

**“Yet Another River To Cross...”
Canadian Army Engineers Get Long-Overdue Recognition
For Their Work During The Italian Campaign 1943-1945**



M. Hamilton presents copy to
HCol Gil Taylor, Toronto Scottish

Photo Credit:
© Sergeant Peter Moon, Canadian

On 17 November 2015 at the Royal Canadian Military Institute in Toronto, Malcolm Hamilton launched his book: “Yet Another River to Cross” – The Royal Canadian Engineers in the Italian Campaign 1943-1945”

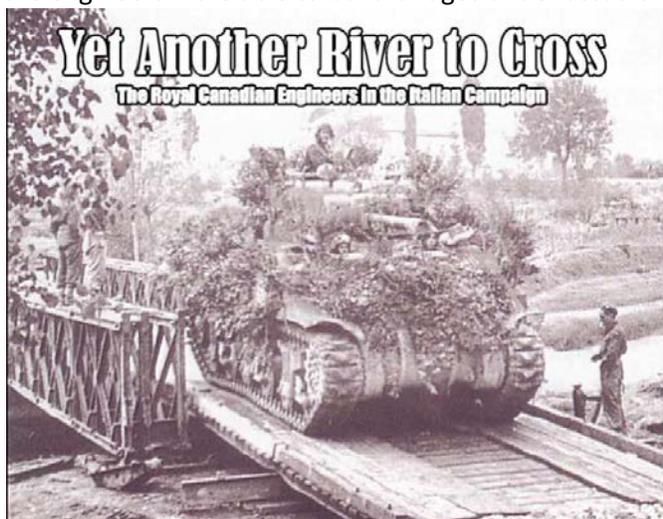
Having been inspired his father’s experiences in Italy, co-author Malcolm W. Hamilton had initially set out to chronicle the work of these engineers with a view to writing a magazine-length article. The senior Hamilton had started as a Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE) Captain in Sicily in October 1943 and ended as an Acting Major on the Gothic Line towards the end of 1944.

The junior Hamilton was fortunate to be able to enlist the invaluable help of Major Bill Milhausen MiD (Ret’d), who frequently served with Hamilton’s late father in England, Sicily and Italy. In addition, invaluable assistance was given by LCol Ken J. Holmes CD (Ret’d), widely respected as the unofficial Canadian Military Engineer Historian.

The planned magazine article grew into a ground-breaking book that describes a campaign that is frequently called "The Engineer's War" because of the significance of the challenges of encountering an endless set of obstacles.

While Canadians over the past decade or so have gained a better understanding of the roles of engineers in combat - especially the renowned task in Afghanistan of neutralizing Improvised Explosive Devices - history has not well told the story of what the military engineer - the sapper - did during the Second World War. Many know little about how the engineers were able to build bridges under assault conditions in just hours or how they could clear hundreds of deadly tank and anti-personnel mines at night and under enemy fire.

Although the Canadian public has well learned of D-Day and the fighting in North West Europe, they often have little knowledge of the role of the Italian Campaign in the overall Allied effort during WW II. They don’t realize that the 19 months the Canadian troops fought in Italy was 50% longer than those who fought in North West Europe - and that many troops who started their combat experience in



Sicily carried on through Italy and finally continued into North West Europe for an overall duration of almost two years of combat. They don't realize that the brave actions of the Allies in the Italian Campaign siphoned off more than 20 German divisions that were therefore not able to defend in France and North West Europe. They don't know that these Canadian soldiers in Italy were called "D-Day Dodgers" - a slight that still stings today.



The book is lavishly illustrated with photographs taken during 1943-45. There are also drawings showing how the engineers went about their work, including a detailed picture of how to construct a 'mouse hole' that was used during the desperate house-to-house and room-to-room fighting in towns such as Ortona. This book shines some light on the Royal Canadian Engineers and their role in Italy by relating a small set of vignettes of operations that were typical of the actions of the Canadian

Sappers in Sicily and Italy. These examples help to illustrate the Sapper accomplishments in all-arms combat situations and illustrate the extraordinary leadership and bravery of these individuals. The stories are accompanied by an excellent selection of photos and marked maps that assist in appreciating the "Engineer's War" that characterized the Italian Campaign.

The book has been printed initially in limited numbers. There are 20 hard-cover versions for libraries, etc. and 180 soft cover versions for distribution. Books will be given to individuals who pledge to donate to one of five charities commemorating the work of Canadian military engineers. Currently:

- CME museum – with the intention of preparing an Italian Campaign display at CFSME.
- ROYAL Canadian Legion Fort York Branch 165 - a plaque at the Sunnybrook Chapel in memory of the RCE in Italy
- Petard Corp - funding of the cataloging and digitization of the archives of Bruce Savage regarding the RCE in Italy
- Peace Through Valour - inclusion of a plaque on their monument for the Canadian liberation of Italy that highlights the RCE
- Crestwood School - encouragement for their program of [interviewing WW2 veterans](#)

Requests for a copy of "Yet Another River to Cross – The Royal Canadian Engineers in the Italian Campaign 1943-1945" should be directed to Malcolm Hamilton at: hamilton47@rogers.com