Roy SCHMELZER

Roy Schmelzer was born in Whitla, near Medicine Hat, Alberta. Growing up in that area, he worked on the family farm (some 1000 acres) during the summer and in the nearby coal mines in the winter. Like most of the young men of that area, Roy was an accomplished rider and rifleman. With drought and hail in the area over the summer of 1940, five neighbouring young men decided to saddle-up, ride to the nearest bus depot, catch a bus to Camrose and join the army. That was October, 1940 and Roy became a member of the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. He volunteered to take a mechanics course at the machine shops in Calgary and, after six months, to go into the heavy repair shops in Ottawa.

Roy also answered the call for volunteers to go overseas. On arriving in Aldershot he experienced his first taste of war; the train station was blown up by bombs shortly after they had cleared the area. Roy again volunteered to join the Royal Regiment of Canada and he again narrowly escaped disaster in that most of his group of volunteers had shipped out on the Dieppe Raid before Roy arrived at the Regimental base.

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During the months leading up to the Invasion of Normandy, the training exercises left little doubt that something was afoot. This was also the time when the German V-2's were actively attacking English targets. A critical moment in the war was clearly at hand.

Roy left for France at the end of June, 1944 and after a very rough Channel crossing he waded ashore and moved inland with his unit. Roy was serving as a bren gunner and as they moved up to the area south east of Caen, "All hell broke loose." His unit was trying to hold a position on the Orne River that they had taken over from an English regiment. Bren gunners wore steel jackets to offer some protection, given that they were prime enemy targets and particularly exposed to enemy fire; Roy's jacket had 52 holes in it when he was brought to the medical tent after being wounded. "I woke up in Aldershot, England in the hospital; no idea how or when I got there. The nurse said I'd been there for two weeks."

Roy was sent back to Canada later in 1944 aboard the Queen Mary. He received his discharge in Calgary, returned to Medicine Hat briefly and then came back to the Ottawa area. Roy married Iris Tubman from Munster and the couple bought her uncle's farm in April, 1945. They were active in the agricultural community and village life for over 50 years.

Roy joined the Legion in 1961 and joined the Richmond Legion when it was formed. Iris passed away in 1996 and Roy moved back out west to be closer to his family. He passed away in hospital in red Deer on June 14, 2008 at the age of 88. He is survived by his brother Len Schmelzer of Red Deer and numerous nieces, nephews, grand nieces and nephews and other extended family.