



## **Lance Corporal Russel McConnell NESS**

**01-B-05**

Russel Ness was born on 20 March 1922 in Belleisle Creek, King's County, New Brunswick. He was the oldest of 10 children born to Robert and Mabel Ness. Russell belonged to the Methodist congregation in Belleisle Creek. During Ness' early days he attended Belleisle Creek School until grade eight. He then worked in sawmills in and around the Belleisle area. Russell was very mechanically inclined and loved to joke with his family and friends. He had striking black hair and was the apple of his grandmother's eye. He was very social and a bit of daredevil but was loved by all. Russel was working with the New Brunswick Department of Highways in a repair shop until the day he enlisted. Russell enlisted on 13 July 1942 in Saint John, New Brunswick. He spent eight months in training. He started with the 7 District Depot of Canada; he was then T.O.S. to the Canadian Engineers Training Center in September 1942 for all purposes. There he became a qualified driver I.C. Class III. In January 1943, Russel was attached to AD & M School for Phase III of Drivers Mechanics. Ness was then sent overseas on 23 March 1943 with the 18 Field Coy, Royal Canadian Engineers.

Russell sailed out of Halifax to England where he fell in love. He trained in England until 16 July 1943. They first saw action in the UK. Russell was among the 155,000 allied troops who landed in France on D-day, 6 June

1944. During Russell's days in the army he was an engineer. He, along with the rest of his company, were assigned the duty of building Bailey Bridges and finding clear water on the land the infantry had already taken so that the rest of the battalion could advance. Ness was a sapper, so he also had the job of detecting any hidden land mines and disarming them. In January of 1945 Russell was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and clasp. He was also reclassified as Driver Mechanic and promoted to Lance Corporal. In late January 1945 Russell took 9 days of privileged leave to the United Kingdom. Once Ness returned from his leave he was back in action for only two months until his death. Russell's final days in the war were in the early part of April, the first and second week. The Canadians were advancing deep into The Netherlands. The lay of the land was filled with rivers and canals making the engineer's job long and tiring because of all the bridges that needed to be put in place. They barely had a chance for a break or even for sleep. Another problem the Allies faced in The Netherlands was the tactics of the opposing army; they destroyed all of their own bridges and blew giant craters in all of the good roads; this meant more and more unforeseen work for Russell and the rest of the engineers. On the 4th of April 1945, Russell's company lost two men and another 10 were wounded, when they were caught up in an enemy shelling from the west bank of the IJssel River. On the 5th the Allies discovered that the level of water in the IJssel was rising one inch every hour because the enemy controlled the locks at the junction of the Twente Canal and the IJssel. The Allies

immediately captured the locks so the enemy couldn't use the water to their advantage. By the 6th of April the 3rd Canadian Division had cleared the town to Zutphen. The engineers managed to put in place a 1200 foot triple-single Bailey Bridge that crossed the Schipbeek River. The division only lost four men, one a Major T,C, Thomas, due to shelling. The next town cleared was Deventer so the division pressed on parallel to the west shore of the IJssel lead by the 9th Brigade and supporting the 18th Field Company with Ness. At 16.30 hours on the 11th of April, the troops were halfway between Zutphen and Deventer. Russell and the other engineers recovered a small bulldozer and starting grading areas for the raft landing sites. The rest of Ness' division was under fire for 11 hours with some success. On this day 11 April Russel Ness was recorded as Killed in Action. There is no specific reference as where Russell died but during this day there were many engineers casualties between Zutphen en Deventer. Russel was killed while clearing mines. Once his mother received the news, she was devastated. Russell's brother Bob was in the war at the same time, but in a different area. He learned about his brother's death by a letter of his mother. Russell Ness received 6 honours of awards. He was killed in the age of 23.

