

PRIVATE ROY JOHN ROBIDEAU – (1889 – 1984)
Regimental # 3207274



Roy was born at Stanley Wisconsin on November 26, 1889. The family had moved to International Falls, Minnesota in 1905 and then to Bezanson in April 1917. Roy filed a homestead application on SE 12-72-3-W6. He worked in Grande Prairie until the spring of 1918 when he was called-up for service in the army on June 10, 1918 – 1st Depot Battalion Alberta Regiment in Calgary. He arrived in England in August 1918. He served in England with **Canadian Army Medical Corps**. which played an essential role in keeping soldiers alive. While in England he met Margaret Hague who was the daughter of a marine. She was quite taken with this handsome young Canadian in his uniform. Roy's service records dated July 1, 1919 stated that he was "granted permission to marry".

On demobilization, Roy and Maggie sailed on the S.S. Scandinavian on October 10, 1919 and landed in Quebec where he was discharged from service on October 24, 1919. Roy received the British War Medal.

Roy and Margaret arrived in Grande Prairie by train, and then headed to the Bezanson area by horse and stoneboat – a trip that took three days. They lived with Mr. and Mrs. Willis and Roy's parents for some time, finally moving to their homestead, in 1921 where they raised a family of four boys and one girl; Peter, Alfred, Amelia, Leo and Ernie. By means of a Soldier's Grant, Roy acquired another quarter of land - NE 24-72-3 -W6. Another ¼ was by means of a homestead application where he broke a few acres and sold it to Fred Sedore for a bottle of whiskey and a box of chocolates.

The July 5, 1921 edition of the Grande Prairie Herald reported:

"What might have been a fatal accident was fortunately averted but the foresight of Roy Robideau of Bezanson. The old ferry cable which crosses the river at Goodwin's Crossing looked pretty safe to some five travelers who wished to cross from the east to the west side of the river. They thereupon made a raft and hitched onto the cable. When half way across, the cable sagged and the raft was submerged. The five passengers were precipitated into the water and started to float down stream. Robideau swam to a boat that was tied to the raft and after much difficulty succeeded in cutting the boat loose. He thereupon pulled out and rescued the other four men who at that time were struggling for their lives in the water. He eventually succeeded in bringing them all ashore much scared and wet from their emersion."

Although the family lived very humbly, they were happy in spite of the hard times during the depression. Days were filled with milking cows, working in the fields, cooking, cleaning and raising the children. Wood had to be cut, split and stock piled for the long cold winters. They melted snow in the winter and hauled ice from the Smoky River, packed it in sawdust to keep it from melting for the summer water supply. In 1929 wheat was 29 cents however threshing costs were 10 cents.

During WWII, Roy was an orderly for 1 ½ years in the hospital of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps. at the Barracks in Grande Prairie following which he became a Veteran Guard.

Roy was always interested in sports and after the War, he managed a softball team for a year. He had a ½ ton truck and would load the players in the back and travel to outlying areas for their

scheduled games. Some of the players included Jerry Moody, Barney McNally, Donnie and Jackie McLaughlin. As well, Roy organized the kids' activities at Bezanson Stampede for many years.

In 1952, Maggie and Roy retired and built a home on their son, Alf's farm near Highway 43, RR 31. In 1969, they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a lawn party by their home with all their family and many neighbors in attendance. Roy and Maggie loved company – there was nothing like game of cards while visiting with your neighbors and would always have the tea pot ready along with a dessert of some kind.

Roy passed away in 1984. When Maggie passed away in 2006 at age 104 she had over 165 descendents continuing down to the sixth generation.

Reference

Smoky River to Grande Prairie History Book (pg 382)

Maggie's Obituary

Roy's service records

Linda Nellis - granddaughter