



Gordon Earl Crawley—known as Gordon—was born on February 6, 1917, in Toronto, Ontario. He was the son of William and Elsie Elizabeth Crawley (née Spracklin). Gordon had three brothers and one sister. The family attended the United Church of Canada, and English was the language spoken at home.

When Gordon enlists for active service in the Canadian Army in Toronto on November 30, 1942, his occupation is noted as "shipper." After completing his primary education, he has pursued one year a technical training.

He marries Eileen Myrthe Barrett on October 31, 1942.

Before he is officially enlisted in the army Gordon underwent a medical examination. Standard physical details were recorded: length 5'5½", weight 124 lbs, brown hair and brown eyes. A specific identifying mark is also noted: a scar at the base of his left thumb, which could serve as a means of identification. A separate observation is made during the examination, he is considered 'physically weak, given his height and weight— It is expected that this will improve during his time in the army.

After three weeks at the district depot in Toronto, Gordon enters the military system. In mid-December 1942, he arrives in Simcoe, Ontario, for basic training. Gordon remains there until spring of 1943. Then he is transferred to Nanaimo, British Columbia (BC), to join the 46th Light Anti-Aircraft Artillery. While there, he is hospitalized with a severe infection in the nose and the pharynx. Following his discharge from the hospital and a short period of leave, Gordon remains in Nanaimo until the end of May 1943. He then spends a month at the Combined Operations School in Courtenay, BC.

The school was established in the spring of 1943 as a joint initiative between the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) for the defense of the Pacific coast. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, there were fears of a Japanese invasion of Canada's west coast. By mid-1943, it became clear that the Japanese threat to the coast of British Columbia had subsided. The school's focus shifted entirely toward training for offensive amphibious invasions in Europe, in preparation for operations such as D-Day.

After about a month, Gordon's training here comes to an end, and he is reassigned to the Anti-Aircraft Artillery. The next entry in his file reads:

'On special duty to Kiska'. This requires some explanation.

The Japanese had occupied the Aleutian Islands Attu and Kiska between June 1942 and July 1943. The reason: to protect the north flank of the Japanese Empire.

On August 15, 1943, U.S. and Canadian troops landed on opposite shores of Kiska. When the men were ashore on August 15, 1943, after three weeks of bombardment by ships and aircraft, the troop found that the Japanese soldiers had slipped away.

Both U.S. and Canadian forces mistook each other and a friendly fire incident occurred, which left 28 Americans and 4 Canadians



Landing 13th Inf. Brigade
Note: the men are wearing US helmets

dead, with 50 wounded on either side.

In early January 1944, the Canadian contingent returns, and the men are granted a month's leave.

Following his leave, Gordon is transferred to the district depot in Vancouver, British Columbia (BC).

In early May 1944, he is admitted to Shaughnessy Hospital in Vancouver.

No specific reason can be found in his file; the reason why remains unknown.

Gordon is not discharged from the hospital until early July 1944; the cause must have been serious.

(In 1944, Shaughnessy Hospital in Vancouver, Canada, played a crucial role as a military hospital for the care and rehabilitation of wounded service members.)



After a short leave, Gordon is transferred once again.

His new destination is the infantry training camp in Calgary, Alberta.

The birth of his son, Barry Wayne, on October 11, 1944, is explicitly noted in his file.

Gordon remains in Calgary. In mid-November 1944, he is granted embarkation leave before departing for a short stay at Camp Debert in Nova Scotia—here thousands of troops destined for the United Kingdom (UK) are brought together.

On December 18, 1944, Gordon is among the many who board a troopship bound for the UK, arriving there on December 27, 1944 and Gordon is assigned to a reinforcement unit.

Gordon spends two months in the UK. His crossing to the mainland of Western Europe—and into the harsh reality of war—takes place on February 23, 1945, when he arrives in Antwerp, Belgium.

In early March 1945, he is transferred to the Algonquin Regiment.

The final entry in Gordon's file reads: Killed in Action on April 18, 1945.

The war diary of the Algonquin Regiment provides some information about what he experienced during those few months on the mainland of Western Europe.

On March 31, 1945, the regiment crossed the Rhine. The Algonquins then moved into Dutch territory. Passing through places including Millingen and Lochem, they headed toward Bornerbroek (April 4, 1945).

A confrontation with the enemy near Wierden was imminent. Heavy fighting took place for the liberation of Wierden. Once again, luck was on Gordon's side.

The advance continued into German territory. Esterwegen was reached on April 11, 1945. The Küstenkanal (Coastal Canal) was reconnoitered, and the regiment's next task—following the crossing of the canal—was to secure the road from Edeweicht to Friesoythe.

In the early hours of April 17, 1945, the north bank was reached, and a bridgehead was established. That afternoon, the unit faced counterattacks. The Germans deployed heavy equipment, including a self-propelled armored howitzer. The resulting shelling caused several casualties. Support was requested from their own artillery, but it proved largely ineffective. Meanwhile, further casualties were reported among their own ranks.

Gordon was assigned to 'C' Company—the unit that endured a grueling ordeal during the night of April 17–18, 1945, within the bridgehead on the north side of the Küstenkanal. By the early hours of April 18, 1945, the company had suffered 7 deaths and 15 wounded. Gordon was among those killed in action.

He is given a temporary burial site near Friesoythe. A temporary cemetery was established there for 107 Canadians who fell in the region.



On March 9, 1946, he is laid to rest in his final resting place at the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten: Plot 8, Row B, Grave 15.

He was awarded the following:
1939–1945 Star, France and Germany Star, War Medal 1939–1945 and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.



Sources:

www.cwgc.org; www.ancestry.com;
www.canada.ca/library-archives; wikipedia, wartimesproject.com; *War Diary Algonquin Regiment*.