

**Owen, Eldon Martin**

**Trooper**

**South Alberta Regiment**

**29<sup>th</sup> Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment**

**B/111305**

**Royal Canadian**

**Armoured Corps**



SOUTH ALBERTA REGIMENT  
(29th Cdn Arm'd Recce Regt.)



Eldon Martin Owen was born 17 December 1920 at Toronto, Ontario (ON). His father Eldon Julius Clarence (who went by his third name) Owen was from Duluth, Minnesota, USA of Norwegian parents. Clarence came to Canada around the beginning of the Great War and married Eldon's mother Marjorie Long, of Scottish descent, at Toronto, ON in 1918. Eldon was the only child to the Presbyterian couple.

Clarence was an auto worker and the Owens lived with Marjorie's family in Toronto. Eldon's mother died while he was a child and they continued to live with her family. Her aunt Marjorie Seymour helped to raise Eldon and



1934 - Looking west from east of Bathurst St and College St. Notice College Street United Church on the right (City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, Sub Series70, Item 445)

they were members of College Street United Church. Eldon attended King Edward School and had two years at Central Technical where he took a machine shop program before going to work age sixteen. He was mechanically inclined like his father and found work as a truck driver.

*College Street United Church  
Toronto, ON 1934*

Eldon's father Clarence enlisted with the Canadian Army soon after WW2 broke out and became a Craftsman with the Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RCEME). Eldon attested 15 April 1942 at Toronto age 21. He was then 5'7" tall, 152 lbs with blue eyes. Eldon took his first few weeks of basic training at Newmarket, ON before being sent to Brantford, ON 6 June 1942. He spent 30 days hospitalized there that summer for an inguinal hernia. Eldon suffered a non-combat wound to his right hand that fall as a bystander to an incident at a restaurant.

Eldon was transferred to the Canadian Armoured Corps (CAC) at Camp Borden, ON

M.F.B. 371  
3003-7-41 (1087)  
H.Q. 1772-39-104

### REPORT ON INJURIES

*Other than Wounds Received in Action*

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1. Certificate to be signed by injured officer or soldier:  
 I, **Bill 1305 Pte. OWEN Eldon Martin**  
 Gen. Ser. C.A.(A) Att. #20 B.T.C. hereby declare that the injury sustained by me  
 on the **30th September** did not occur while I was in the performance  
 of military duty.

No. **20 C.A.(B).T.C.**  
**Brantford, Ontario Oct. 1/42.**  
 (station) (date)

2. (a) Description of injuries **Cutting wound right hand, three stitches inserted.**

(b) Are the injuries serious or of such a nature that they might be the exciting cause of disability later? **Not serious.**

(c) Whether admitted to hospital or sick in quarters? **Treated at C.S.H. Sept. 30/42.**

(d) How long before initial treatment was given? **Immediately after.**

Date **Oct. 1, 1942.** Signature of medical officer **W. M. Owen**  
 Major, R.C.A.M.C.

3. Short statement by injured person of the circumstances of the injury (see instruction 5). Signed statements of witnesses, or of persons to whom the injured person may have mentioned his injury, to be attached (see instructions 3 and 4):

I was sitting at the counter in a restaurant in Toronto. During an argument one man broke a water glass on the table. He threw it at the man sitting next to me. It missed him and I threw up my hand so that it would not hit me in the face. The jagged end struck my hand (right) causing the injury.

Eldon Martin Owen

M.F.B. 371  
3003-7-41 (1087)  
H.Q. 1772-39-104

### REPORT ON INJURIES

*Other than Wounds Received in Action*

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1. Certificate to be signed by injured officer or soldier:  
 I, **Bill 1305 Tpr. Owen, Eldon Martin**  
 Gen. Ser. C.A.(A) Att. #20 B.T.C. hereby declare that the injury sustained by me  
 on the **16-1-43** did not occur while I was in the performance  
 of military duty.

**Camp Borden Ont. 18-1-43**  
 (station) (date)

2. (a) Description of injuries **Sprained Left ankle, left lateral ligaments  
 Sprained both knees, internal ligaments.**

(b) Are the injuries serious or of such a nature that they might be the exciting cause of disability later? **NO**

(c) Whether admitted to hospital or sick in quarters? **NO**

(d) How long before initial treatment was given? **36 hours.**

Date **18-1-43** Signature of medical officer **K.C. Weller, C.M.D.C.**

3. Short statement by injured person of the circumstances of the injury (see instruction 5). Signed statements of witnesses, or of persons to whom the injured person may have mentioned his injury, to be attached (see instructions 3 and 4):

**While skiing # on Saturday at approximately 18.00 hrs. I was going down the hill, and one of the boys standing on the hill crossed in front of me. I tried to stop and swerved on my ski pole, and falling causing the injury.**

E. M. Owen  
 Tpr. Owen, E M

not applicable.

18 November 1942 and trained as a Trooper. While at Borden Eldon was involved in a skiing mishap January 1943, spraining an ankle and both knees. He qualified as Driver Class III for both Wheeled and Track vehicles 8 February 1943 and was cleared for overseas service.

Eldon disembarked in the UK 17 March 1943 where he reported to the CAC Reinforcement Unit.

He qualified as Driver Mechanic Group "C" 21 July 1943 and was taken on strength by the 29<sup>th</sup> Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment, South Alberta Regiment (SAR) soon after. The SAR was part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Division and had arrived in the UK summer 1942.

*29<sup>th</sup> Armoured Recce Regt. (SAR)  
training in U.K. WW2*

In April 1944 the SAR was placed under command of 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade, the infantry component of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. Brigadier General Jim Jefferson from Edmonton, Alberta was appointed to command 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade after a successful Italian campaign. The SAR's job would be to support three Ontario infantry battalions of that brigade in



the coming campaign: Algonquin Regiment, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Argylls) and Lincoln & Welland (Lincolns). The SAR had been a fully trained infantry unit before being converted to armour so adjusted easily to its new role.

Eldon was likely able to see his father Clarence during his leave time in the UK. Clarence remarried an English woman named Sarah ("Sally") and Eldon listed his stepmother as his next of kin while also providing notification to his great aunt Marjorie Seymour in Toronto.

The SAR was ordered to waterproof its vehicles on 20 May 1944 so that they would be able to drive off landing craft through water onto a beach. They did not participate in the Allied D-Day invasion that June and were left waiting in southern England in reserve. Eldon disembarked at Courseulles-sur-mer (Juno Beach) 21 July 1944 with his regiment. It took a few days to get all their equipment unloaded.

The SAR moved closer to the front line 29 July 1944, travelling through bombed out Caen, France. The 29<sup>th</sup> Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (SAR), supporting 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade, gained invaluable battle experience in the month of August against the depleted German Army and suffered setbacks along the way in Normandy. They established a reputation for toughness and determination at St. Lambert-sur-Dives during the Battle of Falaise Gap, where "C" Squadron leader Major David Currie was awarded the Victoria Cross, the only such award to the CAC during the war and the only one awarded to the Canadian Army in Normandy.

The SAR was involved in another major action at Moerbrugge, Belgium 8-12 September, the opening round in the Battle of the Scheldt. The tough fighting there cost the South Alberta Regiment eleven men killed, including three officers, and 27 wounded. They led a clearing action up to the south coast of the Scheldt and provided ongoing recce patrols with the help of Belgian and Dutch resistance groups. Their next significant engagement was the Battle for Bergen op Zoom 25-27 October. The SAR again experienced substantial losses coming up the dirt road they called 'Hulk Alley' which was heavily mined. Eldon received a minor wound during this period. They occupied Bergen op Zoom, Netherlands with the Germans blowing bridges as they withdrew.

The retreating Germans had stripped that part of Holland, leaving the Dutch with little food and no fuel. The winter of 1944-45 became known as the 'Hunger Winter'. SAR soldiers shared their rations with their hosts.

In mid January 1945 the SAR did some shooting over the Maas River, focusing on the island of Kapelsche Veer near Capelle. The Regiment played a key role in Operation ELEPHANT later that month 26-30 January in assaulting a German outpost there, supporting the Lincolns and Argylls. That bitter action cost the SAR 4 killed plus 5 wounded.

First Canadian Army launched Operation VERITABLE 8 February (Feb) 1945. By 21 Feb they had closed in on Hochwald Layback and planned a new operation to take it. Operation BLOCKBUSTER was to be carried out by 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Corps, including 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Division, and was scheduled to commence 26 Feb 1945.

The SAR mobilized 22 Feb from Nijmegen, Holland to Germany, travelling through two inches of mud along the road. BLOCKBUSTER kicked off 0430 hours, 26 Feb 1945. The first two phases of the attack were completed by 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Divisions plus 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division, including the capture of the high ground above Udem in the face of stubborn German opposition. The way was clear for the third phase of the operation – the attack on the Hochwald Gap by the SAR and Algonquins, and the ridge to the south by 11<sup>th</sup> British Armoured Division.

With the Algonquins on their back decks, the South Albertas moved out of Hau at 0800 hours 26 February to be in position for the attack scheduled for that night. Recce parties had marked the route but progress became difficult as the tanks and wheeled vehicles tried to get through thick mud with the consistency of prairie gumbo. It was churned up to a depth of three feet by the preceding Divisions' traffic.



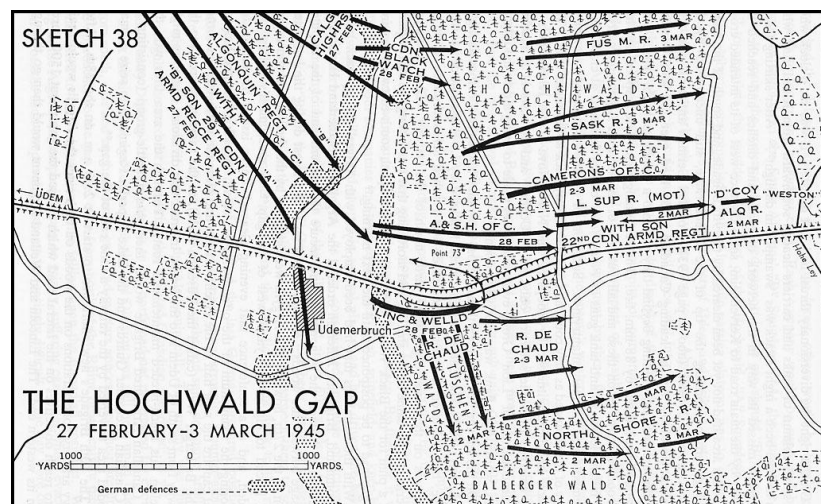


*SAR Trooper hooking cable to tow a Sherman tank 26 Feb 1945*

The SAR spent nearly an entire day trying to move a distance of less than five miles. It took almost 12 hours to get within a mile of the start line. Their tank crews were already exhausted and falling asleep on duty before the battle began. The South Albertas, with "A" Squadron leading and carrying Algonquins on their decks,

moved out at 0130 hours 27 Feb. They had to detour around a Brigadier vehicle from 2<sup>nd</sup> Division that was stuck on the road, and the light Stuart tanks all got bogged down. Some Shermans also got stuck and it was finally every tank for itself. As a result, only about half of the tanks and infantry made it to the starting point in time for the attack. The attack went in at 0600 hours just as dawn was breaking. The shallow valley was a giant bog which "B" Squadron had difficulty traversing, making them sitting ducks for German artillery. B-3 Troop tanks became pinned down but the two surviving tanks of B-1 moved forward with the Algonquin "C" Company and helped them take their objective.

"A" Squadron met with disaster when its column of tanks and Algonquin carriers missed its way in the network of roads and ditches after skirting Udem. The area had still not been cleared



and German anti-tank guns were waiting in deadly ambush. The three SAR leading tanks were instantly knocked out by 88-mm fire. The eight remaining were trapped and had no room to turn. Soon these and all but one of the thirteen Algonquin carriers fell victim to German anti-tank and infantry gun fire, with survivors making their way back to the Kirsal area. "A" Squadron was badly depleted and held back from further combat until they were able to regroup. The South Albertas suffered additional casualties before their battle for the Gap ended in the afternoon 2 March when the Regiment was relieved.

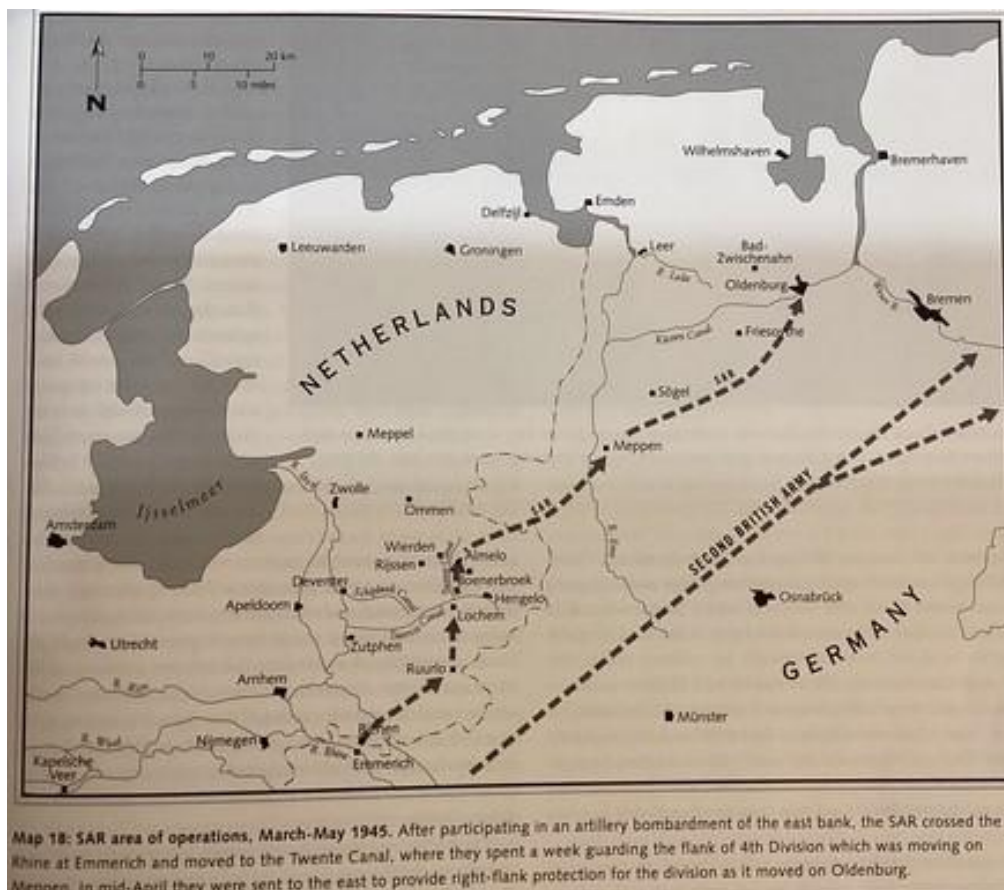


The SAR provided close support for the Algonquins in an attack on Veen, Germany 7 March 1945 in a costly battle for 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade which secured their objectives the next day.

*SAR Sherman and Stuart tanks advance 7 March 1945*

During the night of 31 March/1 April 1945 the SAR became the first

armoured unit of 4<sup>th</sup> Division to cross the Rhine River at Emmerich, Germany on a temporary pontoon bridge. 4<sup>th</sup> Division was ordered to take over the next German defensive obstacle, the Twente Canal in Holland about thirty miles to the north. 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade would lead the division's advance and hopefully seize a bridge over the Twente in the vicinity of Lochem, Netherlands. The bridge was blown by the Germans and the SAR suffered casualties, remaining there for a week guarding the flank of 4<sup>th</sup> Division which was moving on Meppen, Germany.





The SAR arrived in undamaged Meppen 11 April 1945 and were given a few days rest. 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade had taken Frieosythe, Germany by 14 April and the SAR's next job was to recce a route to Oldenburg. They

**TPR. ELDON MARTIN OWEN,** 24, died April 16 of bomb fragment wounds received on that date while in action with a Canadian reconnaissance regiment in Germany. He died less than a week after spending a nine-day leave in England with his father, Sergt. Clair Owen. His father returned to Canada immediately after his leave, having served almost six years with the

Royal Canadian Engineers, and did not learn of his son's death until his arrival here. Enlisting in 1942, Tpr. Owen went overseas in June, 1943, and was wounded previously in December, 1944. Born in Toronto, only child of Sergt. Clair Owen, Kingswood Rd., and the late Marjorie Owen, he attended King Edward school and was a member of College Street United church.

encountered German tanks on 15 April, including a 68-ton Tiger II with an 88-mm gun which they managed to take out. On 16 April the SAR hit an area thick with mines, with their Recce Troop losing three Stuart tanks, killing driver Trooper Bill Carr in one of the explosions. Trooper Eldon Owen was badly wounded by small-arms fire after bailing out of his tank which had been hit by a *Panzerfaust* (German anti-tank gun). He was evacuated to 2 Casualty Clearing Station and died of his wounds there, age 24.

*Toronto Star May 1945*

OFFICIAL CANADIAN ARMY OVERSEAS CASUALTY NOTIFICATION (DEATH)			
NUMBER	B 111805	RANK	Trooper
NAME	OWEN, Eldon Martin	SERVICE UNIT	29th Armad Recce Regt. (South Alpe Regt) (C.A.)
DATE OF BIRTH	17-12-20	DATE OF ENLISTMENT	18-4-42
MARITAL STATUS	Single	RELIGION	Church of England
NEXT OF KIN AS SHOWN ON M.F.M. 1, 2 & 3 RELATIONSHIP	Mother	NAME ADDRESS D.A.B.	Mrs. Sally Owen,
ADDRESS	24 Heathcote Rd., Epsom, Surrey, England		
ADDITIONAL PERSON TO BE NOTIFIED	Mrs. Marjorie Seymour, (Great-aunt)	ADDRESS	442 Kingswood Rd., Toronto 13, Ont.
PARENTS NAME ADDRESS (IF SOLDIER MARRIED OVERSEAS)			
AUTHORITY CAS. SIG. NO.	8368A	H.Q.405-0-2015	DATE 16-4-45
CASUALTY DETAILS	Died of wounds.		
Western European Theatre of War.			
LAST WILL ATTACHED TO NOTIFICATION TO A. OF E.?	JMD YES/NO	M.F.M.S. ATTACHED TO NOTIFICATION TO A. OF E.?	YES/NO
FORM NO. CAS. 6 25M-4-44 (4184) H.Q. 1772-39-1989-1990	3/1 2340 0/S with A.C.	DATE 24-4-45	DIRECTOR OF RECORDS
6	COPY FOR DOCUMENT FILE		

Trooper E.M. Owen was temporarily buried at Meppen, Germany and later relocated to Holten Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **X. D. 6.**

*Photo courtesy lestweforget1945.org*

Eldon Owen's campaign medals:

- 1939-45 Star
- France-Germany Star
- Defence Medal
- War Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal/Clasp



Biography by Jim Little, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources Consulted:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Veteran Affairs Canada – Canadian Virtual War Memorial

Ancestry public trees

Newspapers.com



College Street United Church Toronto, ON image

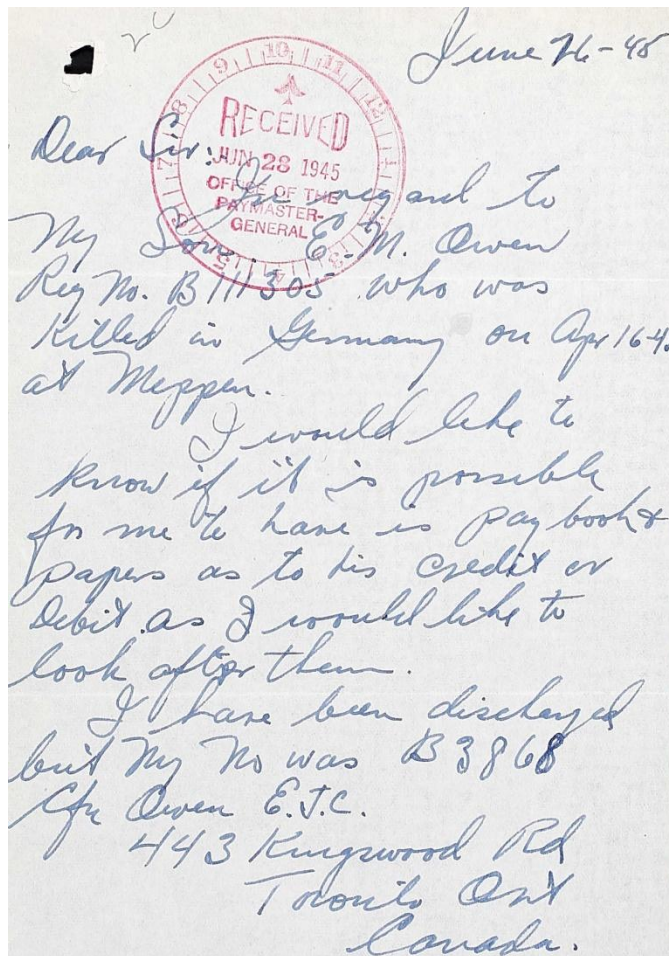
<https://www.torontojourney416.com/college-street-united-church/>

Graves, Donald E. (1998). South Albertas – A Canadian Regiment At War

Hochwald Gap map and information

<https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/UN/Canada/CA/Victory/Victory-19.html>

\* Do you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact [info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl)



Clarence Owen survived the war and returned home to Toronto where he learned of his son's death from Eldon's great aunt Marjorie Seymour. His English wife Sally joined him in Canada and they retired in British Columbia (BC).

Forest Lawn Memorial Park,  
Burnaby, BC

Courtesy findagrave.com

