

Robert J. Clapham
Home Child and
WWII Veteran
October 1942

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM PIER 21



R.J. Clapham



I enlisted at Toronto, July 21, 1942. My travelling Warrant was from Aldershot, Ontario. So that means I had to leave Waterdown at 5:30 in the morning, as I had to get the 6:00 a.m. train from Aldershot, and the train had to stop especially for me, for I had to report at the Exhibition Barracks for 8:00 a.m. Why so early? I do not know for we had to wait for ages to get attended to.

When I first reported, I was asked if I wanted to go "Active" or stay as I was, and that was a trainee or a Zombie, that's what they called the ones that did not volunteer for overseas. As much as I disliked joining up, I had make up my mind that once I was called, I would automatically go "Active"

that gave me an opportunity to go back to England once again, it would be my first time in 13 years. It would give me an opportunity to visit the orphanage, in London, that I had come out of in 1929.

It took us a very long time to get indoctrinated, getting into the army, you wouldn't believe, they would ask you a few questions and then send you back to the Bull Pen for further questioning later. Before I go on, in the morning they had the Pipes and Drums, marching around the Horse Palace, to wake us up at 6:00 a.m. and if you could sleep through that, it was a miracle



Private Clapham R.J. B130522 on the right.
Private Jackson Frank W. on the left
4th Division. R.C.A.M.C.

We set sail from Halifax, on Friday, October 30, 1942. One night, when we got half way across the Atlantic Ocean, we felt our boat make a complete turn, for there was a German submarine after us, but our speed was too fast. I might just tell you there were 19 000 troops on board. We spent a year in England, then we had to get ready to go to Sicily. We spent over a year there. I can recall after we had passed the Rock of Gibraltar we were attacked by an enemy plane. You see, I was on fire picket duty, and I am telling you it was really scary.

When we got finished in Sicily and Italy, we went over to the Continent. One Sunday morning, while serving in Holland, I was paraded before all of my fellow soldiers to be decorated with The Bronze Oak Leaf for being Mentioned in Despatches' for service in Italy.



DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE
ARMY

OTTAWA, CANADA.

August 1, 1945.

B 130522 Pte Robert James Clapham,
Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps,
Canadian Army Overseas.

Dear *Clapham*;

I have noticed in a recent issue of Routine Orders which I have just received that you have been mentioned in Despatches. I was delighted to see your award and I wish to congratulate you and to thank you for the excellent service which you rendered to the R.C.O.C. and to the Army during the campaign in Italy.

I also want to thank you for the cooperation and assistance which you have given me and to wish you the best of luck for the future.

Yours very sincerely,

(J.A.W. Bennett) Brigadier.