

On July 13, 1925, a boy is born in small town of Eastview, located on Lake Ontario. He is named Joseph Alberic Gérard and is the seventh child of Hervé and Valentine Bériault (née Desjardins). He has 6 brothers and 3 sisters.

Little is known about his younger years except that he learned English and French at school and left school at the age of 16 to go to work. His father and one of his brothers worked at the Dominion Printing Bureau. Joseph got a job as a "filing clerk" at the Canadian Air Force headquarters in Ottawa. A job he would like to return to after the war. But he also states that he wants to become a machine operator.

Shortly after his 18th birthday, he volunteered to join the Canadian army on September 11, 1943. Before that he has had some military experience as a reservist with the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps for a year and a half. From his inspection report we learn some more personal things; he has a normal social life and a moderate interest in sports. He is calm and reliable and is considered suitable for training as a infantryman and/or "technical storeman". The latter is probably due to his two years of administrative experience as that was a position where you were responsible for the management, storage and issuance of specialised technical equipment and spare parts.

Unlike a "regular" quartermaster (who was engaged in clothing, food, or general equipment), the Technical Storeman worked with more complex materials such as vehicle parts and tools.

He then follows the standard infantry training in camps such as Aldershot and Camp Borden in Canada and is considered a good marksman. In July 1944, he is ready for "overseas service". You would expect him to be deployed in Normandy a month after D-Day and he is transferred to the UK on July 27. But things turn out differently. The army needs him at the front line in Italy where he arrives on November 18 by troop transport ship after a 15-day sea voyage. He is assigned to the Royal 22nd Regiment (R22eR), the only French-speaking infantry regiment in the Regular Force, which at that time was stationed in Cattolica on the Adriatic Sea.



Royal 22e Régiment

The Germans have retreated to the Gothic Line (Gotenstellung), an expanded, fortified defensive line through the Apennine Mountain range all the way

across the width of Italy. The Germans used the natural barrier of the mountains and strengthened it with thousands of bunkers, artillery domes of tanks (Panzerturms), miles of barbed wire and minefields. The Allies have fought hard here and suffered a lot of casualties. In early January, the R22eR is involved in a fierce battle north of Faenza. The plain of the River Po is intersected here with countless waterways which is a difficult area to fight in. Canadian infantry receives air support from Spitfires to engage German machine gun fire. On January 3, 1945, Joseph was slightly injured in his left knee. Because he twisted his knee or had a blow to it, he is diagnosed with traumatic synovitis. To make matters worse, three days later he falls into a foxhole during an attack and injures his right knee. Admission to a hospital is the result and on February 13 he has recovered.

Then follows a short time later Operation Goldflake:

From February 22, 1945, Canadian troops in Italy were moved to France in the greatest secrecy and under strict camouflage in a very short time. In order to deceive German intelligence services, measures were taken to suggest that Canadian troops were still in Italy. Most trips to Marseille lasted two days. From there it was a five-day drive to the Belgian border, a distance of 1085 km. By the end of April, more than 60,000 troops and support personnel had been transferred from Italy to the front in Northwest Europe.

Because Joseph is still working in the support role as a "technical storeman", he is one of the last to be moved. He arrives in France on March 17, 1945 and then goes to Belgium.

From there, Joseph is involved in the advance of his regiment in the liberation of the Netherlands. For example, at Operation Cannonshot, the crossing of the IJssel at Gorssel and Wilp. A little later, on April 16, 1945, he was admitted to a military hospital for a month. It is unknown for what reason. Maybe his knee had not yet healed completely. And so he experiences the end of the war.

After the hostilities ceased, part of the Canadian army remained in the Netherlands to take on all kinds of tasks such as disarming German troops, maintaining law and order, clearing ammunition, restoring infrastructure.

In August '45 he is absent for a day without leave (AWL) which costs him a fine of 7 days pay. Did the two women whose names he wrote down in his soldier's book play a role in that? We won't know.

For the occupation of Germany, the 3rd Battalion Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders (Canadian Army Occupation Force) was formed and Joseph was taken on in January 1946. They were stationed near Oldenburg (Germany). The pipe band of the Highlanders regularly performed on the streets of Oldenburg for ceremonies and to show the locals who was in charge.

In February '45, Joseph enjoys his last leave in England. The war is over but the danger has not gone yet. In his case, it came from a bottle of schnapps. On March 31, 1946, he was admitted to a field hospital with a "possible methyl alcohol poisoning". Unfortunately this proves to be fatal and he dies on April 1, 1946 at 12:13 pm. Although his file records that he died of sickness, the cause of this is drinking poisoned alcohol. A month and a half later, the Canadians leave Germany for home.

Pte. Gerard Beriault Dies of Accident In Germany

Word has been received that Pte. Gerard Beriault age 20, was killed accidentally, April 1, while serving with the Canadian Army in Germany. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Henri Beriault, 155 Vernon street, Eastview.

Born in Eastview, Pte. Beriault attended primary school in St. Charles' Parish and continued his studies at the Holy Ghost Fathers St. Alexander's College.

He was employed for two years in the Bureau of Statistics and was a member of the Reserve army before going on active duty in 1943. He was sent overseas in September, 1944.

Pte. Beriault first took part in the Italian Campaign in which he was wounded. Following his recovery he took part in the fighting in France and Germany and after V-J Day he was attached to the occupation army in Germany.

Surviving, besides his parents, are six brothers, Wilfrid, Marcel, Adrien, Fernand, Jacques and Charles Beriault and three sisters, Mrs. Noel Breton, Mrs. Romeo Duhamel and Mrs. Jean-Paul Duhmael.

A funeral service will be held in St. Charles' Church on Monday at eight a.m.

By then the Canadian cemetery in Holten is established and Joseph Bériault is one of the few to find his final resting place there directly. His grave is located in plot 9, row G, grave 16. His family have chosen this text on the headstone: "Que son âme repose en paix". May his soul rest in peace.



Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry
Highlanders

*Campaign medals:
1939-45 Star
Italy Star
France Germany Star
War Medal 1939-45
CVSM & Clasp*

SjB v1.1, mrt 2026

Sources:

*Library and Archives Canada
ancestry.ca*

project44.ca

Gemini

<https://www.cwgc.org>

<https://nl.findagrave.com/>