

**Gipes, Lewis David**

**Rifleman**

**The Regina Rifle Regiment**

**Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**

**L/106467**



Lewis David Gipes was born 26 December 1907 at Chatfield near Winona, Minnesota (MN), USA. His father John Noble Gipes was from Illinois and had



a daughter named Bertha in 1887 with his wife Margaret Norris, who died soon after. He remarried Lewis's mother Sadie Violetta Annis the next year at Winona and they settled in Chatfield. The Presbyterian couple had eight children, half-siblings to Bertha: Lillian, Sarah, Esther, Luella, Anna, William, John (Junior) and Lewis.

Sadie died in 1913 and John Noble remarried Mary Story in 1919. Lewis attended a rural school intermittently due to distance and illness. He ran away from home age thirteen with only a grade 4 education. Lewis later returned home and was a farm labourer plus did road construction work. His brother John Junior left for Canada to homestead around Hillmond, Saskatchewan (SK) near Lloydminster in 1920. Lewis followed him there in 1927 and became a naturalized Canadian citizen in 1933. After several years homesteading with his brother, Lewis acquired his own half-section (320 acres) of land to farm in the Hillmond vicinity.



*Hillmond, SK circa 1935*

Lewis decided to voluntarily join the Canadian Army active service after being called up under the National Resources Mobilization Act for home defence. He attested 8 July 1943 at Regina, SK age 35. Lewis was then 5'10" tall, 163 lbs with hazel eyes and was described as having a "ruddy complexion". Lewis had experience driving and repairing cars and was interested in motor mechanics. He was sent to Prince Albert, SK for basic training and given two months compassionate farm leave for the fall harvest.

Lewis then received advanced infantry training at Camp Shilo, Manitoba from December 1943 – April 1944. Following his embarkation leave he passed through Camp Debert, Nova Scotia and disembarked in the UK 7 May 1944 where he reported to the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit. Lewis landed in France the next month where he was taken on strength with The Regina Rifle Regiment (RRR) 20 June 1944 as a replacement Rifleman.

The RRR, also known as the 'Farmer Johns' or Reginas were combined with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles and Canadian Scottish to form 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup>



Canadian Infantry Division. The Reginas along with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles (RWR) were among the first Commonwealth infantry units to land at the Normandy beaches and suffered heavy D-Day losses while establishing a beachhead.

*RRR & RWR soldiers watching tanks unload Juno Beach D-Day*

Following a rest period at Bray where Lewis joined them, the RRR was on the line again 29 June 1944, taking up positions along the Caen-Bayeux Road to counter the threat from German armour in yet another counterattack. On 4 July Operation WINDSOR was launched as a prelude to the Allied attack on Caen. The Reginas provided fire support to the Winnipeg Rifles when they stormed Carpiquet and took it. They moved onward towards Caen where a three division assault on that city was launched 7 July, Operation CHARNWOOD. Ardennes Abbey was used by the 12<sup>th</sup> SS Panzer Regiment as a headquarters and was heavily defended with mortars, machine guns and 75mm guns, On 8 July the Regina Rifles were ordered to capture it.

After a fierce firefight the Abbey was secured and the Germans driven out. The Reginas suffered 216 casualties that day, 36 of them fatal with another missing in action. This had been the worst fighting for the Battalion since D-Day. The capture of the Abbey by the RRR helped pierce the ring of defences around Caen, which finally fell to the Allies 19 July 1944.



*RRR soldiers holding position Caen, France 10 July 1944*

Mrs. Davidson, the former Sarah Isabell Gipes, was born at Eyota October 28, 1892. She was married November 14, 1918, and had lived in this locality most of her life.

Survivors are her husband; six sons, Ronald, Loran, Darrell, Robert and Irvin, all at home, and Lloyd, Camp Apago, Texas; four daughters, Mrs. Ernest Terott, Mrs. Walter Berthinger and Iva, all of Chatfield, and Mrs. Gilbert Bennet, Rochester; four sisters, Mrs. Henry Olson, Chatfield; Mrs. Charles Winans, Rochester; Mrs. Bertha Vandrey, Spokane, Wash., and Mrs. Carol Oscar, Madison, Wis., and three brothers, John, Hillmont, Canada; Lewis, somewhere in France, and William, whereabouts unknown.

Lewis was one of the RRR casualties 8 July 1944, suffering a gun shot wound to his left shoulder. He was evacuated to the UK for treatment and admitted to 24 Canadian General Hospital 12 July, discharged 14 August 1944. He had listed his sister Sarah Davidson as his next of kin but she died in October at Chatfield, MN.

*Winona Daily News Oct 1944*

Lewis was back in Northwest Europe that fall, rejoining his regiment 8 November 1944.

The Reginas had battled their way through Normandy by the end of summer and helped liberate Channel ports in September. The RRR and 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade participated in the Battle of the Scheldt with engagements at Leopold Canal and Breskens Pocket to open up the shipping lane to Antwerp, Belgium. They were then tasked with static operations around Nijmegen, Netherlands in November, patrolling and sniping against a well entrenched enemy.

They finally moved out with their 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade and 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division 8 February 1945 as part of the First Canadian Army under Operation VERITABLE. They advanced through bombed out Cleve, Germany mounted on Kangaroo armoured personnel carriers and spent five days clearing the Germans from Moyland Wood 16-21 February 1945.



*Personnel of the Regina Rifles preparing to attack enemy in Moyland Wood near Calcar, Germany, 16 February 1945.*

First the Regina Rifles and then The Canadian Scottish had attacked but were stalemated and repulsed by determined German paratroopers. It fell to the Royal Winnipeg Rifles to finish the job. In summarizing events for February, the Regina's War Diarist commented that in addition to a number of casualties, they also experienced a high percentage of Battle Exhaustion cases. The RRR and 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade were out of action during the next phase of the Rhine offensive, Operation BLOCKBUSTER.

The Allies decided to seize two crossings over the Rhine River with the main effort in the north in the Emmerich-Wesel sector for Operation PLUNDER. The Reginas were on the move the evening of 27 March, crossing the Rhine by means of a pontoon bridge that the engineers had constructed.



Rhine River pontoon bridge 1945



- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>1st Canadian Division</b> | <b>3rd Canadian Division</b> |
| 1st Brigade                  | 7th Brigade                  |
| 2nd Brigade                  | 8th Brigade                  |
| 3rd Brigade                  | 9th Brigade                  |
| RCR                          | QOR of C                     |
| PPCLI                        | HLI of C                     |
| Hast. & PER                  | R Wpg Rif                    |
| 48th Highls                  | Reg Rif R                    |
| L. Edm Regt                  | R. de Chaud                  |
|                              | C. Scot R                    |
|                              | NS (NB) R                    |
|                              | NNS Highls                   |
|                              | 7th Canadian Recce Regt      |

Following a tough battle to take Emmerich, Germany, the RRR and 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade headed north to help liberate towns in the Netherlands including Wehl and Zutphen. Lewis was with "C" Company during a clearing operation and attempt at an assault crossing of the Zijkanaal in front of Deventer 8 April 1945 when he was mortally wounded. He was hit by a piece of shrapnel from a High Explosive shell that penetrated his skull and died of his wound that day, age 37.

The Reginas' Lieutenant Victor Small heard about Gipes' demise: "I came up to the unit at night in total darkness. In chatting with the men I learned that they were looking forward to the return of Rifleman Gipes from leave. He was

portrayed as being very popular and upbeat. We took off in the direction of

Deventer and laid over a day in sight of the mill that dominated the skyline. We advanced toward high ground outside of Deventer and were met with a barrage of 75's. As soon as it let up we moved forward among some British flamethrower tanks. Apparently Gipes was hit in the forehead by a piece of shrapnel and was evacuated. We received word that he had died a few days later. I never saw his face".

*Regina Leader-Post April 1945*

**DIED OF WOUNDS**  
**Saskatchewan Regiment**  
**GIPES, Lewis David, Rfn., L-106467,**  
**Mrs. Henry Olson (sister), Chat-**  
**field, Minn. U.S.A.**

18th April, 1945.

Mrs. Henry Olson,  
R.R. #1,  
Chatfield, Minn., U.S.A.

Dear Mrs. Olson:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your brother, L106467 Rifleman Lewis David Gipes, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 8th day of April, 1945.

From official information we have received, your brother died as the result of wounds received in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

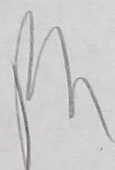
The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement.

We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Yours sincerely,

(A.B. Walford),  
Major-General,  
Adjutant-General.

*2x file  
0-4-45-  
/ MA*



Lewis's sisters Lillian Winans and Anna Olson of Chatfield, MN assisted the Canadian Army in sorting out his Estate affairs after his death.

Rifleman L.D. Gipes was temporarily buried at Lochem Cemetery near Zutphen, Netherlands and later relocated to Holten Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **II. H. 10.**

*Photo courtesy lestweforget1945.org*

Lewis Gipes's campaign medals:

- 1939-45 Star
- France-Germany Star
- War Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp



*Lloydminster, SK Cenotaph*

Lewis Gipes is listed on the Lloydminster, SK Cenotaph as one of their local WW2 fallen.

Gipes Lake, SK was named after him as a geo-memorial site.



Biography by Jim Little, Research Team Faces to Graves.

### Sources Consulted:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Veteran Affairs Canada – Canadian Virtual War Memorial

Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial <https://svwm.ca/casualty-display/?ID=A000007949>

Ancestry public trees

Newspapers.com

Chatfield, Minnesota photo <https://www.lakesnwoods.com/ChatfieldGallery.htm>

Hillmond, SK photo <https://memorysask.ca/hillmond-main-street>

Kevin Lambie, Regina Rifles WWII <http://www.reginarifles.ca/index.htm>

Reid, Brian (2010). Named by the Enemy - A History of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles

Regina Rifles D-Day and Normandy information <https://warchronicle.com/the-story-of-the-royal-regina-rifles/#:~:text=The%20Landing,on%20the%20Isle%20of%20Thanet.>

Regina and Winnipeg Rifles watching tanks unload on D-Day picture <https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/military-war/d-day-memories>

Regina Rifles Moyland Wood picture and War Diary <https://www.junobeach.org/canada-in-wwii/articles/liberation-of-the-netherlands-and-capitulation-of-germany/regina-rifle-regiment-war-diary-16-18-february-1945/>

Zutphen & Deventer, Netherlands April 1945 map and information <https://www.canadiansoldiers.com/history/battlehonours/northwesteurope/zutphen.htm>

Lloydminster, SK Cenotaph picture <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/national-inventory-canadian-memorials/details/2900#photo2>