

**Rowles, James Prosser**  
**Lance Corporal**  
**Royal Canadian Armoured Corps**  
**M/8535**



James Prosser Rowles was born 11 June, 1914 in Okotoks, Alberta, about 11,5 miles south of Calgary. He was the son of John Kansas Rowles, an American from Kansas City and Ann Elizabeth, a Canadian from Listweel, Ontario. They were married 2 January 1898 and had eight children: five sons: Herbert, Theodore, John, William and James, three daughters: Hannah, Macy and Bessie. They were members of the United Church, the biggest Protestant church in Canada.

Their father had a farm with 153 hectares of land and James liked to help, especially on the tractor. He went to the primary school in Canada followed by the secondary school in Washington, USA. He left school at the age of fifteen, having completed grade VII. While still at school he had worked at a garage during the holidays and continued working there after he left, for two years. After that he was employed by the CPR. Codgen Munition Shops in Calgary as a machine operator and working with metal.

James was married on 17 October, 1938 to Sheila Lennox and their daughter, Sheila Elizabeth was born the next year on 3 June. They lived in Calgary at 1822, 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue East and led a quiet life, visiting family, going to a dance occasionally or attending baseball and rugby matches. James was very interested in mechanics and liked to read the trade magazines; he regularly did the odd jobs around the house.

## IN THE MILITARY

Meanwhile, the Second World War had broken out and on 29 November, 1943 James joined the army. It was a difficult time because his wife was soon to give birth to their second child. Just before Christmas, 23 December, their son, Douglas Martin was born; James saw him for the last time during his leave in July, 1944.

Because of his experience in the garage and working with the tractor on his father's farm, he asked to be trained as a driver, for example on a tank. No problems were found at his medical checkup. He was a tall, well-built man with brown eyes and hair; he had broken his nose in 1920 and a finger in 1933, but was found to be in good health. He was friendly and glad to serve in the army.

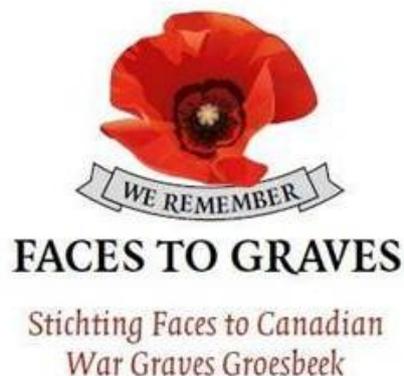
His first training took place in Canada and it became clear that he suffered pain in his legs when he had to stand or march for longer periods but he resolved to continue to the best of his ability. He left Canada for Great Britain at the beginning of November, 1944 and on 29 December he was shipped to France to take part in the liberation.

The war was over when some five months later, on 25 May, 1945 there was a disastrous accident that proved fatal for James. In the afternoon, about half past three, he was riding in a tank convoy going from Buren to Maarsse in the Netherlands, when in the neighborhood of Culemborg, the tank driver at the back had to swerve to the right to avoid a group of footgangers on the left side of the road. Through the movement of the tanks in front, visibility was not good. The tank touched a soft embankment and moved further to the right, hitting something hard on the ground. It turned over, making a complete turn. There was no gun turret and the driver had withdrawn his head as far as possible and was uninjured; he immediately called to his co-driver, James, but received no reply. He jumped out of the tank and found him under part of the caterpillar track, lying there with his face down and his upper body under the tank. A local doctor was quickly there and very soon the army doctor with the ambulance, but nothing could be done. One and a half hours later a crane arrived that could lift the tank from James's body; he was probably killed instantly.

James was temporarily buried two days later in a Nijmegen military cemetery. His mother tried to have his body transported to Canada so that it could be interred there but the cost was too high for her. His father had died. His possessions were sent to his wife and included a framed photo, a wallet, some German and Dutch money and an award, the 39-45 France Germany Star War Medal.

In Okotoks, there is a remembrance monument: the Veterans Way, with a wall on which photos and names of the fallen soldiers stand. In this way they will never be forgotten.

James was reburied in Groesbeek, The Netherlands at the Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **I. C. 3.**



Life story Linda Verhelst, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Photo Donna Maxwell

# Husband Killed In Europe

L/Cpl. James Prosser Rowles was killed accidentally on May 25 while serving in Northwest Europe with the Calgary Regiment (Tank), according to word reaching his wife, who lives at 1922 8th Ave E. L/Cpl. Rowles was the father of two children, Sheila, 6, and Douglas, 18 months.



An employee of the C.P.R., he joined the army in October, 1943, and went overseas in August, 1944, to serve with the Calgary Highlanders in Northwest Europe. After the German surrender he was transferred to the Calgary Regiment. He was born in Okotoks and attended school there.

Besides his wife and two children, he is survived by his mother, Mrs. A. E. Rowles of Okotoks; three sisters, Mrs. Frances MacConnell, Yakima, Washington; Mrs. C. H. Schnelle, Airdrie, and Mrs. R. R. McKenzie, Albert Park; and four brothers, Herbert, living in B.C.; Theodore and John, of Calgary, and William, of Okotoks.

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