



Wellie was born on April 28, 1917, on a farm in Notre Dame du Laus, Quebec, about 100 km north of Ottawa in a French-speaking area.

His father, Michel Bertrand, and his mother, Marie Bertrand, born Filiatraut dit Saint Louis, had a large family. Wellie had four brothers and four sisters.

Wellie's mother died in 1921. A brother, John Edouard, also died that same year, at the age of nine.

Wellie enlisted in the Canadian Army relatively late in the war, on April 7, 1944. His three older brothers worked on the farm; three sisters had married and lived elsewhere.

When Wellie enlisted, he indicated that he would like to have his own farm after the military service. Preferably a company that combines agriculture with livestock farming.

In April 1944, Wellie also reported that he had worked for a few months at the International Nickel Company in Sudbury, Ontario. He did not rule out that he might work there again after his return.

His exact duties in the company are unclear, but it must have been a difficult job.



Notre Dame du Laus 1909

To clarify:

Nickel workers worked 56 hours a week in 1943, without overtime.

They earned 51 cents per hour for surface work, 61 cents for underground work, while miners earned 71 cents. First-class craftsmen earned 78 cents.

There were no fringe benefits, except for a week's paid vacation.

Wellie's medical report stated that he was 5'4" tall and weighed 140 lbs. He had blue eyes and brown hair. Aside from a scar on his right foot, no special remarks were made.

Wellie's military career began at the District Depot in Toronto. He was given permission to stay away until April 18, 1944, likely due to spring farm work. This wasn't unusual; after all, it was crucial for feeding the population (including the military) that farms continued producing food.

Wellie's training began in early May 1944 when he was transferred to No. 45 Basic Training Centre in Sorel, Quebec. After two months, in mid-July 1944, Wellie's next step came. This time to Training Camp A 13 in Valcartier, Quebec, for further training. He would remain there until early November 1944.

Wellie's file indicates that his training was completed in mid-October 1944.

He was granted a week's leave and his pay was set at \$1.50 per day.

Like thousands of others, destined for the United Kingdom, Wellie was transferred to Camp Debert in Nova Scotia in early November 1944. On November 28, 1944, he disembarked after an eight-day sea voyage.

He was assigned to a reinforcement battalion. Wellie spent Christmas 1944 and New Year's 1944/45 in the United Kingdom.

During its advance from Normandy (June 1944) to the Netherlands (winter 1944/45), the Canadian army suffered many casualties, reinforcements were desperately needed.

The transfer to the Western European front soon followed. On January 12, 1945, Wellie landed on the mainland. He was taken on strength by the Régiment Maisonneuve. On February 8, 1945, Wellie faced the harsh reality of fighting in the frontline:

The Rhineland Offensive began its first phase: "Operation Veritable."

The Maisonneuves were deployed in the Reichswald, the Hochwald, and near Xanten, among other places.

To clarify:

"After the largely unsuccessful Operation Market Garden, a massive Canadian-British force was built up in the Nijmegen region during the winter of 1944/1945: approximately 400,000 men and approximately 35,000 vehicles. The goal: to push the German units back beyond the Rhine. On February 8, the Canadians and British launched their attack on the Rhineland with Operation Veritable. They encountered fierce resistance in the Reichswald. It became the bloodiest battle ever fought on German soil. During the night of March 23 and 24, the Allies crossed the Rhine at Wesel. By March 29, the Rhine crossing was complete, and the Rhineland was in Allied hands. The Rhineland Offensive claimed 25,000 Allied casualties and over 60,000 German ones."

In April 1945, the troops crossed the German-Dutch border. Wellie had by now been promoted to Lance/Corporal.

The Régiment de Maisonneuve, with Wellie in its ranks, moved north.

The advance continued via Terborg, Doetinchem, and Hummelo towards the Twente Canal near Almen. After crossing the canal, the bridgehead on the north side of the canal had to be expanded towards Laren-Gelderland.

The regiment suffered heavy losses during the night of April 4-5, 1945.

One of the casualties was Wellie Bertrand. He was given a temporary grave near Almen. His final resting place was the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten.

Grave location: Plot 2, Row E, Grave 13.

He was awarded:

the 1939-1945 Star; the France-Germany Star; the 1939-1945 War Medal; and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp.

