# Steele, William Steven Compagny Quatermaster Sergeant 5-F-10



William Steven Steele—known as Bill—is born on May 27, 1920, in Charlton, Ontario.
He is the son of Thomas Emerson Steele and Gertrude Mary Steele (née Barton).
William is one out of six children in the family. English is spoken at home, and the family attends the United Church.

When Bill enlists for active service on July 29, 1941, the family lives in Kirkland Lake, Ontario—having moved there when Bill was 15. His father works in the local mining industry, while Bill is employed as a butcher and shop assistant at the P & A Store, a grocery and general store in Kirkland Lake.

Before Bill is officially part of the military he has to pass a medical examination.
Bill's file mentions his physical details: tall 5'7½"; weight 140 lbs; blue eyes, and brown hair.
A scar on the outer side of his left wrist is noted as a distinguishing physical mark for identification purposes.
Bill is declared fit for service and enters the military system.




His first posting is to the infantry training centre at Camp Shilo, Manitoba.
Bill remains there until November 1941, the next posting, with the Algonquin Regiment, is Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. The regiment is stationed there to guard the Welland Canal and the Niagara River.

In early 1942, Canada becomes involved in the defence of Newfoundland.
(At that time, Newfoundland was British territory and not yet part of Canada.)
Several Canadian regiments are deployed for this purpose.

The Algonquins—with Bill in their ranks—arrive on February 7, 1942 and are assigned to guard Cape Spear and the airfield at Torbay.
In April 1942, Bill spends several weeks in Botwood Hospital, the reason: the mumps.
In February 1943, the Algonquins return to Canadian soil.
Having completed his infantry training, Bill is recommended for promotion to the rank of Lance-Corporal.
He is transferred to Camp Debert, Nova Scotia, where troops are being assembled for the crossing to the United Kingdom (UK).

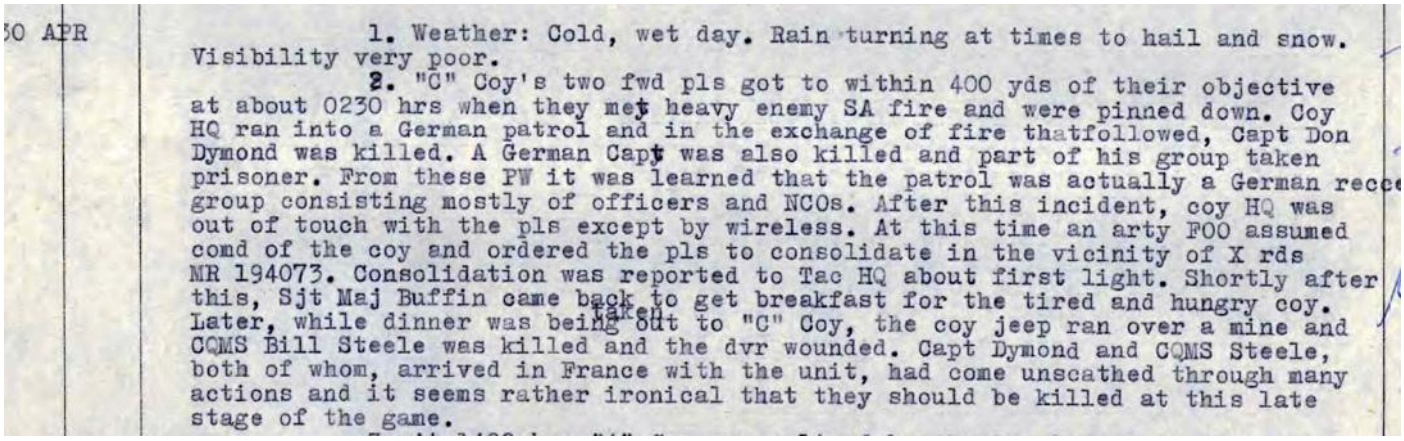
In April 1943, does Bill get the position of 'company stores clerk'.
A few weeks later, he is appointed to serve as a lance-corporal.

On June 10, 1943, the Algonquins—with Bill among their ranks, along with many others—boarded the troopship 'RMS Empress of Japan' in Halifax.

On June 19, 1943, Bill sets foot on land in Liverpool, UK.
The Algonquins travel on to Heathfield, East Sussex. Here, training continues in preparation for the planned landing in Normandy. At his own request, Bill is reversed in rank to 'Private'.
Training continues until early January 1944, when Bill is admitted to the 1st Canadian Special Hospital.
He remains there for the rest of January 1944. The reason: gonorrhea.

Preparations for the invasion of Normandy are in full swing. For the Algonquins—and for Bill—the landing on Juno Beach, Normandy, takes place on July 26, 1944.
Although Bill's service file could have been quite extensive, only a few brief notes follow the entry regarding the landing:
September 1944: he is authorized to serve as a corporal;
October 1944: he is authorized to serve as a sergeant;
November 1944: he is authorized to serve as a Company Quartermaster Sergeant;
January 1945: he is officially promoted to sergeant;
February 1945: he is officially promoted to Company Quartermaster Sergeant.
April 30, 1945: Killed in Action.

Many pages could be filled with everything Bill must have experienced from the landing in Normandy until his death in Northwest Germany.
The Algonquin Regiment found itself in the thick of the fighting on several occasions. Here, we will limit ourselves to what the author of the regiment's war diary recorded for April 30th.



30 APR

1. Weather: Cold, wet day. Rain turning at times to hail and snow. Visibility very poor.

2. "C" Coy's two fwd pls got to within 400 yds of their objective at about 0230 hrs when they met heavy enemy SA fire and were pinned down. Coy HQ ran into a German patrol and in the exchange of fire thatfollowed, Capt Don Dymond was killed. A German Capt was also killed and part of his group taken prisoner. From these PW it was learned that the patrol was actually a German recce group consisting mostly of officers and NCOs. After this incident, coy HQ was out of touch with the pls except by wireless. At this time an arty FOO assumed comd of the coy and ordered the pls to consolidate in the vicinity of X rds MR 194073. Consolidation was reported to Tac HQ about first light. Shortly after this, Sjt Maj Buffin came back to get breakfast for the tired and hungry coy. Later, while dinner was being taken out to "C" Coy, the coy jeep ran over a mine and CQMS Bill Steele was killed and the dvr wounded. Capt Dymond and CQMS Steele, both of whom, arrived in France with the unit, had come unscathed through many actions and it seems rather ironical that they should be killed at this late stage of the game.

Bill Steele lost his life when the jeep, he was riding, in struck a mine near Bad Zwischenahn, Germany. They were transporting dinner to a company; the driver was wounded, and Bill was killed instantly.
Bill was one of two men from the Algonquin Regiment to die that day—men who had made it all the way from France without incident.
With the end of the conflict in sight—May 8, 1945—his life came to an end.

He was given a temporary grave near Osterscheps, Germany.

On March 8, 1946, Bill gets his final resting place at the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten, grave reference: Plot 5, Row F, Grave 10.

He was awarded:
the 1939–1945 Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the War Medal 1939–1945, and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

Posthumously, he was also awarded a "Mention in Despatches" (MID).

*A "Mention in Despatches" signifies that a service member has been officially named and commended in a formal report submitted by a superior to the military high command. This recognition honors an individual's courageous or meritorious actions during engagements with the enemy.*
*There is no specific badge or medal associated with this honor.*

His headstone reads:
**Tho' the world may change**
**Never shall we—the one we loved—**
**Let fade from memory**
**Mother, Dad and Family**




Sources:
www.cwgc.org; www.ancestry.com;
www.canada.ca/library-archives; wikipedia,wartimesproject.com; War Diary Algonquin Regiment, project '44.