acted as prisoner of war escorts when the prisoners started to roll in from the attack. They relieved the Germans of a lot of their valuables in the process of taking them back to the POW cages and when they returned from the battle the Sgt. told them to layout a blanket and put the valuables on the blanket, and then they were given first choice of what they wanted and then the rest of us had a pick. I ended up with a wrist watch, a shaving mirror and a box camera. there was also a lot of French francs available. (Spoils of war!)

After Boulogne, we moved over between Cap Gris Nez and Calais and we held big concrete fortifications overlooking the white cliffs of Dover. The big guns at Cap Gris Nez were still capable of firing at Dover and that was the next objective left to the 9th Cdn Brigade. We sat on top of the fortification and watched the RAF four-engine bombers fly over from England and start bombing the big gun positions. We noted one of the bombers was trailing smoke as he flew inland and the crew must have bailed out except the pilot for as he arrived over the gun positions, he tilted his wings vertically down and crashed and exploded on the gun site. It was something I will always remember.

The 9th. Brigade completed its assault successfully and we were on the move again to the east side of Calais for the assault on Calais. We managed to take over a German *soldatenheim* in the town on the outskirts of Calais and we set the mortars up on the street and ranged in on some potential targets. There was a church down the street and the German engineers had placed charges around the perimeter of the roof and blew the roof in on the church in an act of vengeance before they left the town. Calais was strongly held and the barbed wire and mines were all over the place and the regiment, being on the east side, was there to prevent any escapes through our positions. The battle lasted less than two days and over 7000 prisoners were taken which led to the end of the last channel port to surrender in France after the breakthrough at Falaise.

Since returning to the regiment and looking back at that time, one of the fellows that was still left from my former rifle company and I had shared a slit trench on D-Day, Rfn. Pringle brought me up to date from the time I was wounded. Rfn. Mittler whom I had changed places with was killed by the same shells that I was hit with. Sgt. Bill Murray and Lt. Jackson was killed. later on in Carpiquet. Capt. Stewart died of his wounds. On the road to Falaise most of our company were killed or

wounded. Rfn. Kneller who I shared a slit trench with on many occasions was killed at Quesnay Woods.

To describe the intensity of the combat from D-Day until we reached the channel ports and liberated them, the following will give you an idea of what took place in less than three months. It was a battle of attrition of supplies, equipment and men. The Germans lost 58,172 men killed and countless wounded. The Americans lost 13,796, the British lost 19,137, the Canadians lost 5150 men and over 13000 were wounded. This does not include the Canadians who were lost at Dieppe in 1942. The allied losses were 38,723 and does not include the Free French casualties or the Civilian losses.

This was our initiation of future battles to come as we headed for Belgium and Holland. On leaving Calais, We crossed the frontier of Belgium and 1st. world war sites and ended up in the town of Eecloo near the Leopold canal to await for further orders. During the meantime, The guy's used the cafe's as the daily headquarters playing crap on the billiard tables. With the thousands of French Francs they had relieved from the German prisoners at the channel ports. The Belgium's declared the French money useless but it was fun to see all the high rollers with their tunics stuffed with Francs.

Orders came that we were going to cross the Leopold canal after the 7th. Brigade had gained a foothold on the other side. The attack started with all the flame throwers lining up on the bank and shooting flame across at the German positions. The guy's from the 7th. Brigade paddled across and gained a foothold but the fighting was very severe and no depth of penetration could be made due to the defenses and heavy fire by the enemy. The planners realized there would be a very heavy loss of life so they devised another scheme to have the 9th. brigade pull a surprise invasion.

As the 7th. brigade contained the Germans at the Leopold canal, or the Germans contained the 7th. brigade, the surprise attack was made on the eastern end of the Scheldt Pocket by the 9th. brigade of the 3rd. Canadian division. It was a mini- invasion using special amphibious vehicles called Buffaloes, Duk's were also used and a new amphibious vehicle called a weasel which could carry 4 men was also introduced for the type of terrain . which we would be encountering. The 9th. brigade embarked on these special Buffaloes in the area of Terneuzen beach and traveled across Braakman estuary and disembarked on the opposite shore near Biervliet. The attack was a complete surprise and the 9th. brigade made good penetration into the Scheldt pocket on the south side of the Scheldt river.

A couple of days later, it was our regiment's turn to make the crossing from Terneuzen beach. The Buffaloes on which we were embarking were handled by the British 79th. Division. Our mortar carrier just fitted into the hull of the Buffalo and we sat around the edges as we traveled about 3 knots per hour across the Braakman. The wind was fairly strong and the water was lapping close to the upper edge of the Buffalo but we managed the crossing safely. As we moved up unto the opposite beach, the provost corps rushed us off as now there was no longer any surprises and the Germans started shelling us from the Walcheren island, fortunately we moved in quickly and took cover and no casualties.

The next morning we moved forward and relieved the Highland Light Infantry and then our orders to advance came to start another month of hard fighting under extremely very difficult conditions.

The terrain was quite different than that of France, the roads were raised causeways and dykes, the fields now were called polders which were very low below the causeways and also very wet and muddy which was to be a nightmare for the rifleman having to walk in on attack from the polders. We, in the carriers had to be extra cautious because our only Route was on the elevated causeways which made us excellent targets for anti-tank guns. Each farm house was our objective as we advanced and each haystack became a target for our gunners to ensure no hidden defensive positions. Our first skirmish along the causeway and dykes was close to Ijzendijke, we pulled off the causeway into a farm yard and went into a field to set up our mortar, the ground was too soft for a base so we moved back into the farm yard and found a solid base from which to fire.

The riflemen dug their slit trenches into the side of the causeway and we found the barn had cement walls between the pig pens so we cleaned out the pens and I went over to the haystack in the yard and got an armful of hay to spread around the pen. I went back for another load when suddenly a shot was fired and a voice is yelling 'come out you bastard's' it was Jim Moore and he's got his rifle on 2 German prisoners who were hiding under the hay stack where I had been taking the hay. The last I saw was Jim trying to unload the prisoners on Charlie Martin for further interrogation and I went back to getting more Hay.

A little while later, rfn. Percy McNab came down the road to see me and he handed me a German p38 revolver which he had just taken off a prisoner of his during the skirmish. Percy already had one and he knew I would like one, he was one helluva soldier, a hard rock miner from northern Ontario.

It is hard to describe the various actions that took place during the liberation of the Scheldt pocket but Oostburg stands out in most of our memories. Our position was on the outskirts and we were using a farm house for cover but we were still bothered by sniper fire now and then. Red Cockburn of the carrier platoon came up with our mail one afternoon and we told him about the sniper and approximate position. He wanted to try the 50 calibre he had just mounted on his carrier so he drove up to the edge of the farm house and let loose with his 50 calibre spraying the whole area with bullets, when he finished he left and then we got shelled. Some reinforcements came up that day and I was getting out of my slit trench as they were about to pass when I noticed a friend who I had

Trained with in Canada. His name as we called him was squeaky Wallis and by coincidence he was joining another section in the mortar platoon so we had numerous chances to talk when things were quiet.

Other names of towns we helped liberate were Schoondijke, Zuidzande, Retranchment, Sluis, St. Anna ter Minden and Westcapelle. I guess Westcapelle says it all as when we arrived there, the streets had about a foot of water throughout the town. Fortunately, the remaining German garrison chose to surrender and no further fighting was necessary much to our delight and also the Dutch community.

During the liberation of the Scheldt pocket, our regiment suffered losses of 25 riflemen and officers killed and 102 wounded.

Following the liberation of the Scheldt, the 3rd. Canadian division went to Ghent, Belgium and enjoyed the hospitality of the Belgium people for 5 days of rest before traveling over to Nymegen, Holland to relieve the American 82 division of paratroopers.

In Ghent, Gus Gow and I were billeted with an elderly Belgium couple whom were very kind to us. It was fantastic to step into a nice warm water bath relax, clean up and then put on dry clean clothes after what we had been through in the Scheldt pocket. We were issued new uniforms and beginning to look sharp again. Arrangements had been made that the regiments would eat at specific locations so that we did not impose on the Belgium people. It was great to be able to wander around in peaceable surroundings and enjoy the luxury of a Belgium beer and watch the girls go by. After suffering this luxury for two whole days, it was my turn to return to where the carriers were and watch over our equipment. I was enjoying myself in these surroundings, I chose to stay there for the balance of our leave as it was a nice little Belgium town.

On November the 11th. we were on the road again heading for Nymegen, Holland, passing through the mile long tunnel in Antwerp, then unto Hertogenbosch about one hundred miles away, and then to Graves, where we met up with American paratroopers holding the bridge. We passed them and pushed on to Nymegen and then over to Berg-en Dal, Where we relieved the 504th. paratrooper regiment of the 82nd. Airborne division. Some of the rifle companies ended up on the border of Germany and other companies ended up in Holland. Our position was in Holland. Some of the trucks which came to pick up the Americans arrived with their lights on, the next thing we heard was moaning minnies mortars coming our way and guys yelling turn off those bloody lights. I believe some of the Americans were injured needlessly. We knew then, that we were back again in a shooting war.

Actually, Berg-en Dal was a reserve position, in event a counter-attack was thrust at the Allied front in the area of Nymegen. Patrol activity was again part of the daily routine although the front was to be static for the three months we were there. Near the end of November, we relieved the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders of the 9th. brigade on the flats, east of the Nymegen bridge and south of the Waal river. It was polder country again, wet and cool. Our position there was in a farmyard and we decided to use the same 10ft. diameter culvert which the American paratroopers had been using. They had left a lot of their mortar bombs lying around the top perimeter of the culvert.

We set up our mortar and made space for our mortar bomb cases and then we ranged in on potential targets and fired now and then when required. Early one evening, our A company raided a strong point and were pinned down, the platoon officer had been wounded, and CSM Charlie Martin took over to try and get the men back from a very precarious position. Our two mortars fired half the night to help them get back, I was on my knees dropping bombs down the barrel as the mortar went deeper into the ground when they finally arrived back in our lines safely.

Later that morning, we had to dig the mortar and base plate out, we attached a cable to the base plate and the carrier and pulled the plate out of the ground. We then had to get rocks stones and wood and make a new base for the mortar. We set up the mortar again and started to

range in on some targets, Ross Hahn and I were on the mortar again, Sgt. Jack Selley had gone up to the OP to range us in, Lou Giennetto, our dispatch rider was giving us the telephone orders for the different ranges. Ross aimed on the marker and I fired bomb no.1, we made slight adjustments, and I fired bomb no.2, We made change in the range and I fired bomb no.3 this time the bomb just floated out the barrel and hit the cement wall in front of Ross and I as we tried to scramble out of the culvert, the bomb dropped to the ground unexploded. Ross and I climbed out of the culvert and took a much needed breather and when things sorta settled down I went down and gingerly picked up the bomb and examined it and took off the secondary charges which had failed to ignite due to considerable condensate moisture on the surface of the celluloid containers. This misfire was due to the number of bombs we had exposed to the air during our firing to get A company out of trouble. Fortunately for Ross and I, the thrust from the primary charge was not enough to dislodge the retainer and put the striker in firing position. From thereon in, we made sure the secondary charges were always dry. We were relieved a few days later and in reserve for a weeks rest but never too far from the front.

Our next move took over to the Wyler Berg area and another strong point called K house, of which one of our platoons held. There was a strong attack by the Germans and they took over occupancy of the strong point. Lt. Lea and a rifleman were wounded in this action and taken prisoner. Sorry to say that I have not met Mr. Lea since I borrowed the 25 francs to buy that mess tin of stew while traveling back to the regiment in France.

He was a real gentleman and it would be nice if we could meet again and I could pay my debt. Our regiment attacked the K house a few days later and regained possession even though the artillery fire was heavy.

We came out of the lines just before Christmas in another secondary position, half the regiment had Christmas dinner on the 29th, and the other half had dinner on the 30th.

The officer's and sergeants did their best to satisfy the riflemen, for in the evening of the 30th, we were back in the lines again in the area of Huize Rhata near Groesbeek, to give the Regiment de la Chaudiere a break.

The enemy did not wait until New Year's to start the fireworks as they mortared our rifle company positions and we replied in kind to silence them.

During the so called static positions in and around Nymegen, the army newspaper called the Maple Leaf was announcing IT was coming. For several weeks they continually announced IT was coming, and finally IT arrived. IT was Herby's hamburger joint set up in the center of Nymegen. Any time you come out of the lines for a rest, you could get a lift to Herby's for a hamburger, and the guy's lined up for blocks. We managed to take in a couple of the Canadian variety shows in the evening, I hopped on the back of our DR's bike and enjoyed the evenings. One night Lou went on his own to see the show and when he came out, his bike had disappeared. He had some tough explaining to do but I believe it became a battle casualty or ended up in the black market.

During the 3 month static front, there was a lot of patrol work and when it snowed, the patrols were outfitted with white pants and jackets. Casualties were 6 Officer's wounded, 6 riflemen killed and 41 riflemen were wounded.

We are now at the phase when major plans are coming to push up to the Waal and Rhine rivers.

At the time of awaiting the new plans for for the next phase of attack, we were billeted in empty houses in the Ubbergen region, just east of Nymegen. Indications of for the big attack were becoming more evident as medium 5.5 artillery guns moved into all the vacant fields pointing easterly. There were several guns in the rear of the houses we occupied close to where our mortar carriers were.

On the eve of the attack, we could hear the roar of our airforce bombers going overhead and their targets Goch, Cleve and Emmerich, primarily Goch and Cleve as they were in the line of the initial attack. The next morning, over 1200 guns opened up with a thunderous barrage, the volume of artillery fire was so great, one, could actually see the airwave movement with the dust in the air.

Our 3rd. Canadian division became known as The Water Rats as most of the attacks in which we were involved was associated with water and the North Sea. Once again,

Our 8th. brigade drew the flooded flats along the Waal river and our objective was to push up to the Rhine section of the river in Germany. We went through Nymegen again unto the flats and pushed through Zandpol, Leuth, Kekerdom, Millegen and one platoon went unto Duffelward. Our carriers could not go all the way as the whole area was flooded. The rifle companies made their attacks in buffaloes and boats. One of the advantages of the flooding was that it eliminated the concern of mine fields and barbed wire. The resistance was quickly overcome by the riflemen and the men in D company took 15 prisoners. The riflemen in Milligen were subject to intensive enemy artillery fire and our regiment lost one of our outstanding officers, Capt. George Bean. Our carrier sections returned to the billets in Ubbergen as we were unable to be of further help because of the extent of the flooding and that all objectives had been secured.

We went around the corner to park our carrier and discovered that one of the 5.5 artillery guns mentioned earlier had a premature explosion in the breach while firing and the barrel was peeled back like a banana. One of the gun crew was killed and the others were wounded. We rested for a couple of days and cleaned up our equipment, on one day while I was cleaning up the carrier, a low level messerschmidt came flying over our heads zigzagging all the way, fortunately, he wasn't firing his machine guns.

When the rifle companies returned from the flats, then we were on the move again traveling on heavily congested roads of military vehicles of all descriptions, all heading towards the Goch, Cleve, Hochwald and Balbergerwald forests plus other areas south and east to the Rhine river. Traveling through Cleve was a nightmare as the airforce had flattened the City. The debris was bulldozed to the side to provide traffic access, we were held up in traffic as British tank force had priority to proceed first. We eventually arrived at our assembly point of Roland where we rested a few days and prepared for the upcoming attack.

The next phase of attacks were to become extremely difficult as we were now fighting in Germany and the troops were 1 st. class members of the 6th and 8th parachutists regiments. Our objectives were to capture the Calcar- Udem road in direction of Keppeln and swing East towards Steeg and Wimmershof. The rifle companies fought fiercely with close up fighting and casualties were high. In one region, at Mooshof, with only 4 men left in his platoon, Sgt. Aubrey Cosens with the help of two tanks, one on which he rode, guided the tank men into a farmhouse objective during which he silenced the defenders and then went on to capture two more farm houses. He placed his men in defensive positions to prepare for any counter attacks and during all this action, he was killed by an enemy sniper. He displayed great acts of courage under adverse conditions as did his riflemen with him and the tank crews that helped in gaining their objectives. Sgt. Cosens was awarded the Victoria Cross for his very brave deeds. During all this action, the regiment gained all it's objectives, capturing over 300 of the enemy and inflicting heavy losses. The losses for the regiment were 4 Officers killed, 3 wounded, 28 Riflemen killed, 5 died of wounds and 61 were wounded.

Near the end of February, we were on the move again to the village of Kirsell, it was a mixture of Canadian divisions in the area of the 2nd. 3rd and 4th. as plans were being made to attack the Hochwald and Baldergerwald forests. As we were in Germany, The German people were moved to their basements for security reasons and we took over the main floor. We shared a house with the Black Watch From Montreal, 2nd. Div. As plans developed, the 2nd.div. would attack the Hochwald forest and we, of the 8th. brigade of the 3rd. div. would attack the Baldergerwald forest.

I was in the kitchen writing a letter home, when someone come in and mentioned that our rockets had just gone up the road, I never give it any more thought when all of a sudden there is a tremendous roar and I dived under the table, other guys were diving in different directions and someone said they had just fired a volley of our rockets. This was the first time we had ever heard them. They were just down the road :from the house we were in so we went down to have a look. There were 8 units which had 32 barrels each and they were fired electrically in unison. They were loading up for another volley so we decided to stay and watch, the volume of fire was fascinating to see with all those rockets fired within minutes. Apparently the Regiment de la Chaudiere had started the attack on our objective and we moved in the next morning to witness the results of the rocket fire which was devastating.

The Chaudiere' s had gained a start line and now it was the North Shore reg't. and our regiment's time for action, the North Shore took the north side of the forest and we, of the Queen's Own took the south side of the forest with one muddy road going up the center. The rifle companies had gone into action and some tanks followed them, but when we tried to move up the tanks had made deep track marks in the mud and we had to try and shovel the tracks in to get our carriers up the road and all this was under spasmodic artillery fire and the occasional sniper fire. We were cutting limbs off trees to lay across the road when a series of shells come in and I dived for a slit trench up the road and landed on somebody and two more guys come in on top of me. The shelling stopped and we got out except the fellow under me, I called him and then had a further look and he was a dead Chaudiere who

must have been killed in an earlier action. The clearing of the forest lasted about 4 days during which 12 riflemen were killed, two Officers and 20 Riflemen were wounded. The 9th. Brigade took over from our brigade and continued unto the Rhine river.

Following the battle up to the Rhine, our regiment moved back to the Reichswald forest for a rest. On arrival, we started to build bivouacs of all different shapes and sizes to make our living conditions more comfortable and dry. As usual during all rest breaks it meant more training, equipment cleaning, vehicle maintenance, plus showers and clean clothes. We received new camouflaged sniper jackets which were waterproof and all the guys liked them. I was one of the lucky ones as four other riflemen for we were given 48 hour passes to Brussels where our residence was at Ontario House. A visit to the paymaster, packed our bags, wearing our best uniforms and away we went for a real break, sleeping on white sheets, no stand to at night or early morning, quiet and nice clean eating facilities, it was like a new world after all the mud, water, barns, hay, and shooting both ways. All good things had to end and the 48 hours passed too quickly but we all enjoyed ourselves.

During the last week of March, the 51 st. highland division and the 1 st. brigade of commando's successfully crossed the Rhine River at Rees. The British Engineers built a pontoon bridge across the Rhine and they called it The Lambeth Bridge. We crossed the bridge in the very early hours of the morning and it was quite an event as the bridge was very long and the river current was swift. The British had the pontoons well anchored as our carrier went up and down as we crossed. On crossing successfully, we pushed on to Dornick and took cover in a house as the 2nd. Cdn. Div. was firing the Bofors light anti-aircraft guns at flat trajectory across the river in front of us. The rapid fire display was spectacular especially with the tracer shells at night. That night we had the company of a dead German soldier in the basement where we spent the rest of the night. That morning we moved up to Emmerich and further north to a wooded area where a skirmish took place which the riflemen silenced. We were subject to some shelling and sniper fire, but moved on to Elton. We took over some houses and used them as our base until we received further orders and in the meantime some of our guys explored a nearby cheese factory. They moved around big rolls of cheese and found a hidden quantity of Rhine wine which they brought back to our base. A major decision had to be made to determine if it was safe enough to drink, It was unanimous, we all agreed it was drinkable so the wine flowed freely. Needless to say we all had hangovers the next morning, and to top it off , our officer read the riot act for not posting a guard that evening. There were a lot of promises not to touch the stuff again, but that was before we knew about the welcome we would receive when we liberated the towns and villages in Holland.

Advance patrols approached Hoch Elton and found that these cliffs were not being defended, it seems as if the Germans had hurriedly pulled out which left the road to Holland open for our advance without opposition. I.C. vehicles were brought up for the rifle companies and we moved ahead in our carriers to the area of Laag Keppel. The people of Holland welcomed us with open arms, orange was the colour of the day as we celebrated with the Dutch in the various liberated towns such as Eekhom, Zwaarte Schaar And Hoefken. We had a number of casualties along the way as we progressed.

About April 5th, our mortar section plus 2 carrier sections and a platoon of riflemen from D company set off on a special contact patrol in direction of Rha. We proceeded on a small road in direction of some farm houses and stopped short of the 1st. farm house and waited while the officer in charge with several riflemen approached the farm to seek information. He gave orders to move cautiously up to the first farm house and take up positions. We set up our mortars and then one of the carriers and half the platoon of the Riflemen approached the 2nd. Farm house and took positions. We were informed the Germans occupied the 3rd. farm house and the village lay beyond. We ranged in on the 3rd. house and fired a few bombs to prepare our mortar base and confirm the range of our potential targets. Things were quiet the first night and nothing happened to speak of. About noon, the riflemen of C company came across the farmers fields in single file battle order to take up positions in front of us when suddenly a German machine gun opened up as the riflemen dived for cover. Capt. Pickup yelled for covering mortar fire As Dick gray and I responded. Dick fired mortar #2 and I fired mortar #1, the rest of our mortar crew prepared and carried the bombs to us as we fired at will. Fortunately, the machine gunners had their heads down and stopped covering the fields where we were located. We must have been on target as the riflemen were able to move forward without further incident and took up positions for an upcoming attack. During all our firing, the Germans ranged in on us with their medium artillery and sent a number of shells in our direction. They landed close enough that I had to dive for cover, fortunately, no one was hit in that exchange.

That evening another battle took place as the Germans sent a volley of tracer fire at the carrier section in farm house #2, the barn was set on fire and the carrier boys and the carrier was silouetted by the fire. They scrambled for safety and managed to get to our farm house where we all stood to in event of further action. The riflemen held their positions and nothing further occurred that evening. The next morning a German sniper put a shot through the kitchen window, I ran and got my rifle and climbed up into the attic to see if I could return the compliments but he had taken off hurriedly. That day the regiment made an all around attack to try and liberate Rha. The riflemen attacked from water filled trenches and muddy fields under very duress conditions and managed to penetrate to the center of the village. Another attack was planned for the next day but orders came through that our regiment should join up with the other regiments of the 8th. brigade who were liberating Zutphen. The casualties during this action was 1 officer and 4 riflemen killed, 1 rifleman wounded, died of his wounds while being a prisoner, 2 officers and 10 riflemen were wounded.

The regiment crossed over from the East side of the Ijssel River into Zutphen to receive a royal welcome by Prince Bernhard and all the liberated citizens. It was a very happy and joyous occasion but the danger was still there as the Germans periodically fired shells into the City. Our welcome was short lived as we received orders to push up to Snippeling and Deventer.

We took up positions in some row housing on the outskirts of Snippeling, the riflemen moving forward to attack positions. A company started to attack across a bridge to seize the buildings on the other

side of a canal and beyond, 8 platoon was doing very well and 1 man came back with a group of prisoners, they were supposed to consolidate their advance but as they went they got more prisoners until such a time that they run into a group that counter-attacked and our boys became the prisoners, all 12 of them. That evening A company reorganized and attacked at night securing the bridge and surrounding buildings and took 25 prisoners. The rest of the regiment moved forward and by morning Snippeling was in our hands. Around noon we were ordered to move into Deventer to the joy of all the Dutch people and parties seem to start everywhere even though there was the occasional sniper around which were silenced quite quickly. We billeted ourselves and the carriers in a vacant warehouse in the center of town about 2 blocks from the river. The Dutch resistance were going after collaborators so Gus Gow and I offered to give a hand but they said they would prefer to handle their situation themselves. Gus and I went down to the river front to take a look and found that the bridge crossing the river had been blown up by the Germans as it was jackknifed in the middle. The territory on the other side was yet to be liberated in the direction of Appeldoorn and was still in German hands. We did a little sight seeing in town for that and the following day. On our 2nd night in town, we had a gigantic party on the streets of Deventer with the overjoyed liberated citizens. It was here, that we broke our earlier promise never to touch that stuff again as the Dutch people generously offered us their version of a drink called Schnapps. We had opportunities to sing, dance, share some goodies and souvenirs of Deventer. I received two old picture post cards of the old wooden bridge and historical buildings which I still have. It was a night to remember.

The next morning we were on the move again, through Zwolle without a shot being fired. Flags, bunting and cheering people everywhere, and the same joyous and happy reception from the Dutch people in Meppel. This type of reception continued the province of Friesland in Steenwijk, Wolvega and Heerenveen. Orange was the color of the day and we will never forget the outpouring of thanks we received from the beautiful people of Holland. We spent the night in Heerenveen and the next morning we were heading for Sneek, Wons, Komwerder, Witmarsum, Pingum and the fortifications at the Zeider lee Causeway.

Sneek fell without too much opposition, but in between Sneek and Wons, the Germans put up a defensive line at a small bridge where we had to cross. An attack was planned when it was learned that the Germans had a force there and they would have to be overcome. The rifle company was A company of 7, 8 and 9 platoons, a flame throwing Carrier called a WASP and a bren gun carrier carrying 6 men. The road of approach was a raised dike or causeway lined with trees, 8 platoon on the left side in the water filled Ditch below the road and 9 platoon was on the right side of the road under similar conditions and 7 platoon would come up the center of the road after the carrier attacks. The flame thrower made the first probe firing flame from this side of the bridge and after exhausting all his fuel retired to the rear and then the 3 carriers attacked with guns blazing. The Germans opened fire with their 20 mm. Anti-air craft gun at flat trajectory and hit the 3 carriers killing 6 and wounding 2. Orville Cook pulled his wounded driver and sergeant from their carrier, laid them by the roadside, gave them a cigarette and then went for medical help. In the meantime, Sgt. major Charlie Martin was on top of the dike because he had a bad cold

and did not want to be in the water in the ditch, so he went forward thinking the riflemen were up with him, when in fact he was the point man leading the attack. He was moving forward when he detected someone on his left which was a German pointing a Schmeisser at him and fired, even though Charlie was hit, he managed to get a shot away and silenced the German. 7 platoon rushed over the bridge and took control with white flags coming from every direction as they now wished to surrender. We had been supporting the action and our Sgt. Jack Selley who was up forward relaying our firing instructions came back and told us the sad news. The casualties were Riflemen Cockburn, Shepherd, Jackson, White, Pennell and Ouderkirk killed during the carrier attack. Sgt. major Charlie Martin seriously wounded.

Following the battle at Wons, the regiment went on to Witmarson and Kornwerder, which were liberated after a short fight. D company continued on to Pingum where there was a lot of small arms fire, Lt. Hancock who could speak German Fluently, calmly walked down the road and yelled out that it was useless to continue the fighting and cause needless loss of more lives. The Germans promptly surrendered and the town and Dutch people were liberated. 49 Germans had given up the fight. B company had a short fight in their region and captured 3 officers and 110 men. C company advanced on the fortifications at the Zuider Zee causeway and fortunately the Germans had left leaving behind considerable quantities of weapons and ammunition. It seems as if the Germans had given up the fight in the Friesland area and the province had finally been liberated.

The regiment was well dispersed in all the small villages expecting to take a break but on the 20th. of April, the regiment received orders that we were to proceed East and clear out The Rheiderland peninsula in Germany. The travel of direction took us through Leerwarden, Heerenveen, Gronigen, Winschoten to Rhede.

During the Fighting in Rheiderland the peninsula, we liberated a group of Yugoslavs from a camp and turned them loose. We made the mistake of using their bunks and became lousy. The M.O came to our rescue, We managed to shower, sprayed with powder, clean clothes and uniform so we could continue in action. Come to think of it and I'm still scratching. The Peninsula was finally cleared by our B and D companies when they took over 500 prisoners from Ditzumer and Pogum. After a short rest, the regiment crossed the Ems river and passed through Leer, then up the road to Hesel. The Germans were now using Arial bombs to mine the roads so caution was needed as we advanced.

By May the 4th., The regiment had occupied 4 villages of Bagband, Ulbargen, Grossefehn and Osterander. The last regimental action took place on the outskirts of Osterander at a strongly defended crossroad. Riflemen of C company made the attack on this position and it was captured by 3.0'clock in the afternoon. During this attack riflemen Fryday and Smith unfortunately were killed. At 3.30 or 15.30 hours, we received word to discontinue firing unless we were attacked.

Later that afternoon we became aware that something big was happening as the dispatch rider for the 6 pounder anti-tank platoon was given orders to bring a special message to the German commander in Aurich and

he was met and guided through the German positions and the arial mined roads which I mentioned earlier. On his return, he was a little under the weather as he was offered a few glasses of Schnapps while waiting for the response. The unofficial word was that the war was over which everyone took very calmly as there was no joy but one of inner gratitude to have survived the horror and tragedy of 11 months of bloody and deadly fighting whereby we lost many comrades on the road to peace and freedom for the people and countries we had liberated. The official announcement came at 8 a.m. the next morning.

In looking back, I think about all the young men that sacrificed their lives and the thousands that were wounded and maimed. I think about the 7 fellows with whom I joined the regiment and other fellows I was in action with in C company and later on in Support Company in #3 platoon of 3 inch mortars.

Rifleman McCullough was wounded on D-Day during the assault up the beach with A company.

Corporal McNab of A company was wounded during the heavy fighting at Steege and Wimmershof in the push to the Rhine.

Rifleman Bob Nicol of B company was the last man in his section on D-Day that was not injured. 7 of his section were killed in the water and two other Riflemen were wounded. Bob was wounded later on in the attack at Giberville about 5 weeks after D-Day.

Rifleman Seymour of C company came out shell shocked during the fighting at Carpiquet airport.

I was wounded during the attack on Carpiquet airport, in Normandie. Fortunately my wounds were not too serious and managed to return to the regiment on the outskirts of Boulogne at LaCapelle and managed to survive the balance of the fight into Germany.

Rifleman Phillips was wounded in action in Normandie too.

Rifleman Smole of D company was taken prisoner on June 11th. during the illfated battle at Le Mesnil Patry When we lost 55 regimental comrades killed and 38 wounded plus 11 riflemen taken prisoner and then 6 of our comrades were shot in cold blood while being prisoners by the 12th.S.S. I believe Rifleman Smole was one of the survivors.

Rifleman Fred Shepherd of the Carrier platoon was one of the 6 killed during the attack to liberate Wons in Holland. Fred had been in since D-Day like other Riflemen with him, Only to lose their lives 3 weeks before the war ended. That's the story of the greenhorns that joined the regiment one month before D-Day.

My memories take me back to the attack on Carpiquet airport, when Rifleman Mittler and I changed positions before going into the attack. He and I were wounded by fragments of the same shells that exploded around us. Rifleman Mittler died of his wounds and is buried at Beny Sur Mer. During my visits to Normandie, I pay homage to Jon.

I thought of Rifleman Kneller who I shared a slit trench with the night before the attack at Carpiquet. While I was back in the hospital, he and others went through the severest of fighting on the road to Falaise. Rifleman Kneller lost his life during the battle for Quesnay Woods where he fought with honour after all nco's were out of action. He lies at rest in the cemetery at Brettville Sur Laize. Cpl. Dave Fletcher, our section leader was also very seriously wounded in this action. I still correspond with Dave today in Streetsville.

Getting back to what happened after the cease fire had been declared and the end of the war, we started to loosen up a bit and then came the

spit and polish, but no fraternization was to be permitted. We still carried our rifles when going out for a walk.

The regiment assembled in Mitte Grossefehn on the 7th. of May and paraded to church for a thanksgiving service with Major Dalton being the speaker of the day and Padre Capt. A. J. Mowatt conducting the service. The regiment was dispersed to the different villages in the area and became occupational troops. Of course, the ceremonial guards now became our new way of life. That lasted about a week and then the good news came that we were moving back to Amersfoort in Holland.

We spent about a month and half in Amersfoort. Our platoon was lucky as our billets were away from all the glamour located in an empty office building up on a hill, not too far from the Big 2 Canteen operated by rifleman Gus Goutouski. It was well managed with lots of refreshments and dances twice a week and a good place to take a break. During the day, the RSM. scheduled everyone to attend his drill school, learning how to march, right turn, left turn, about turn, change step and halt to the commands of a rifle regiment, I believe it was called indoctrination but when the course was finished most of the guys looked pretty sharp.

Sports and travel became more of the desired recreations, however a number of us took up educational courses, I took up math and French with the books provided by the Royal Cdn. Legion and our teacher was one of our regimental Officers.

In remembrance of D-Day, the 3rd. Division marched Before Gen. Harry Crerar in the City of Utrech.

We moved again on July 4th. to the City of Doorn where we stayed until we were scheduled to leave for home. Once again we had new billets, In Doorn, One area for the regiment became known as Cabbage Town, for the regiment being from Toronto thought it would be appropriate. They elected their own mayor and council, fire department, parks department And they also made toys from beer cans so we had to drink more to provide the manufacturers with sufficient materials. Streets took on names from Toronto and where the Officers lived became known as Jarvis street. I can't say for sure if there were any red lights on this street, but it was out of bounds for riflemen.

Support company had a big chalet with a German canteen hut beside us which we used as a mess hall and where we held our parties on Saturday nights. The adjacent property was owned by the German Kaiser from the First world war. The atmosphere in Doorn was very friendly and became sports oriented to keep busy, Soft ball, swimming, yachting and travel. There were a number of occasions when we had to do guard duty at company headquarters or the Officers mess on Saturdays To guard the vehicles on party night.

The regimental baseball team went on to prove to be the best winning the 3rd. Div. championship and then went on to win the Cdn. Army championship. Later on, they beat the Air Force team, the occupational army team and the army team from England. Most of the games were played in Utrech and transportation was provided for us to attend and they were great to watch.

The months in Doorn passed very quickly and on October 25th. we, from Montreal who had seen considerable service with the regiment were told to pack our gear as we were being transferred to 3rd. div. headquarters

to await formation of a return home draft to Montreal. We were sent to Nymegen and we were given billets in an unheated house down the street from the headquarters building. To top it off, we were delegated to stand guard in front of headquarters for a period of 2 hours on and 6 hours off for over a week. Because of these hours, our scheduled eating times were interrupted and quite often we had to do without because the cook had left. It was an anti-climax for Rfn. Pop McGarr, of the carrier platoon, Rfn. McCrae of the 6 Pounder platoon, Cpl. Jim Yule, And yours truly of the 3 inch mortar platoon.

We were very happy when we received word that we were heading for England via Ostend in the middle of November. Our base in England was in the area of Cove and our first stop when we got settled was the warmth of a British pub. We now had to play the waiting game as to when we could be accommodated aboard a ship. During our stay at Cove, we met up with fellows who we had trained with in Canada before going overseas and by coincidence we were returning home on the same draft.

Our draft finally left Cove during the 3rd. week of December for Southampton where we boarded H.M.T. QUEEN ELIZABETH bound for New York. Our billets were up forward on the promenade deck which were quite comfortable as we were one of the last drafts to board before we set sail. We entered the English channel which was quite rough and when we hit the Atlantic Ocean we ploughed into a very severe storm with the waves being so high that they splashed over the prow of the ship. The skipper had the vessel slowed down to 8 knots to minimize the shock on the propellers should they come out of the water. We were not allowed on deck during this fierce storm.

Poor Jim Yule was sea sick from the time we left Southampton, until he recovered about a day from New York when the seas were calmer. I must say that he did get out of his bunk for christmas dinner which the crew put together with all the trimmings. Our regular meal schedules were twice a day at 10 AM and 6.30 PM as there were 8000 thousand troops aboard. The idea was that you take a doggie bag with you after each meal.

We arrived in New York on the 27th. of December sailing down the Hudson. There was a tug pulling a flat deck barge with a band and a bunch of beautiful dancing girls, which we scrambled across to Starb'd. side to cheer and wave them on, with all the guys on one side of the ship, it listed. The captain got on the blower and ordered us to the port side to balance as he was trying to bring it in to dock the ship.

We disembarked later in the evening and went over to a ferry boat which transported us across the Hudson to New Jersey where we were met by the ladies of American Red Cross which served us a bunch of goodies and then we boarded the train for Montreal.

We knew we were home when we started to cross the Victoria Bridge and we saw the big Black Horse Ale sign as the train took us to Bonaventure Station. The arrangements to meet families was simple, go to the section of the first letter of our last name. Mom and Dad with my brother Jim and cousin Mary were there to greet me. What a reunion after being away for two years, with the rest of the family awaiting at Home. There was a big welcome home sign in front of the house and my

brother Jack and sister Jen and her family with further greetings. It was great to be home.

As New Year's was on us, I had the opportunity to meet a lot of my school friends who were lucky to come home too. After my 30 days leave, I was Honorably discharged from the army on February 1st. 1946 which was 3 years from my enlistment at the age of 18 and discharged before my 21 st. birthday.

In writing these personal memoirs, there is no doubt in my mind that these words may apply to all of my fellow regimental comrades although their situations may have been more precarious under different circumstances. The same may be said for all the front line Canadian regiments that participated in the land fighting to liberate farms, villages, towns and cities.

We take our hats off to the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force whose valiant efforts in their line of duty made it possible for we, of the land forces to accomplish our objectives to liberate occupied countries and their people.

We who, by the grace of God, survived the fighting, returned home safely to see and meet our families again, were the most fortunate of all. Since then, and to-day, we are the voices of our fallen comrades who paid the Supreme Sacrifice, for we do REMEMBER THEM.

During our memorial trips to Normandy through to the Netherlands, the sincere expression of gratitude and thanks from the people of the liberated countries has been over whelming. They know the cost of freedom, liberty and democracy was very high. Each decade of children have been taught by their parents to remember the sacrifice of the young Canadians that sacrificed their lives for their countries freedom.

To all of the people of the liberated countries, We wish to express our sincerest thanks of appreciation for the manner in which you are eternally remembering our fallen comrades. May you forever live in Peace and in good Health.

Yours very Truly,

The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada,
Once a Queen's Own, Always a Queen's Own.

J. William Ross.

22 Monsadel St. Kirkland; Quebec. H9J 3K4.

