

Gunner Victor Hermann Emil Brunke 12 A 04

Of the Royal Canadian Artillery 5th Regiment C101957



*Born: August 3, 1911
Died: May 21, 1945*

Victor Brunke was a young man of 30 years, full of vigor, youth and zest for life. He was a much loved son of Ida (Cheslock) and Richard Brunke and brother to Rupert, Frieda, Irene and Anita. When Victor's father Richard was killed in a vehicle accident in 1934, Victor became the father figure in their family household. Victor was an extremely honorable man and wanted to fight for his country's freedom and loved ones. His military records upon joining the Royal Canadian Artillery state that he was neat with a very pleasant personality and a direct manner about him.

Victor enlisted at Ottawa in the Royal Canadian Artillery in November 1942. He was stationed at Lansdowne Park until the end of November and was then sent to Peterborough, Ontario for his basic training. His first leave was New Year's and he came home on December 31st through a terrible snowstorm to keep his promise to the love of his life, that they would spend New Year's Eve together. This special woman in his life was Mary Turner.

His next leave on January 15th was when he proposed to Mary and gave her the diamond ring. In February of 1943, Victor was sent down East to Eastern Passage Nova Scotia for advanced training in anti-aircraft guns. Victor then came home on embarkation leave on Sunday, April 12, 1943 and he spent two sweet weeks together with his sweetheart Mary visiting family and friends. Together, they bicycled to Buckingham to visit his sister Frieda. That happy event took place on April 23rd, 1943. Victor and Mary took a lot of pictures and had a lot of fun. They made special memories that would last for a lifetime for Mary, but sadly only a few more years for Victor.



Victor, Ida, Rupert Brunke



Mary

This is a special story of Victor's final day that he saw and hugged his family and fiancée Mary. Victor was called to war and left on "Good Friday", April 23rd 1943 on the 4:00pm train from Ottawa to Montreal. Victor said his farewells in the home where he was raised but his mom, Ida Brunke, our grandmother came running out of the house, running down the path crying. Victor went back to her and walked her back up to the house trying to calm and soothe his mom. This happened twice and Mary, his much beloved fiancée kept walking down the path to give Victor and his mom some privacy. Victor upon leaving his mom and seeing her so distraught was close to shedding tears himself. Victor had previously asked Mary to join him for lunch that day, his embarkation day, but after seeing Victor so upset, Mary had an idea that she would take the train from Ottawa to Montreal to share part of Victor's journey with him. And that is exactly what they did. In Montreal, Mary and Victor said their tearful farewell to each other and that was the last time they ever saw each other. Mary cut off a lock of Victor's hair to keep with her and Victor cut off a lock of Mary's hair and carried it with him. Mary took the train back to Ottawa and Victor continued his final journey east on the train to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Before Victor left Ottawa on his embarkation day, he had ordered red roses to be delivered to Mary for Easter.

Victor returned to Eastern Passage for a while and was then sent to Tracadie, New Brunswick and also Bedford, Nova Scotia. He was supposed to have come home to Ottawa again in August 1943 and Victor and Mary were to be married. However, his leave was cancelled as Victor was needed to replace the Canadian troops who were involved in the invasion of Italy. Victor left for overseas and arrived in England around the 28th of July, 1943 and was stationed at different places while in England and Wales. He sent money to Mary to buy herself a watch for her 21st birthday and he sent her white mum flowers for Christmas that year.

Victor's first leave overseas was in the early fall of 1943 and Victor spent it at "Littles" in Carlisle. His next leave was in April 1944 and he spent it in London with his younger brother Rupert who was serving with the Royal Canadian Air Force.





D-day was June 6th, 1944 and Victor went to France the first week of July 1944 and it was after he arrived in France that he was transferred into heavier artillery and was attached to the 5th Field Regiment. He fought in the battle along the coast of France and was in the big parade in Dieppe. After Victor fought in France, he continued to fight on our behalf in Belgium, Holland and then in Germany. Because of his language skills in being fluent in German, French and English, Victor was often used as an interpreter and was needed to interrogate prisoners of war. As a result of being needed as an interpreter, Victor was often in the front lines when towns or villages were captured.

On the 21st of May 1945 at approximately 15:30 hours, Gunner Victor Brunke was driving in a Jeep with Gunner Buchanan and Captain Steeves on the road between Aurich and Wittmund during a heavy rainstorm when the vehicle skidded and went into a ditch. Victor, who was along as an interpreter to

interrogate some high ranking German officers, was thrown out of the Jeep. Both Gunner Buchanan and Captain Steeves were not seriously injured and improvised a stretcher and carried Victor into a house across the road as it was raining quite hard. Approximately 30 minutes after reaching the house, an ambulance arrived and took Victor to the hospital. The telegram to his mother said that his cervical spine had been fractured and that he had died immediately. Victor's death occurred two weeks after the war was declared officially over. Victor was first buried in the Aurich cemetery in Germany but then moved to the Holten Canadian Military Cemetery in Holten, Holland where his tombstone reads:

"He is not dead but rests in God and softly sleeps beneath the sod"

Many love letters were exchanged between Victor and Mary until the sad news that Victor had been killed on May 21, 1945 while on active duty. Mary numbered all of her letters and letter numbered #247 was written on May 24, 1945, one love letter that Victor never got to read.

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We, uncle Victor's nieces and nephews, are so very proud and honoured by the ultimate sacrifice of our beloved Uncle Victor in his fight for freedom and democracy. We are so thankful and extremely appreciative of the special care, love and honour that is continually shown by the people of Holland in the care of the gravesite where our Uncle Victor is buried in the Holten Cemetery.



There can be no greater sacrifice than that of your own life and we, your family, friends and loved ones will always love and honour you, Victor Brunke.

They shall grow not old as we who are left grow old

Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We Will Remember Them

