

Brigadier General Allister Thomas MacLean, CBE, MC, VD (1888-1962)



He was born on March 27 1888 in Bridgeville Nova Scotia. And between 1910 and 1914 he served with the Peterboro Rangers in Peterboro, Ontario.

By the start of the war he had qualified as an electrical engineer and was with the 3rd Fortress Company operating the searchlights in Esquimalt, B.C. There he rose to the rank of Sgt and in 1916 joined the 12th Field Company CE as a Lt. With them served in England and France and in 1918 was appointed as a Staff Captain to the Chief Engineer, Canadian Corps. He was awarded the MC on the occasion of His Majesty's birthday.

He rejoined the 6th in North Vancouver in 1920 as a Capt and in 1922 was assumed command of the Company. He remained in command until 1926. Between 1927 and 1932 he was the Lt.-Col. CE 11 District Engineers. Between 1931-1932 he was the President of the Military Engineers Association of Canada. In 1933 he ceased his active involvement with the militia and became a Lt.-Col. on the Reserve Strength.

After the war he married Edith Mavis Hawkins and in 1930 they had a son Allister Stewart. Edith and Allister were tragically killed on October 30, 1938 when she lost control of her car on the Granville Street Bridge and it plunged over the railing. By the time rescuers could reach the car both had drowned. He was now a widower.

On his reactivation in 1939 he reverted to the rank of Major and in December became the OC of the 11th Field Company, RCE. In 1941 he again became a Lt Col and was appointed as the CRE of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division. In 1942 he took command of No 1 Canadian Engineer Reinforcement Unit. Later that year he was promoted to Col and appointed as the CRE, of the Canadian Army Troops. On the 14th of January 1943. he was promoted to Brigadier and became the Chief Engineer of the 2nd Canadian Corps. Six months later he became the Chief Engineer of the 1st Canadian Army.

In April of 1944 he visited the RCE units in Italy and on the 6th of July 1944 arrived in Normandy with his staff. During the first days of Sept. 1944 he retired from the Active Force as he was now well over the age for active field service. He joined the retired list as Brig. A T. McLean, CBE, MC, VD, Retired. On the 5th April of 1945 a 1656 ft long floating bailey bridge over the Rhine was named in his honour.

He returned to Vancouver, remarried and worked as an electrical engineer until retirement. After LCol J.P. Fell passed away he became the Hon Col of 7 FER (M). He was three times the president of the Military Engineer Association of Canada. An avid horseman and polo player he died suddenly of a heart attack on July 8 1961 while watching his son Ian compete in a horse show in Vancouver. He started WWI as an Acting Sergeant and finished WWII as a Brigadier General.