

**Goetz, Rudolf**

**Private**

**11<sup>th</sup> Canadian Field Ambulance**

**Royal Canadian Army Medical  
Corps**

**K/1553**



Rudolf Goetz was born March 10, 1921 in Molotschna, a Mennonite settlement located in southern Russia. The area suffered severe famine in the 1920's. The Mennonite Church of Canada sponsored many immigrants who came and settled on the Prairies. Rudolf's parents, Gerhard and Anna Goetz, were part of this migration.

The family arrived in 1924 settling first in Dalmeny (north of Saskatoon) Saskatchewan where they lived for about ten years. They then moved to Yarrow, British Columbia in the mid 1930's where his father was a veterinarian.

Rudy attended Yarrow Elementary School until age 15. He dropped out, taking various seasonal jobs but returning to Yarrow Bible School in the winter months and graduated in 1941. He had an interest in animals and loved boxing.

From the book "Village of Unsettled Yearnings", we learn he was fast, wiry and relatively short - the perfect build for a welterweight. Rudy and his father built a boxing and wrestling ring in their small barn; probably the only such facility the Yarrow community had ever seen. Rudy could be beaten in wrestling but, in boxing, he always had the upper hand, even over much bigger and stronger opponents.

As mentioned, the Goetz family were Mennonites. Many Mennonites held pacifist views, but about 4,500 Mennonites joined the armed forces in WW2.



*Rudolf and his mother*

*Photo courtesy of Chilliwack Museum and Archives*

Rudy enlisted on December 12, 1943. He was part of a rush of military-aged Yarrow men who joined the Medical Corps between December 1943 and January 1944. Eleven of the seventeen Yarrow recruits enlisted during this period.

These enlistees advised the Military of their "conscientious objection to war". Young Mennonite men who made such a declaration were usually assigned to serve in the non-combatant Medical Corps. Rudy's enlistment papers are marked in red "Restricted-Enlistment" acknowledging this status. Rudy was assigned to the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps and sent to Trenton, Ontario for his basic training.

Here the boys from Yarrow, together with other enlisted conscientious objectors to war, e.g. Quakers, Jehovah's Witnesses and Plymouth Brethren were grouped in medical units. To the amusement of some officers and taunting soldiers from the infantry units, these "conchies" used stretchers instead of guns in their basic training. Rudy was then transferred to Camp Borden, Ontario for his medical training and assigned to the 12<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance Corps. In May 1944 he was given furlough, which he spent with his parents in Yarrow. He then departed for Britain on June 25, 1944.

By the time Rudy arrived in Europe on July 3, 1944, the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance Corps had been serving in France since D-day and were short on strength.

On August 16, 1944 Rudy was transferred from the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion to the 11<sup>th</sup> Ambulance joining his new unit in St-Pierre-sur-Diver, France. His assignment was Stretcher-bearer.

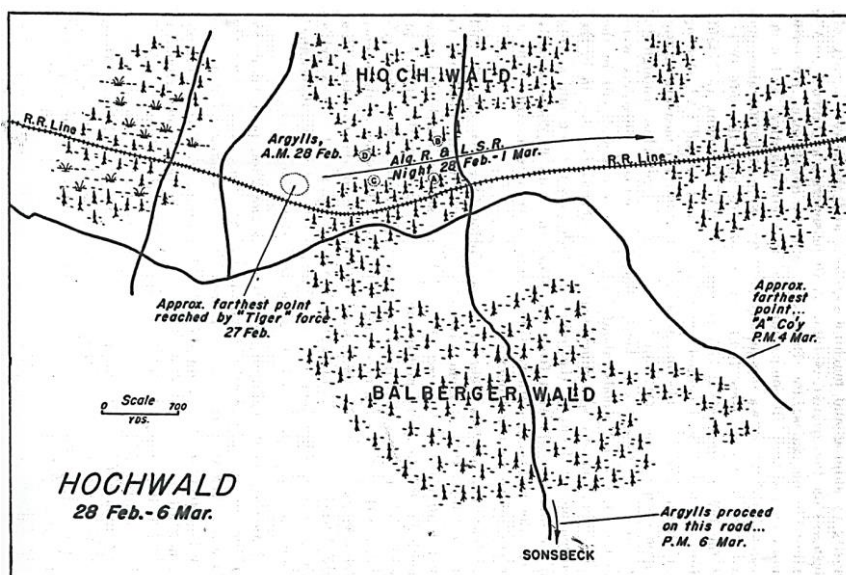
From "Village of Unsettled Yearnings" we have the following outline of the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance Corps in which Rudy was serving:

"For many weeks after Rudy joined the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance Corps they were on the move every two to three days due to the rapid advances of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army to the north in the direction of Belgium and Holland. They moved from St-Pierre-sur-Dives to Falaise to Orbec to Brionne and on to Dieppe. He would have been adapting himself to the procedures of his new unit and to the physical environment of war. He would have carried wounded and dead civilians from the dwellings bombed by the Germans in Falaise and struggled with fatigue, grime and horror while removing the wounded, shellshocked and dead off the battlefields of the Falaise Gap. This was a twelve mile wide natural bottleneck outside Falaise where the German and Allied Forces met head on. The battle raged from August 19 - 21.

This was a sudden introduction to the horrors of war.

On September 1, the unit was camped near Dieppe and then traveled up the coastline to Dunkirk, crossing the France - Belgium border at Dixmude. They then moved on to Ostend arriving in Antwerp on the 17<sup>th</sup>. The military objective was accomplished by early November, and Rudy's unit was relocated to Groesbeek and Nijmegen in Holland. Here it remained until early February 1945 when the major Allied offensive into the Rhineland commenced. Rudy would have administered aid to German POW's and may have been called upon to translate due to his fluency in German.

On February 16<sup>th</sup>, the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital was able to establish the first advanced dressing station on German soil, in Kleve. It would take another three weeks before the Canadians took Xanten and then only after suffering large numbers of casualties. By March 6, the Hochwald and Balberger Wald were clear.



Map of the Hochwald Gap by Maj Hugh N. Maclean

Another two days of strenuous battle by both the Canadian and British troops were required to secure Xanten. There was heavy shelling on March 7, and the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance lost several of its personnel - an ambulance driver among them. On March 8, the unit was overwhelmed by 160 casualties from the brigade to which it was assigned. The call came constantly of "stretcher-bearer, stretcher-bearer, stretcher-bearer over here". Each stretcher-bearer had a limited supply of medical items - bandages, sulpha and morphine. When these ran out, he had to make do with whatever was available to deal with gaping wounds, missing limbs or blood spurting from wounds". It is impossible to imagine the horror seen by Rudy and his fellow corpsmen.

A shell exploded close to Rudy and two others. Rudy was taken to the regimental aid station with major wounds to his stomach. In an entry written in the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance's operations centre, Major Barney Bucove sent a message to his superiors March 8, 1945 at 1739 hours saying: "Private Goetz, Rudolf and Private Sauve, Albert R. have both been killed in action while acting as Strecher-Bearers with the Infantry Regiments".

Rudy Goetz was two days shy of his 24<sup>th</sup> birthday. He was buried in a temporary grave in Xanten, Germany. Later, on July 18, 1946, a letter was sent to the family advising that Rudy's remains had been carefully exhumed and been reburied in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, near Nijmegen, Netherlands, grave reverence **III. H. 10.**

His parents were advised the grave would receive care in perpetuity by the people of Holland.

Rudy was his parents' only child and never married. His mother Anna died in Yarrow, BC of cancer just eight months after her son's death. Rudy's father George (Gerhard) died in Yarrow, BC on September of 1979 at the age of 89.

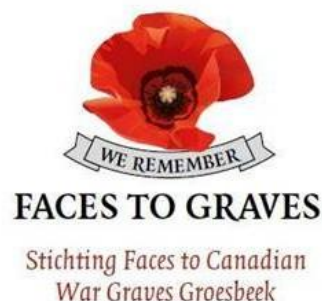




A number of mountains have been named in honour of servicemen from the Upper Fraser Valley who died in WW2. A book called "The Mountain Project" was written by Neil Grainger to commemorate the climbing of these peaks and the placing of crosses in memory of the soldier. In the summer of 1984 a local mountain, named for Rudolf Goetz, was climbed and a cross placed at the peak in Rudy's honour. Goetz Peak is 6600 ft in elevation, and is one mile north of Williams Peak, connected by a ridge. It can be seen from Foley Lake looking northeast. The ridge is snow free in mid summer and is shown below on the left.



The expedition was undertaken June 19, 1984 by local climbers Neil Baker and Reinhardt Fabische of the Chilliwack Outdoor Club. Their day-long climb was reported in the Chilliwack Progress newspaper on August 22, 1984.



Biography by Marlene Dance, Chilliwack, BC for Faces to Graves.

## Bibliography:

Library and Archives Canada Military Service records of WW2 Soldiers

Yarrow Pioneers and Settlers

<http://www.yarrowbc.ca/biographies/indexframes.html>

Permission given to use any part of the Goetz biography online was granted by website Editor: Esther Epp Harder.

Village of Unsettled Yearnings - edited by Leonard N. Neufeldt

Chilliwack War Memorial Website: <https://www.chilliwackmuseum.ca/>

Military colour picture of Rudolf Goetz provided by Deanna Friesen.

The Mountain Project by Neil Grainger

Private Rudolf Goetz's name is listed on the Chilliwack Cenotaph and appears just below the rifle of the cadet marching past. He is also named on the Chilliwack Museum and Archives War Memorial website and the Yarrow Roll of Honour.



*Photo credit: Chilliwack Progress November 2018 - Prepared by Marlene Dance*

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