

Champagne, Joseph Hormidas. Corporal.

3-B-15



Hormidas Champagne was born on December 31, 1920.

At his baptism, he was given the names Joseph Hormidas Champagne.

He is the son of Evariste Champagne and Léa Champagne, née Marcotte.

His place of birth is listed as St. Samuel of Horton, Quebec.

The family, which is Roman Catholic and French-speaking, has four other sons and two daughters.

Hormidas reported for duty on December 6, 1940, at the Motodrome Barracks in Montreal.

He reports that he left school in 1934 after completing nine years of school. Besides helping on his parents' farm, he performed various tasks, mostly as a daysman.

During his medical examination, the standard information was recorded:

Height: 5'8½", weight: 150 lbs, brown eyes and black hair. Hormidas complained of earache, but the doctor found no abnormalities. He is classified in Category A, that means 'fit for general service'.

Hormidas' initial assignment is to the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps. (RCASC)

During the Second World War, the Corps consisted of 35,000 soldiers, not including the thousands of civilians who worked in the Corps units. They provided all the material supplies the army needed, from clothing to weapons.



Mobile unit

The unit Hormidas joined was the 3rd Mobile Laundry & Forward Bath Unit.

He remained in Montreal until February 1941.

Prior to his transfer to the United Kingdom (UK), he reported to Aldershot, Nova Scotia, on February 6, 1941.

Hormidas was granted embarkation leave for a few weeks before the crossing.

He arrived in the UK on March 25, 1941.

Until the end of June 1941, Hormidas was administratively assigned to the large group of reserve personnel, then known as the Canadian Infantry Holding Unit (CIHU). Early December 1941, he was transferred to the Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE). He was assigned to a road construction company.

In mid-December, Hormidas was admitted to the hospital for some time.

The reason why he was hospitalized could not be determined.

In April 1942, his file notes that he was found sleeping while on guard duty. His punishment: seven days "Confined to Barracks" and seven days' pay was withheld.

In July 1942, Hormidas was again hospitalized for several weeks. Also, this time the reason for this is unknown.

At the end of August, he was transferred to Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal (FMR). He started with 'one day Absent without Leave' (AWL) In November, he was officially granted seven days' leave.

Hormidas' file mentions several times that he was 'AWL'.

In July 1943, he encountered the military police. Two weeks under arrest and two weeks pay was withheld, 'resisting the authorities' was the reason.

Whether this was related to his brother's accident and death is unclear. His older brother, Alexander, also serving in the UK, suffered a bicycle accident during a short leave. Alexander died of a serious head injury on July 20, 1943, at Horsham Cottage Hospital in Sussex, England.

The monthly \$20 transfer to his mother, which Hormidas had recorded upon enlistment, continued as usual. Instead of his mother, he now designated his brother Alexander's widow, as his beneficiary. She now had to care for two young children alone.

Up until July 1944, Hormidas' file only records punishments for 'AWL'.

Then, one month after D-Day, Hormidas' landed on Juno Beach, Normandy. On July 22, 1944, he is added to the list of wounded personal. (X-3) A few days later, he is mentioned on the list to be evacuated to the UK. (Y-3) The nature of his injuries cannot be determined. The separate medical form is missing from his file.

The only difference between the X-3 and Y-3 lists is the location of the hospital. If you were in a field hospital ("in the operating area"), you were on the X-3 list. If you were transferred to a Canadian hospital in the UK, you were added to the Y-3 list.

Discharge from the hospital is reported on August 1, 1944, he is first granted a week's leave. Hormidas remains in the UK, assigned the reserve-list for the FMR.

On September 25, he returns to the mainland of Europe and rejoined the FMR on October 4, 1944. The next entry is from mid-March 1945, when he was promoted to corporal.

His file in 1945 has only a few entries:
On April 7, 1945: added to the list of wounded.
On April 9, 1945: died of his wounds.

In the intervening months, Hormidas must have witnessed considerable action. The advance through northern France and Belgium toward the southwest of the Netherlands. Hormidas must also have witnessed the Battle of the Scheldt, in which the FMR suffered heavy losses. A monument commemorating the FMR stands in Waarde, in the municipality of Reimerswaal.

The purpose of the battles for the Western Scheldt was to clear both sides of enemy troops so that the port of Antwerp could be used for the supply of troops and equipment.

Then, during the winter months, a period of relative calm followed for the FMR. Time was spent maintaining equipment and strengthening the unit, as well as conducting reconnaissance and combat patrols.

On February 8, 1945, the Rhineland Offensive began. Hormidas would have witnessed these actions as well.

To clarify:

The Rhineland Offensive consisted of several phases. After the partial failure of Operation Market-Garden, the German units were to be pushed back behind the Rhine.

A massive Canadian-British force of approximately 400,000 men and approximately 35,000 vehicles was built up in the Nijmegen region during the winter of 1944/1945. A similar American force was assembled near Roermond.

The offensive had three phases. "Operation Veritable" began on February 8, 1945, with the attack on the Reichswald. After the capture of Kleve and Goch, the offensive was restarted with "Operation Blockbuster" and "Operation Grenade." Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal were tasked with clearing the road to Xanten.

The fighting continued until the Rhine was crossed with amphibious vehicles at Wesel and Rees during the night of March 23-24. In support, 16,000 paratroopers landed on the eastern bank of the Rhine. This was the largest airborne operation in a single day. The Rhine crossing was completed on March 29, 1945. The toll: approximately 25,000 Allied casualties and an estimated 60,000 German casualties.

Hormidas must have endured all these actions without being injured or otherwise encountering problems. Records of this would have been included in his file.

On March 31, 1945, the FMR crossed the German-Dutch border and advanced towards Gendringen. The advance continued: on April 4, the FMR was near Zutphen; on April 5, they crossed the Twente Canal near Almen to relieve the Calgary Highlanders on the north side.

On April 6, the FMR moved to a position north of Laren-Gelderland to prepare for the crossing of the Schipbeek Canal towards Holten.

On April 7, 1945, the FMR war diary recorded:

OLLAND HEET 2-1 GCHOLF rea 0702	7 Apr 45	Weather fine. Visibility good. At 0400 hrs unit moves to its start line MR 063005 and proceed to its objective. Very light opposition encountered and at 0900 hrs the objective was reached and secured. 14 POW including 1 officer were taken. After another "O" group troops push forward again and reach area 0803 (P-1) which was found clear of enemy. Carrier platoon patrol along the bank of the CHIPBECK canal and is engaged by enemy MG and arty fire. Enemy has dug in defenses along the north bank of the canal and intends to hold our track northwards for awhile. At night infantry take position along the south bank of the canal and prepare for the crossing. Lieut P H Boutin was killed by a sniper during the day.	Appx II
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In the early morning hours, they begin their advance, encountering little resistance. As the day progresses, they approach the Schipbeek Canal; the carrier platoon makes a reconnaissance of the southern bank, coming under heavy enemy fire. Lieutenant Boutin is reported killed. Others are wounded.

On the wounded list from that day, we find the name Hormidas Champagne, who was assigned to the support group, and several others.

8 STRENGTH DECREASE (CONT'D)

b) SOS to X 3 list wef 7 Apr 45

D-109427	A/Cpl	Champagne H	Sp Coy
D-133558	Pte	Mathurin L	Sp Coy
D-133535	Pte	Barry JP	Sp Coy "A" Coy
D-133580	Pte	Boudreau A	D Coy
D-141465	Pte	Burattine C	D Coy
D-146227	Pte	Cloutier T	D Coy

The wounded were transported to Nr. 3 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station (3CCSS) in Lochem. ("De Cloese")

According to the records, Hormidas died of his wounds on April 9, 1945.

He was given a temporary grave in the general cemetery in Lochem.

His final resting place was the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten.

On February 1, 1946, he was reburied there in plot 3, row B; grave 15.

He was awarded:

1939-1945 Star, France-Germany Star, Defence Medal, War Medal 1929-1945 and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

The family has the following inscription added to his gravestone:

Qu'il repose en paix



Sources:

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