

Mayer, Alfred Peter, Trooper (L58674)



- Alfred Peter Mayer was born on 6 May 1921 in Medicine Hat, Alberta. He was 23 years old when he died accidental injury on 12 February 1945 in the Netherlands.
- On 5 July 1941, he enlisted at the No. 12 District Depot in Regina, Saskatchewan. After enlisting, he was sent to 100 Canadian Army (Basic) Training Centre in Portage La Prairie for two months basic training, then to the No. 8 Canadian Armoured Corps Training Centre in Borden, Ontario, where he qualified as a driver and mechanic for wheeled and tracked vehicles. He was sent overseas in November 1941 to be posted to the 1st Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit. On 29 July 1943, he was transferred to the 29th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment (South Alberta Regiment) where he qualified as a driver-mechanic for Motor vehicles. On 2 July 1944, he was transferred to France with his unit, and on 28 July 1944, he was transferred to the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment (17th Duke of York's Royal Canadian Hussars). On the 12 February 1945, he drowned accidentally.
- He had no military experience prior to enlisting.
- He left school at age 15, having completed his education up to grade eight. He spoke German as well as English.
- Prior to enlisting, he was employed for 5 years as a salesman and truck driver at Kick Beverages and Bottling works in Regina, Saskatchewan.
- According to his medical examination, he was 5 foot 11 inches tall and weighed 135 pounds. He had dark brown hair and brown eyes. He had a long scar on the inside of his right leg, below his knee. He was found fit for category A.
- Son of Alexander Peter and Mary Mayer of 2062 Wallace Street, Regina, Saskatchewan. They were married in Holdfast, Saskatchewan and later returned there. He had a step brother, John Mayer (32), who served in the RCAF, and a step sister, whose married name was not known, who lived in Detroit, Michigan.
- On 3 December 1940, Alfred married Gerladine Margrette Mayer. The couple had no children and lived together at 2070 Ottawa Street, Regina, Saskatchewan. On 12 January, she moved to 602-40th avenue NE, Calgary Alberta, and later to Airdrie, Alberta.
- The sole beneficiary of Alfred's will was his wife.
- His body is buried in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Groesbeek, Netherlands (Ref I. G. 6.) (plot, row, grave)

Context

- After nearly seven weeks in a string of observation posts along the River Waal, the Regiment moved back to Nijmegen on 3 February 1945. This redeployment was in preparation for Operation Veritable, whose mission was to clear the west bank of the Rhine, cross the river and advance into Germany. The 3rd Canadian Infantry Division was responsible for operations on the northern flank of the operation. The operation was divided into three phases, corresponding to the three main fortified zones established by the Germans. The 2nd Canadian Corps plan provided for the three British divisions and the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division to launch the initial assault on the morning of 8 February, and for the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division to follow on the evening of the same day. The 3rd Canadian Infantry Division was given the task of clearing the area between the Nijmegen-Kleve road and the River Waal.
- On 8 February, the launch date of Operation Veritable, the Regiment completed its check of vehicles, armament and all equipment.
- The difficulties imposed by the Dutch climate only worsened at this time, especially in the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division's low-lying sector, the Waal Flats. A sudden thaw and heavy rains caused the River Waal to begin rising from 3 February, reaching a peak on 17 February. Earlier in the winter, the Germans had breached the main dike six kilometres east of Nijmegen. On 6 February, water began to pour through this gap and on 8 February, most of 3rd Canadian Infantry Division's area of operations was submerged.
- In Lieutenant Pavey's words: "... life became exceedingly wet. The only possible way of getting to the Squadron positions was by boat, buffalo, weasel [sic] or some other amphibious vehicle... The whole 3rd Division ... had removed its wheels and taken to the water. Liaison, supplying, communicating and fighting was done across the choppy flood waters in these oddly-labeled craft."
- Amphibious vehicles were much used, but choppy water and racing currents sometimes proved too difficult for the Weasels. On 12 February 1945, a gap was blown in the winter dike to counteract the flooding caused by the enemy further up the Waal. As a result, the regiment was marooned by the large breaches on either flank, and the only way to reach the squadron positions was by water. Three Buffaloes were assigned the task of taking supplies to the squadrons, but when these failed to appear, the transportation had to be performed by the squadron Weasels. Just after last light on the following day, a Weasel from "A" Squadron tried to reach the squadron location with rations, batteries and jerricans picked up from Nijmegen. The engine cut out and although the driver managed to restart it and get it to within 70 metres of the beaching strip, the motor again stalled. Two of the four regimental personnel aboard tried to climb out, and the boat swamped. Despite rescue efforts, both drowned. They were Troopers Blake Eldridge Moorehouse and Alfred Peter Mayer.