

Pte Joseph Edgar Roy (Service # G23307)



Joseph (Edgar) Roy was born September 9, 1922, on a farm near Petit Rocher-Nord, Gloucester County, New Brunswick, the son of Jerome J. P. Roy and Louise (Chiasson). Louise was a widow, Jerome a widower and Edgar was their only child together. He had two siblings, one older half-brother Lucien and an older half-sister Josephene. Edgar left school at age sixteen. He went to work on the farm and also found employment as a truck driver. Records show that he spoke both English and French fluently.

On July 15, 1940, Edgar enlisted at Petit-Rocher with the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment, 2nd Battalion. This unit was part of the Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM) composed of volunteer soldiers who trained on weeknights, weekends, and at summer camps. They were paid and could be called upon for home defense. A year later on July 9, Edgar changed his status by enlisting for active service wherever he might be needed. Basic training took place at Camp 70 near Fredericton and upon completion, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC), Camp A14 near Aldershot, Nova Scotia.

At the end of February 1942, Edgar was sent overseas. He landed in the United Kingdom on March 10 and was placed with the 3rd Division Infantry Reinforcement Unit (DIRU). He continued to train in the UK and in May 1942 was promoted to Lance Corporal. In April of 1943, Edgar was returned to the North Shore (NB) Regiment and at this same time, at his request, he returned to the rank of private. The following year was spent rehearsing beach landings throughout England and Scotland.

In the early months of 1944, the training became more intense. In the cold of February, the men would march for ten or fifteen days straight. The days were long and dinner could be in a barnyard at 9 p.m. followed by a call to "march on" into the night.

Frequently they would end up at some port on the English Channel and then board a ship that held the entire regiment. After traveling a short distance along the coast, the men scrambled down rope ladders into smaller landing craft that held 30 soldiers. The landing craft now sped to the beach and had to be emptied in 40 seconds. The soldiers then had to penetrate barriers of barbed wire and then a concrete wall. They were assisted by the engineers who used Bangalore Torpedoes (long pipes filled with explosives) to clear the barbed wire. Other explosives blew holes in the wall. This was all done amid a smokescreen with live shells flying overhead to duplicate a real invasion. Some of the men were injured during this training and occasionally some were killed.

In April 1944, the regiment moved to the Chilworth South Camp, southwest of Aldershot. Tighter security and censorship were implemented, all phone calls were monitored, and telegrams could only be sent through army channels. In the latter part of the month, almost all leave was suspended. The entire south of England now became a restricted zone and everyone sensed that something big was happening.

Suddenly the NS(NB)R was getting a lot of attention, including an inspection by King George VI and a few days later by British General Bernard Montgomery. This was followed on May 13 with an inspection by General Dwight D. Eisenhower the commander of all Allied troops. The 3rd Division which included the North Shore Regiment was then notified that it would be part of the first wave of the D-Day invasion.

Ross Munro, a well-known war correspondent for the Canadian Press, wrote that the rest of the Canadian army now viewed the 3rd Division with awe. Many now referred to them as the "death or glory boys" and Division estimated their losses on the beach at 50%. Nothing was denied them now. Guns, vehicles, and supplies flowed quickly.

On May 26, the North Shore began three days of training focused on the invasion. A briefing hut included a large-scale model of a beach in the center of the floor. The walls were covered with both aerial and sea level photographs and maps with locations renamed using designations such as Montreal and Halifax. Every man was to commit to memory the details of photos of a small town with a seawall, behind which stood a row of shops and houses and key landmarks such as the church and the water tower. The steel mobility blockades and rolls of barbed wire on the beach were also clearly visible. The real name and location of the town were still kept secret.

Upon landing, the rehearsed plan had A Company move to the right, capture buildings and establish a defensive position to the southwest of the village. B Company would turn to the left and attack the main German artillery strongpoint that was firing on the beach and landing craft. C Company was to follow and then push through

Late in the morning of Saturday, June 3, 1944, the men of the North Shore (NB) Regiment, loaded onto ships at Southampton. Despite delays due to bad weather the ships left port on June 5 and joined an armada of 7000 vessels advancing towards beaches of Normandy. New maps were now unfurled that showed the real name of their destination as Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer. At about 7 a.m., on June 6, and eight to ten miles from the beach, landing craft (LCA's) carrying 30 men each were lowered to the water. Now as they moved closer to the beach, the memorized landmarks of Saint-Aubin came into view.

Now using grenades and flamethrowers D Company took on the task of clearing houses and streets. The War Diary records that by 11:15 a.m.. Hitler's Atlantic Wall had been broken, all Company objectives had been achieved and the NS(NB)R was in control of Saint-Aubin.

Included in the fatal casualties was Pte Joseph Edgar Roy. He was originally declared missing in action but was found later that same day. Historian Tony Chiasson wrote that Edgar was killed exiting the landing craft. Edgar was twenty-one years of age.

A Monument at Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer, to the Canadians killed on D-Day, includes the name of Joseph Edgar Roy.  
Photo by Gary Silliker

