

BRAVE HAMILTON OFFICER, MEN WIN FRENCH CROIX DE GUERRE

Major Bruce Peene, Sgt. Vern McIlveen, L.-Bdr. Munce Decorated By Ally For Gallant, Distinguished Service

The Croix de Guerre has been awarded to one officer and two soldiers from Hamilton. They are Major Alfred Bruce Peene, 32, of 145 Emerald street south; Sgt. William V. McIlveen, 28, of 35 Jones street, a member of the Spectator staff when he enlisted, and L.-Bdr. Lorne Robert Munce, 28, of 36 Balsam avenue north. A district man, Cpl. (A.-Sgt.) William Hamilton Graham, 33, of Brantford, has also won this award. The awards were announced to-day among 176 similar honours to members of the Canadian Army serving overseas in the northwest European theatre of war. These awards are conferred on Canadian soldiers by the French Government in "recognition of gallant and distinguished service in the cause of the Allies," the announcement stated.

Mentioned in Dispatches

Major Peene was awarded the Croix de Guerre with silver-gilt star. He was mentioned in dispatches in February, 1945. His present citation reads:

"Major A. B. Peene landed in Normandy on June 6, 1944, and held the appointment of second-in-command, 19th Canadian Army Field Regiment, throughout the campaign in France. On July 8, 1944, during the push south from the line St. Andre sur Orne, Verrieres, Hubert-Folie, this regiment was ordered to take up a position in the area of Rocquarcourt. This village had been taken after a fierce struggle at 8 a.m., July 8. At 9.40 a.m. Major Peene led the regiment reconnaissance parties forward along the Caen-Falaise road to prepare the regiment gun area. Very shortly the party came under very heavy enemy fire.

Showed Coolness, Ability

"With outstanding determination, Major Peene continued forward and, without the loss of precious time, completed the task. He then returned and directed his regiment safely into the new area. At this time the 19th Canadian Army Field Regiment was the most advanced artillery unit in this sector and there is no doubt that its supporting fire contributed in great measure to the success of 4th Canadian Armoured Division. To Major Peene all credit is due for his initiative, coolness under fire and able leadership, which has been an inspiration to all and a steadying influence in adverse conditions."

Major Peene, former Hamilton Tiger football player and an insurance company inspector in civilian life, was taken on the strength of the Canadian Active Army with the rank of lieutenant in June, 1940. His wife resides at 145 Emerald street south.

Was Press Operator

Sgt. William Verdun McIlveen, Royal Canadian Artillery, was employed in the press department of the Hamilton Spectator prior to his enlistment. He has been awarded the Croix de Guerre with bronze star. His wife, Mrs. Eileen E. McIlveen, resides at 35 Jones street in Hamilton.

His citation reads:

"On August 14, 1944, Sgt. McIlveen was in charge of a self-propelled gun of a Canadian anti-tank regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery. His troop was in support of an infantry battalion which was putting in an attack on a woods and high ground near Estrees-la-Campagne and had been ordered to occupy previously allotted positions around the wood. At that time, the objective was to have been cleared by the infantry and occupied by our troops.

"Sgt. McIlveen's gun approached the objective rapidly at the time ordered and when about 400 yards short came under heavy mortar and machine-gun fire from a hedge-lined sunken road near the woods. Our infantry had not yet reached the woods but had been pinned down in the wheat fields by fire coming from the high ground which dominated the approach. This non-commissioned officer ordered his detachment to engage the enemy with small arms, he himself firing the Browning from the open turret of the self-propelled. Groups of the enemy then attempted to leave the hedge and gain the cover of the woods. Some half-dozen were shot down by the small arms fire from the self-propelled and the remainder returned to the hedge.

Disabled Post

"Sgt. McIlveen then ordered the self-propelled stopped and engaged the strong point with two rounds of high explosive at a range of about 200 yards. The enemy machine guns were put out of action and the bold assault of the self-propelled drew the fire of their remaining small arms, thus allowing our infantry to again move forward. After a further hot exchange of small arms fire between the enemy and Sgt. McIlveen's detachment, the post surrendered. Thirty or 40 gave themselves up to the oncoming infantry and 17 surrendered to the self-propelled crew. The hedge was then occupied by our infantry and subsequently the wood which was their objective.

"When confronted with an unexpectedly difficult situation in face of a well-armed enemy, this non-commissioned officer displayed a standard of courage and leadership that was an inspiration to the troops under his command. By his actions the infantry was materially assisted in maintaining the momentum of a successful attack."

L.-Bdr. Munce

L.-Bdr. Lorne Robert Munce, whose wife resides at 36 Balsam avenue north, is the winner of the Croix de Guerre with bronze star. He is the son of Mrs. Munce and the late Harold Munce, of 69 Rothsay avenue, and a former employee of Kraft Containers, Ltd.

His citation reads:

"L.-Bdr. Munce served as an artillery signaller for a forward observation officer of a Canadian field regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery, throughout the period the regiment fought in France.

Inspiration to Others

"During this time his total disregard for personal safety, his cheerful bearing under adverse conditions and his steadfast devotion to duty have been an inspiration to other members of the observation post party. At Soliers, on July 29, while assisting in registering our guns on enemy positions,

his post was located by the enemy and brought under heavy fire. Several shells struck his tank and it burst into flames. With exceptional coolness, L.-Bdr. Munce salvaged sufficient equipment from the burning tank to maintain communications so that there was no interruption in the fire of his battery. His courage and determination in this instance made it possible for his battery to deal a further blow at the enemy at a very important time."

A.-Sgt. Graham

Cpl. (A.-Sgt.) William Hamilton Graham, of Brantford, has been awarded the Croix de Guerre with bronze star.

His citation reads:

"On July 8, 1944, the Highland Light Infantry of Canada were ordered to destroy the enemy in and around Buron, Normandy, and to capture the town.

"Cpl. (A.-Sgt.) William Hamilton Graham commanded a pioneer section of the battalion which was given the task of clearing mines and booby traps.

"During the assault 'D' Company came under very heavy mortar, artillery and machine-gun fire. Sgt. Graham organized his section as riflemen and led them forward against the enemy positions. By this action, Sgt. Graham and his men wiped out two enemy machine-gun posts and materially assisted 'D' Company to take its objective.

"After completing his original task of checking for mines and booby traps, Sgt. Graham organized his section as stretcher bearers, established a casualty collecting post and led his men over the bullet and mortar-swept battlefield to carry in wounded.

"Sgt. Graham's courage, leadership, initiative and disregard for his personal safety were far beyond the call of duty and contributed to the success of the battalion battle."

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