

On 11 October 1945 the London Gazette officially announced that 35-year-old Corporal Morell McEachnie - of Calgary's 10th Field Squadron, Royal Canadian Engineers, (10 Fd Sqn) - had been awarded the Military Medal (MM). Cpl. McEachnie's award, which was instituted by King George V in 1916 to recognize non-commissioned officers and men for acts of bravery, came four months after his death. Cpl McEachnie's citation read:

"On the afternoon of 15 April 1945, during the advance to Deelen [near Arnhem, the Netherlands], 2 Troop of 10 Fd Sqn, in support of 5 Canadian Armoured Regiment, was subjected to heavy artillery and mortar fire. Two of the troop's vehicles, carrying essential tools and explosives, received direct hits and were set on fire.

Fully aware of the imminent danger of the vehicles blowing up, Cpl McEachnie coolly issued orders for lower priority stores to be offloaded from one of the as yet undamaged vehicles. He then moved to the burning vehicles and personally assisted in offloading over 200 pounds of high explosives and the highly sensitive detonators and primers.

During this action the enemy fire which had knocked out the two vehicles continued undiminished, but had no effect on the urgent work being carried out.

Shortly after the completion of removal a priority call was made for explosives to clear a road block ahead. As a result of this gallant Non-Commissioned Officer's unswerving devotion to duty, appreciation of what were the essential stores, and gallantry under fire in the face of extreme danger, the necessary explosives were available to clear the road block and enable the Armoured Regiment to continue its advance."

Cpl McEachnie's exploits were part of an operation codenamed 'Cleanser', intended to break out of Arnhem towards the IJsselmeer in order to seal off the western Netherlands and cut German communications. "Cleanser" and a subsequent assault on the Dutch port of Delfzijl constituted 10 Fd Sqn's final combat operations.

As German Field Marshall Wilhelm Keitel signed the Instrument of Surrender on 8 May 1945, the sappers of 10 Fd Sqn celebrated briefly with additional rum rations. Although 10 Fd Sqn had been engaged in almost continuous combat operations in Italy and Northwest Europe since Spring 1944, the end of hostilities did not diminish the need for engineering services. While other military personnel transitioned to more sedentary duties, the sappers were soon back to work on road construction, bridge building, and minefield clearance tasks. Although these tasks were no longer conducted under enemy fire, the inherent dangers of engineer work remained.

Cpl McEachnie survived the war but never returned home to his wife Tillie. Just a month after the cease fire in Europe, Cpl McEachnie was killed when the 6-ton truck he was driving skidded on a curve, got caught on a soft shoulder, and turned over in a Dutch canal. He was buried in the Holten Canadian War Cemetary in Holland with the letters MM displayed on his headstone. Sadly, he died before the award was officially announced.

