

<http://cmea-agmc.ca/ww-ii-veteran-sapper-bill-nicoll-presented-french-legion-honour>

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The Canadian Military Engineers are pleased to advise that the Government of France has awarded Sapper Bill Nicoll the Rank of Knight of the National Order of the Legion of Honour. Mr Nicoll is a WW II Royal Canadian Engineer veteran who was a participant in the Battle of the Liberation of France. Some background on this honour is found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legion_of_Honour

Russell Power, president of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 5 in Port Morien, NS presented the Legion of Honour to Mr. Bill Nicoll of Mira Gut, NS. Coincidentally, the medal was presented on Bill Nicoll's 95th birthday. The award was accompanied by a letter from the Ambassador of France who explained that the Legion of Honour is the highest decoration in France: "...It is awarded in recognition of your professional involvement in the liberation of our country. Through you, France remembers the sacrifice of all of your compatriots who came to liberate French soil, often losing their lives in the process..."

Bill Nicoll enlisted in Halifax on 4 December 1941 and took his basic training at No. 62 Canadian Army Basic Training Centre in Charlottetown, PEI. From there he went on to A5 Canadian Engineer Training Centre in Petawawa, ON to complete his Field Engineer training. On completion of this training, Bill was assigned to the 20th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers that was stationed in Winnipeg at the time. Shortly after, the unit was dispatched overseas and arrived in the United Kingdom in May 1943. In England the unit continued its training in preparation for the invasion of the Continent.

Bill's company landed in Normandy on D+10 when 20th Field Company became part of the enlarging Allied force in the Normandy bridgehead. They were first tasked with the clearance of Caen and then supported the Allied advance through France. Construction of Bailey Bridges was a common task – including the crossing of the Seine River under intense enemy fire. After the Battle of France, their taskings included Operation BERLIN, the night-time rescue of the encircled allied airborne troops near Arnhem after Operation MARKET GARDEN. During Operation DUCK, as part of the Battle of the Scheldt, his company was tasked with the ferrying of personnel and equipment using stormboats and, later, Bailey Close Support Rafts. While in Holland, the company completed many bomb disposal tasks including the destruction of V-1 launching sites. When the war ended, the company moved to 's-Hertogenbosch, Holland, where they were tasked with rebuilding bridges that had been destroyed during the war.

Sapper Nicoll returned home in October 1945 and was demobilized. Following the war he attended Acadia University and obtained his BSc. in Geology and worked for INCO (International Nickel Company) in Thompson, MB for 25 years before retiring to his home in Mira Gut.