

Paul Smashnuk

Sergeant

Army – 3rd Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery - Regimental # M/4075

Bezanson, Alberta

Date of Death: November 24, 1943

Commemorated at: [Moro River Canadian War Cemetery, Italy](#)

Peter Smashnuk (1889), originally from Romania, arrived in Canada in 1911. He worked his way across Canada and eventually settled in Andrew, Alberta where he met Elena Frunchak (1901). They were married in 1917; a son, Nick, was born in 1918 followed by Paul on July 14, 1919. After living in Andrew for two years, Peter decided to move his family to the Peace County. The family arrived in 1920 and Peter immediately filed a homestead application on SW 25-72-3-W6 in an area of Bezanson known as Lindsay. Nine more children completed the family; William (1921), Eli (1923), twins Dorothy & George (1924), Mary (1925), Harry (1926), Donald (1927), Leon (1928) and Doreen (1929). The children received their education at the Lindsay School. The family worked hard on their farm and in an effort to increase the farm's viability, Peter found employment off the farm in the wintertime. The boys also trapped which brought additional funds into the home.

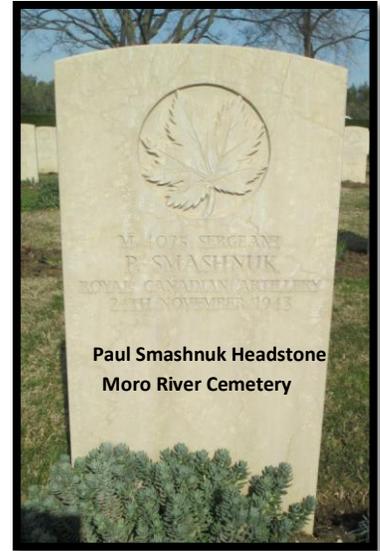


In 1939, Paul was living in Nanton, Alberta with his common-law wife, Rose Kokotailo. He had found employment as a tractor operator for farmers and had commenced an apprenticeship as a diesel mechanic; however, he did not complete the program. A son, Paul Jr. was born on July 10, 1940.

In September 1939, Paul answered the call of duty to Country and enlisted at Edmonton with the 92nd Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery. His attestation paper stated he was 5' 8 3/4" with brown hair and blue eyes. It was also noted in his service file that he wished to work in the jewelry profession once the war was over. Paul was subsequently transferred to the 3rd Field Regiment. He sailed from Halifax in December 1939 and landed at Greenock, Scotland before being sent to Aldershot, England. Paul remained in England until June 15, 1943, at which time he was sent to Italy. After the success of the Sicilian Campaign, the invasion of the Italian mainland was the next operation. The 1st Canadian Division along with the 8th British Army led the way across the Strait of Messina to the toe of Italy and then advanced towards the Gustav Line which was a series of concrete bunkers and artillery positions on the rocky slopes of mountains fronted by a no-man's-land of barbed wire and land mines. The Canadians found themselves in the central mountain range where they met fierce German resistance

Paul Smashnuk

along the Sangro River. Two batteries of the 3rd Canadian Field Regiment pushed forward with mules that pulled the battalion's three-inch mortars and machine-guns down the muddy slopes. All day on November 24th, the thunder of guns of nine artillery regiments rolled through the valleys. By mid-afternoon, the progress was delayed by enemy shelling. Sadly, it was here that Paul was killed in action. By November 27th, the main assault on the Adriatic coast had been successful as the British and the Canadians succeeded in driving the Germans from the Sangro. However, they were faced with the same scenario a few kilometers north along the line of the Moro River where some of the bitterest fighting of the war occurred. The Germans counter-attacked repeatedly and often the fighting was hand-to-hand as the Canadians edged forward to Ortona on the coast. After several days of vicious street fighting, the city officially fell on December 28th.



In Memory of
Sergeant
Paul Smashnuk
M/4075, 3 Field Regt., Royal Canadian Artillery who died on 24 November 1943

Remembered with Honour
Moro River Canadian War Cemetery



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Paul received the 1939-45 Star, Italy star, Defense Medal, War Medal, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

A Memorial Service was held for Paul at the Lindsay School – the same school where he had received his education. As well, a headstone inscribed with Paul's name, regimental #, year of birth and death, was installed at the Glen Leslie Cemetery. It was a very special tribute to a courageous young man.

Paul's brothers William, Eli and George also enlisted in the Army and served overseas. They returned home and along with their siblings, settled in various locations in Alberta and BC. Elena and Peter sold their farm in Bezanson in 1962 and moved to Fort St. John, BC. Peter passed away in 1975; Elena in 1980. Both are buried in the Glen Leslie Cemetery.

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After Paul's death, Rose Kokotailo eventually married William (Bill) Danyliuk. They did not have any children. Bill was an electrician by trade and also operated a service station in Andrew for a period of time. Paul Jr. received his education in Andrew. The family subsequently moved to Edmonton where Paul Jr. became a City Police Officer. He was married and had two sons. Paul died from a heart attack in 1990 at the very young age of 50. Rose passed away in 2003 and Bill in 1992. Both are buried in the Andrew Cemetery.

Paul Sr.'s legacy will certainly live on through his grandchildren.

The Bezanson Community honours the memory of Paul Smashnuk – a young man who answered the call of duty to maintain the Country's freedom and died in the effort to do so.

Written by Wanda Zenner

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