



Figuur 1, De herdenkingstegel bij de Vriezenbrug in Almelo

Though World War II was a well-documented conflict, there are thousands of soldiers about whom we know very little. Once one looks deeper into the life of a soldier, you can find how much they meant to a child, to a wife, to parents and to their families. The soldier we researched lived a sad, yet heroic journey through the Canadian military and WWII, as he died just a month before the end of the war.

Milton Roy Lewis was born on March 31, 1919, as the son of Mr. and Mrs. John Lewis. He spent most of his life in Hamilton, Ontario. In August, 1940, he joined the Canadian Forces Reserves. On September 6, 1942, Milton married the love of his life, Ruby Helen Lewis with whom he had one child. Up until his enlistment in the Canadian Forces, Milton Lewis was a truck driver and a member of the United Church. He only attended High School for 2 years due to financial stress and had to quit in order to support his family. He was described by a medical examiner as a short, stocky recruit (165 cm, 65 kg), of low average ability and a pleasant, polite young man. He was strong at mental arithmetic. He was particularly fond of boxing, skating and dancing. He appeared to be clean-cut recruit with a long accident-free driving record. He was keen to drive either in the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (R.C.A.S.C) or "Tanks". The medical examiner concluded that Milton would make a stable, steady driver.

Milton Lewis was an African Canadian soldier, who could read, but not write or spell. For fear of rejection during the recruiting process, he lied about these lagging skills. When his brother, Richard Selwyn Lewis, lost an arm in the Battle of Dieppe, Milton could not be held back from fighting on the front lines in Europe!

Mr. Lewis spent a total of 761 days in the Canadian Armed Forces, of which 172 days were spent overseas. He was first enlisted as a private in the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Regiment in August, 1940 when he was 21 years old. He joined the Canadian Armed Forces on January 19, 1943 as a trooper. He then later joined the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps, more precisely, the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, as a tank driver. He earned Class III Driver, Dr. Mech. Group C qualifications.

There are very few details about the final days of Milton Roy Lewis' life. All that is known is that he was killed in action, on the April 4, 1945, at the age of 26, near Almelo, which is close to the border of the Netherlands and Germany. He had the rank of Trooper at the time of his death. Though he was killed on April 4, his wife received a letter about his death which stated that he died on April 5, 1945. The confusion of dates caused his dear wife great turmoil. The discrepancy of dates was odd, indeed, and strangely enough, the letter also made mention of his inability to spell or write.

Medals: the France-Germany Star ; Canadian Volunteer Service Medal (with clasp)
They were given to his wife in his honour.

Lest We Forget

Milton Roy Lewis was first buried in a temporary cemetery in Almelo, Netherlands, but was later reburied on February 4 1946 in Holten.

Milton Roy Lewis was evidently a brave soldier. He fought on the front lines in order to protect not only his country, but Holland and NW Europe as well. The loss of his brother, who died in 1944 in service of freedom, proves that the Lewis brothers were courageous, and that they put the lives of those overseas over their own lives. Without soldiers like them, Canada would not be what it is today, and neither would the rest of Europe. We would like to sincerely thank these selfless heroes, as the freedom we enjoy today only exists because of these men. Thank you.

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