



**Lance Corporal Howard Lewis
SAUNDERS
09-E-01**

Howard Lewis Saunders of Fleet, Alberta, was born in Castor on 24 November 1918. He was the son of Howard and Lydia Saunders. He grew up on the farm and took his schooling at Fleet, Rush Point and Viking. He joined the army for active service in the summer of 1942. Where he spent the winter, receiving leave home in February 1943 and June 1943. In July 1943 he went overseas with The 8th Reconnaissance Regiment, 14th Canadian Hussars and landed in England. He spent one year training in England. On 6 July 1944, the regiment landed on Gold Beach near Le Hamel, France, and moved on to Le Mesnil de Louvigny where they encountered heavy shelling. Operating as an Infantry Battalion the moved ahead to the south of Caen on 29 July 1944. The battle of Caen was a major encounter where they experienced heavy fighting. With flail tanks to make a path through the minefields they moved on through Tournebu and Estres la Champagne on their way to Falaise, meeting fierce resistance all the way. After Falaise was taken it was bombed by the retreating enemy until it was a raging inferno. After closing the Falaise Gap, the regiment turned towards the Seine. The town of Orbec was liberated after 48 hours of continuous fighting. The Assistance given by the local residents was invaluable. Crossing the river Risle was the last water obstacle before the Seine. This was accomplished while repairing a bridge under heavy fire. After cleaning the forest area they crossed the Seine at Elbeuf on 31 August 1944, at night. By morning they were traveling fast through Rouen, cheered on by liberated civilians and

Howard Saunders mentioned in letters home, seeing a huge 500 foot tower come crashing down. Living in barns with steady rain and enemy shelling was very unpleasant. On 19 December 1944 the regiment moved to nest positions on the Maas River to relieve the 3rd British Division. Conditions there were better and the towns held Oeffelt, Bergen and Boxmeer along the German border, these positions were held until 8 February 1945, when a major push was I force capturing Gennep on 12 February and moving to Nijmegen. After two busy days they moved by night through Gennep and on to Kleve in Germany. From there they worked through to Calcar. After heavy fighting and bad roads they were in Xanten and then on to Wesel. For the next ten days they were moved to holding positions along the Rhine between Millingen and Emmerich. On 28 March 1945 the unit crossed the Rhine encountering heavy resistance all the way. They advanced through Terborg, Doetinchem and headed for the Twente Canal. After bridge building under fire, the canal was crossed at Lochem. The next water obstacle was the Schipbeek, south of Holten. Going was slow due to road craters and mines and as they approached the Schipbeek they observed that the bridges had been blown out. The canal bridge was repaired under fire and the advance was made to the Overijssels Canal, the next water barrier. Heavy fighting and artillery fire were part of each adventure. With this crossing secured and the Vecht river, further north, the regiment moved fast through Ommen, Balkbrug, Hoogeveen and Spier to the edge of Beilen. Beilen was surrounded by canals and a large open field. There was a little protection for "A" squadron patrol as it advanced, cautiously, to the edge of two on a reconnaissance mission to report on a bridge. They came under heavy sniper and machine gun fire. This is where

in night attire. At Totes they were stopped for a day in a hard battle with hundreds of dead and wounded and 150 prisoners. The next morning the regiment moved on, reaching Dieppe by evening, 1 September 1944. The First Canadians to reach Dieppe, they were royally treated by the civilians and given a three day rest. After Dieppe the regiment pushed on non-stop through Abbeville to Grave lines on the channel coast west of Dunkirk. Passing Dunkirk, they rushed on to liberate Oostende, Furness, Blankenberge and Nieuwpoort in Belgium, Nieuwpoort was strongly held, taken several days to liberate. The regiment rested for three days near Lier, Belgium. After crossing the Albert Canal they moved on to Antwerp-Turnhout Canal. Facing a heavy fortified area the regiment dug in for three weeks to build up forces for the push to South Beveland. Establishing a bridgehead over the canal farther down enabled them to clear the area and open the port of Antwerp. Heavy fighting took place at Camhout, Belgium, on 9 October 1944 and on the dikes of the Scheldt. They managed to cut supply route of the enemy from South Beveland to Bergen-op-Zoom, Holland. After gaining control of the causeway, they advanced through Goes to the extreme end of South Beveland which was now a liberated area. "A" squadron complete with vehicles was loaded onto every type of craft available and made their way to the island of North Beveland. After a short stiff fight 200 prisoner were taken and the area freed. After a short leave, the regiment moved to relieve the 43th British Recce on the Waal river near Dreumel and west of Nijmegen. Being stationed along the Waal River in November and December with steady rain and mud and relentless shelling by the enemy was made very difficult. The enemy pastime each morning was shelling the church towers in Dreumel and Wamel.

Howard Saunders was killed along with other soldiers on 12 April 1945. One man got back to the Headquarter and with armoured cars and a gun carrier they were able to rescue the others. The relentless push continued on and in three weeks the war was over, thanks to these courageous men.
Howard Saunders was 26 years old.

