

Bourgeois, Jean-Paul. Private.

11-B-3



Jean-Paul was born on August 19, 1922, in Chicoutimi, Quebec. Jean-Paul is the son of Wellie and Lia Bourgeois, née Vigneau. The 1931 census records that Jean-Paul had a younger brother named Lionnel.

The family also had a boarder, a carpenter.

Chicoutimi played an important role in the pulp and paper industry in the 1920s.

The family speaks French and attends the Roman Catholic Church.

Jean-Paul is conscripted under the N.R.M.A. law.

To clarify:

In 1940, Prime Minister King introduced the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA). This act required a national registration of all eligible men for homeland defense and authorized the government to "conscript every man in Canada for military training in the defense of Canada." The NRMA also granted the federal government conscription and exemption powers, but only for homeland defense. Soldiers engaged in homeland defense as a result of the NRMA were called "Zombies," after the living dead in a Hollywood horror film. The term reflects contempt for those who refused to fight overseas.

It should be noted that French Canadians were fierce opponents of the NRMA.

On October 6, 1942, Jean-Paul enlisted. His enrolment and attestation paper reads that he had completed eight years public school and worked as an office clerk. His employer is not recorded. Reading is his favorite pastime.

His medical report lists only the usual information: 5'8" tall, weighing 130 lbs, brown eyes and brown hair. No special features are mentioned.

Jean-Paul began his military service at the basic training center in Chicoutimi, Quebec.

After two months, in December 1942, he was transferred to the infantry training center in Valcartier, Quebec.

There is no record he was granted furlough during the New Year's Eve of 1942/43.

The next entry in Jean-Paul's file is that, starting in February 1943, he was assigned to No. 15 Aerodrome Defence Company in Valcartier. In early March, he qualified for ski course and was allowed a day's leave.

Jean-Paul remained in Valcartier, but in mid-March 1943, he was assigned to the Fusiliers Mont-Royal. In April 1943, he was granted a few weeks' leave.

He also completed a course with the mortar crew, qualifying Q1 (!) and his pay increased, this time with 20 cents per day. (In February, he had received an additional 10 cents per day.)

In the third week of July 1943, Jean-Paul was granted leave prior to his transfer to the Royal Canadian Air Force base in Goose Bay, Labrador.

As of August 1, 1943, he was assigned to No. 5 Defences Labrador.

To clarify:

Within two years, the remote and undeveloped wilderness of Labrador became home to the largest airfield in the Western Hemisphere. The population surrounding the airfield grew steadily as people flocked to the base in search of work.



Goose Bay 1943

Jean-Paul remained in Labrador until the end of June 1944. He was then transferred to Shelburne, Nova Scotia, where, effective July 1, 1944, he was included in the Personnel Directorate, purely for administrative purposes of pay and food.

Then it was time to allow Jean-Paul personal leave. Standard time and extra leave, as he had not had any days off, due to continuous duty.

From July 14 to August 16, 1944, he was "free to come and go."

Then the next transfer awaited him: on August 17, Jean-Paul reported to St. John, New Brunswick, under M.D. 7 (Military District 7).

In October 1944, he received a substantial sentence. He was AWL (Absent Without Leave) for one day, but upon returning, he was found in possession of alcoholic beverages.

Jean-Paul was sentenced to seven days' imprisonment and seven days' pay. He was transferred to the military detention barracks in Sussex, New Brunswick. He was released on October 10, 1944.

On December 1, 1944, Jean-Paul was transferred to Sorel, Quebec, and was assigned to Le Régiment de Châteauguay.

He was allowed Christmas leave and embarkation leave because he was assigned to the troops to cross the ocean to the United Kingdom.

To clarify:

In November 1944, the N.R.M.A. was modified and offered the option of sending conscripts overseas. This was in response to the losses suffered by the Canadian troops.

Jean-Paul arrived in the UK on January 10, 1945, and was assigned to a reinforcement battalion. He remained in the UK until March 1945.

He then sailed to Antwerp, Belgium and was taken on strength by Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal (FMR) on March 8, 1945.

This unit had seen significant action during the fighting in the southwest Netherlands, aimed at capturing the port of Antwerp.

Jean-Paul would experience the FMR's advance into the Netherlands and northwest Germany.

Through the eastern part of the Netherlands, region of Gelderland, Laren/Holten, north to Beilen and further. The FMR advanced to the city of Groningen, where the regiment would experience fierce house-to-house fighting.

Next the FMR crossed the German border and the advance continued into northwest Germany.

The fateful day for Jean-Paul was April 29, 1945.

The regiment's war diary records:

29 Apr 45 Weather: cloudy in the afternoon with rain at night. Visibility good.
At 0900 hrs battalion with 1 troop of tanks, 1 troop of tank flame throwers and tank mine sweeper started operation to clear the village of MUNDERLOH, MR 4295 sheet M-2 guarding the approaches of the city of OLDENBURG.
Many snipers encountered but the flame throwers soon immobilized them. The operation was completed by 0700 hrs and 8 Recce regt took over while our men came back to their original positions.

Jean-Paul sustained serious head injuries from shrapnel and died.

He was one of approximately 2,500 conscripts who were actually deployed for front-line service and he was one of the sixty-nine conscripts killed.

He was given a temporary grave near Kirchhatten, Germany.

On March 14, 1946, he was laid to rest at the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten.

The grave reference is 11-B-3.

He was not awarded any medals, nor is there any additional inscription on his headstone.



Sources:

www.cwgc.org; www.ancestry.com; www.canada.ca/library-archives; project '44.