

Oram, Joseph James

Lance Sergeant

G/10125

Royal Regiment of Canada



Personal Information: Joseph James Oram was born on 21 August, 1921, contrary to his military records which state he was born 21 September, 1921. He was born in Saint John New Brunswick, to George and Lillian Oram. He was the oldest of three brothers, had an older sister, and two older step brothers. He enlisted before he completed school at Saint John Vocational where he took typing. He tried to join before his eighteenth birthday but he was turned away. He was a clown, but very likable. He was a very popular person; everyone who spent time around him loved him. Joseph joined the army because he felt that going to war would be an adventure, and he loved adventure. He was a very independent young man as was demonstrated by the fact that he taught himself to swim by going to the river and jumping off a wharf. He was also very loyal and dependable as was demonstrated by the circumstances of his death. He was only a few days past his eighteenth birthday when he joined the Saint John Fusiliers on 2 September 1939.

Military Movements: After he enlisted in September 1939 he spent the next year and a half training with the Saint John Fusiliers. He was then TOS (Taken on strength) with the 16th A.A in Newfoundland. In 1941 he received an award for serving outside of Canada (Newfoundland was not part of Canada until 1949). He spent his years in Newfoundland training and preparing for his eventual transfer overseas. December, 1943 he was

TOS to Arty A. A. Reinforcement Camp, and only a month later was TOS again by A 23 T. C. In 1943 he also qualified to wear the clasp to the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and was entitled to wear the Maple Leaf on the ribbon, presented to anyone who honourably completed 18 months complete voluntary service.

January 1944, he was SOS (Struck off Strength) to #24 BTC in Brampton Ontario. Then in June 1944, he was SOS to A12 CITC in Farnham Quebec. 4 August he was SOS to C.A overseas. Once there he was TOS to the Royal Regiment of Canada, 21st army group. On 29 August 1944 he embarked in the UK and disembarked at the south of France⁶. He would eventually be involved in the final push of the war: The battle of the Rhineland. The commander of the 21st army group, General Bernard Montgomery, wanted "one really powerful and full-blooded thrust toward Berlin"; he wanted focus to be on his group.

The 21st army group spent months preparing for the push into Germany, creating a line, along with other allied forces, throughout Belgium and the Netherlands.

The Final Days: Two and a half days before Joseph died he had a final chance to see his younger brother George Oram. George was a dispatcher and had been driving through the town of Ghent when he spotted his brother, Joseph. They spent as much time as they could together before parting ways. Joseph was leaving to become part of Operation Veritable. Their objective was to clear the Germans off of what land they still occupied to the west of the river Rhine. Operation Veritable began on 8 February 1945 after a hard night of the allies bombing communication centres in Cleve, Goch, Weeze, Udem and Kalkar. The operation was run by the 21st army group, which at this point consisted of the British Second Army, First Canadian Army, and the US Ninth Army.

During his last days he was involved with the Fourth Canadian Infantry Brigade, which consisted of: Royal Regiment of Canada (who Joseph was with), Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, and the Essex Scottish Regiment. This was part of the 2nd Canadian Division.

The first phase of Veritable had been completed by 15 February and the 21st Army Group was moving quickly into the second: the clearing of

Moyland wood and the Goch – Kalkar road. These battles cost British and Canadian divisions more than 3000 casualties.

The 4th Brigade began to move along the road to Kalkar late in the morning on 17 February. Their objective for that day was to clear high ground south of Kalkar, which could not be done unless operations to clear the Cleve forest, as well as the ridges of Moyland, were completed. Clearing the Cleve forest was done successfully but German resistance of the Moyland wood was far more intense than expected. The Fourth Brigade would now be required to clear the Wood instead of following afterwards as previously planned. There was some confusion to the orders that day, and the Royal's attack ended up being postponed. This was mostly due to lack of artillery support.

19 February they were finally brought into action. The 4th Brigade took lead of the 7th Brigade to clear the eastern end of the Moyland Wood. The 7th Brigade was making very little progress but to their right the 4th was infinitely more successful. The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry and the Essex Scottish began the attack at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

The Royals advanced to their supporting positions about 1500 yard behind the road. There was hardly any cover for them when the Germans began to attack. Within the companies there were approximately 15 killed by the time they had reached their objectives.

Late in the afternoon of 19 February, 1945 the enemy was still shelling and mortaring heavily and the Germans continued to launch counter attacks. They had managed to penetrate some lines being held by the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. This heavy opposition continued long into the night.

According to a letter received by Mrs. Lillian Oram, Joseph's mother, Joseph died late in the night of the 19th. He was in charge of a group, and when one of his men got hit he went out to bring him back to safety. In doing so he lost his own life, he was shot in the head and killed on the spot. He was temporary buried in Cleve, Germany.

Lest We Forget: Joseph James Oram was reburied at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands. His grave reference is **XX. F. 12.**

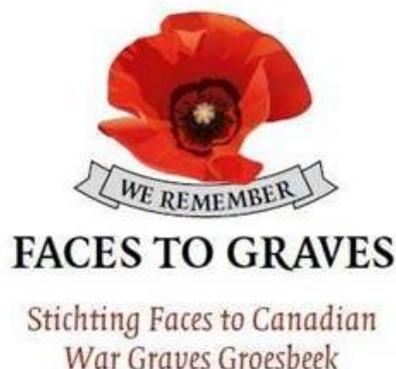
Groesbeek is located 10km southeast of the town Nijmegen and close to the German border. He is commemorated on the 551st page of the Second World War Book of Remembrance. He is now survived by one sister and his brother George (who survived the war), and many nieces and nephews.

Joseph James Oram

Lest We Forget

Biography by Tylr Lingley. (Courtesy of the Lest We Forget initiative of Belleisle Regional High School, Springfield, N.B.).

Video by a student at Belleisle Regional High School as part of the school's Lest We Forget initiative: <http://www.teachertube.com/video/152325>



Biography made available for Faces To Graves, with courtesy of Stephen Wilson, Belleisle Regional High School.

Bibliography

Copp, Terry. Cinderella Army, the Canadians in Northwest Europe 1944 - 1945. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.

Goodspeed, Donald J. Battle Royal: a History of the Royal Regiment of Canada, 1862-1962. Toronto: Royal Regiment of Canada Association, 1962.

Stacey, C. P. The Canadian Army, 1939 - 1945: An Official Historical Summary. Ottawa: Kings Printer, 1948.

Interviews

Hamm, Eileen. "Joseph Oram." Personal interview. 18 May 2009.

Photo Eileen Hamm

Archival Reference

Military service files of Lance Sergeant Joseph James Oram (RG24, volume 26732) obtained from Library and Archives Canada, 365 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario.

Internet Sites

<http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=collections/books>

<http://vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=collections/virtualmem>

http://www.cwgc.org/debt_of_honour.asp?menuid=14

[http://www.vac-acc-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=collections/cmdp/mainmenu/group04/cvs_m](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=collections/cmdp/mainmenu/group04/cvs_m)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/21st_Army_Group

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Veritable

<http://wwii.ca/page-55-germany.html>

<http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/rhineland/rhineland.htm>