Gahan, Norman Joseph Fitzgerald   Private   9-D-8

Norman Joseph Fitzgerald Gahan was born on March 3, 1921, in Montreal, Quebec.
He was the son of James and Ann Gahan. He had six sisters and four brothers, two of whom had died before Norman was born.
His mother died in 1943, while he was serving in the army. Norman was the youngest of this large family. The family was Roman Catholic.

Norman attended high school for four years and graduated at the age of 18. He spoke English and could read both English and French.

After graduating, he worked for two months as a factory worker at Northern Electric. His service records also indicate that he had completed a training as a machinist.

On December 13, 1940 he enlisted. Prior to his enlisting Norman had served 5 months in the NPAM (Non Permanent Active Militia). His reasons for enlisting:he wanted to travel and contribute to the fight against Germany.

During his medical examination it was noted that he was colourblind. Norman had dark brown hair and dark eyes, he was 1.74m tall. He was a real sportsman and loved sports such as boxing, swimming and tennis. He was also a forward on the ice hockey team. Another hobby of his was playing the harmonica.

He was interested in technology and stated that after the war he wanted to work as a car mechanic. Norman joined the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada as a private. Upon enlisting, he got his basic training in Montreal.

From February 19, 1941, to February 25, 1941, he was hospitalized for chemosis (a swelling of the optic epithelium). Remarkably, he received several reprimands for leaving the barracks while in quarantine, for not being present, or for other reasons. As a result, his pay was often withheld.

On May 2, 1942, he left for the United Kingdom, he arrived there on the 12th of that month.

On the 1st of September 1942 Norman was appointed to be a Lance-Corporal. But, soon after, on the 19th of September, he was demoted to the permanent rank of Private.

A month after D-Day, he landed at Juno Beach on the 5th July 1944 and from there advanced further inland.

On September 9, 1944 he is reported wounded. After receiving first aid at a Field Dressing Station he was transported to the 8th Canadian Hospital.

The nature of the injury is unknown but serious enough to transfer Norman to a Military Hospital in the UK early October 1944. He stayed there until early December. Norman was also here reported "Absent Without Leave" (AWL) several times.

On December 3, 1944, he reported back to his unit, the Black Watch of Canada., who, according to the War Diary, were stationed in theneighbourhood of Groesbeek, Netherlands.

After the relative "calm" of the winter of 1944/45, the Rhineland offensive followed, starting with Operation Veritable. After the crossing of the river Rhine (Operation Plunder) the Canadian troops changed their direction and entered the eastern part of the Netherlands. They were ordered to advance to the north.

The BW of C and the other regiments still faced heavy fighting before they reached the Wadden Sea and turned eastwards to enter Germany. On April 29, 1945, Norman with the BW of C advanced to Berne, near Oldenburg in Germany.
The War Diary for that day reads: "A cloudy and rainy day. The roads to Berne were heavily mined, forcing the soldiers to be extremely alert."

They also came under heavy fire at various times of the day. In the afternoon and evening there was occasional mortar fire. An explosion proved fatal for Norman Gahan. He lost his life here, just before the end of the Second World War.

He was buried temporarely in Vielstedt near Oldenburg. His final resting place is the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten. Grave reference: plot 9, row D, grave 8.

He was awarded:
the 1939-1945 Star; the France-Germany Star; the Defence Medal; the War Medal 1939-1945 and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.