



A.J. Paul LaPrairie: Engineering Student, Ajax Campus, born Montreal 1919–died Sunnybrook Hospital, Toronto, 2013

As a student of Ajax Campus, Paul LaPrairie set a standard of Skule™ spirit that all engineering students are called to emulate today. He will be forever remembered as a role model to everyone who is aspiring to make an impact on the Skule™ Community.

Kevin Saludaes, *The Cannon*, October 15, 2013

During WWII Adolphe Joseph Paul LaPrairie served overseas in England, Italy, North Africa and Holland with the Irish Regiment of Canada. He reached the rank of Major. As the Battle Second in Command, he was chiefly responsible for working out details of attacks.

LaPrairie recounted his war experiences in a letter to his brother, George, in 2001:

Dear George,

... Our regiment started its battle action in Holland, on Nijmegen Island, near Arnhem. They crossed on the famous pontoon bridge. There were minor skirmishes and the division moved up toward Otterloo. On April 11th the Germans, who had been cut off in their retreat, attacked our Division and our Battalion Headquarters. Our flame-throwers went into action and stopped the attack. This was a tremendous victory for us. The corporal in charge of the flame-throwers, "Red" Asselstine, received the Distinguished Conduct Medal. I rejoined my Regiment there and was posted as the Battle Second in Command.... The next day we advanced on Ermelo and took 105 prisoners from the 6th German Parachute Division. The People of Ermelo were wonderful in their reception of us.... We then moved on and up to the Jour-Sneek area. On April 23rd we took over from the Canadian Scottish Regiment, of the 3rd Canadian Division, east of Groningen. On April 28th we started to move toward Delfzijl. The Germans had

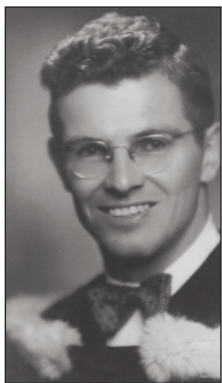
used this port town to bring their supply ships across the Ems River, from Germany. We had brief bits of fighting here and there and moved up to Heveskes. As Battle 2i/c it was my job to work out the details of an attack with heavy artillery support, to move through Weiward and to seize a key bridge



The nine LaPrairie children according to age
A.J. Paul LaPrairie was one of six brothers and one sister who graduated from Mining Engineering or Mining Geology at the University of Toronto

before the enemy could destroy it. Our tanks were supposed to cross this bridge at daylight. The bridge was the only way that our tanks could cross some swampy ground and the river. On the morning of May 2nd, A Company was supposed to lead the attack. Unfortunately, A Company had gone through some terrible actions. There were only eighteen men left, of an establishment of one hundred and twenty-seven. The Company Commander was also a casualty. So, being the one who made the plan of attack, I took over. We went ahead with what is called a creeping box barrage of artillery. Shells were falling to each side of us and in front. As we advanced, the shells fell farther in front. This barrage was to keep down enemy infantry. Then, there was a dog-leg. We followed the road with a sharp left turn, with the artillery changing too. When we reached the bridge two sections of our troops ran across and the third section stayed at the near end. Then I saw two men, who I thought were our troops checking for mines on the bridge. They were Germans putting in mines. That was the end of their activity. As daylight came I could see around us the huge artillery placements. Then I saw a long stairway going down into the ground. My Batman, of Polish origin, could speak German. Some prisoners told him that below was the big headquarters. So, for some reason, I wanted to go down. God must have been on my side. I decided to take off my steel helmet and put on my Green Bonnet. To do so I had

to put my revolver in its holster which was under my loose camouflage jacket. Then, I put the steel helmet in the rear pouch of the jacket. Down the steps I went into a large room with telephones and radios and staff people sitting at the desks. At the bottom of the stairs was a German soldier pointing a sub-machine gun at me. However, I was not carrying a weapon and was not wearing a steel helmet. A senior officer who spoke English came forward. I told him that I wanted to talk to his Commanding Officer, and was brought to *Korvet Kapitan Von Walters* (Major General). I told him unless he surrendered his troops, our artillery bombardment would start again. Through his interpreter he said that enough of his men had been killed, and gave the order for the radio and telephone operators to issue a cease fire order. We then took 38 Officers and 1386 other ranks as prisoners. As a matter of interest, I took the *Korvet Kapitan* back to Brigade Headquarters. Our Brigade Intelligence Officer spoke German and questioned him. Then, the *Korvet Kapitan* pointed at me and asked the I.O. what my rank was. I was still in my camouflage coverall. I thought he was being a bit uppity, wanting to make sure that he, of senior rank, had been captured by a senior officer. I told the I.O. to tell him that I was a Boy Scout, and left. I was awarded my Distinguished Service Order for this adventure. That was the end of the war for us. On the 5th of May, all of the Germans in Holland surrendered.



LaPrairie returned to Canada to attend university at the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering at the University of Toronto in 1946, and attended school at the Ajax Campus with a large class of returning veterans. He spent two years at

Ajax with his fellow students, and moved to the St. George Campus in the fall of 1948.

During LaPrairie's time at Ajax, he concluded that a 'regimental' band was in order. At the time, he was still active in the Militia, and through his contacts in the Irish Regiment, acquired the necessary equipment for what would become a world-famous band.

Scrounging through Fort York, the University Avenue and Fleet Street Armouries and the Sally Ann at Church and King Streets, he turned up a collection of Irish regiments' red tunics, some pith helmets, six Dragoon's brass hel-

mets, a set of cymbals, a drummer's leopard skin, two tenor snare drums, a drum major's baton, and most importantly, a bass drum with one head (the open side was used to stockpile beer while "on parade" — a tradition that occasionally re-appears in the present day).



The Lady Godiva Memorial Band was founded in the calendar year 1949 — although the exact Skule™ year, '48-'49 or '49-'50, is unclear. They were first pictured in the 5T0 Yearbook. Paul recalls the first events during the fall of 1948. The first rehearsal fielded about a dozen people from all years consisting of trumpets, trombones, saxophones, clarinets, one flute, two snare drums, and the bass drum.

A.J. Paul LaPrairie recounted a humorous episode of the Lady Godivas in 1950. During a big football game at Varsity Stadium, the band marched through the gates and onto the field. They were wearing great big moustaches. When they approached the fifty yard line, Paul noticed Sidney Smith, President of the University of Toronto, sitting in the front row. LaPrairie offered him a moustache, which Smith promptly put on!

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Paul started at Ajax but like other Ajax starters, finished his degree at University of Toronto, St. George. His siblings graduated there as well.