



On August 23, 1917, Michael Joseph McKenna is born in Greenfield, Prince Edward Island. He is the son of Patrick Joseph and Laura Josephine McKenna. Michael Joseph, nicknamed Joe, is the eldest child.

In 1931, the family has three sons and three daughters, according to the 1931 census. The English-speaking family is Roman Catholic and operates a farm.

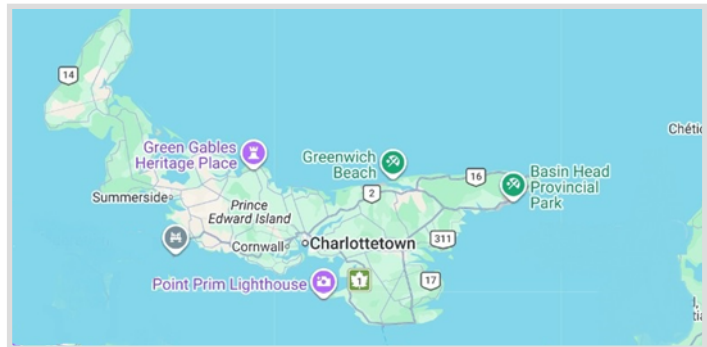
Joe leaves school at sixteen, after having completed grade eighth. He then starts helping on the farm.

Joe, like many others, is conscripted under the N.R.M.A.

*To clarify:*

*In 1940, Prime Minister King introduced the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA). This act required a national registration of all eligible men for homeland defense and authorized the government to "conscript every man in Canada for military training in the defense of Canada." The NRMA also granted the federal government conscription and exemption powers, but only for homeland defense. Soldiers engaged in homeland defense as a result of the NRMA were called "Zombies," after the living dead in a Hollywood horror film. The term reflects contempt for those who refused to fight overseas. It should be noted that French Canadians were fierce opponents of the NRMA.*

Joe is called up for training in January 1940. In February 1942, he has completed the prescribed thirty-day training program, after which he is enrolled in the reserves in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, in August 1942.



At the end of November 1942, Joe is called up for active duty, he first gets a medical examination.

Some personal details recorded in his file: height 5'8", weighed 140 lbs, gray eyes, and reddish-brown hair. A scar on his left big toe is noted as a distinguishing characteristic.

Joe complains that his ears are occasionally "plugged". However, the doctors find no abnormalities, and with an A1 rating, Joe is declared fit for all duties.

Joe is assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Anti-Aircraft Regiment in St. John, New Brunswick.

He serves there until the end of January 1944. His file reads only two entries for 1943: two weeks' leave in June and five days' leave in November.

At the end of January 1944, Joe is transferred to No. 1 Transit Camp Windsor in Nova Scotia.

He only stays there for a few weeks, as of February 13, 1944, he is taken on strength by the infantry training camp in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

There, Joe is admitted to the military hospital for three weeks. The reason why is not recorded in his file.

On April 5, 1944, he is discharged from the hospital and apparently allowed to go home for a week. On April 10, he is reported "Absent without Leave", but this is revoked. Joe is sick at home.

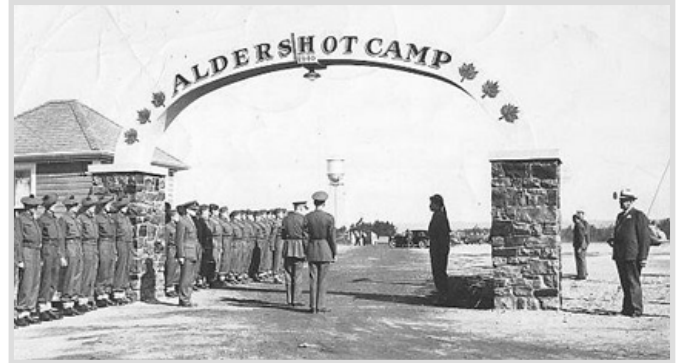
Back in Yarmouth, Joe is granted a few weeks' leave in late May and early June 1944, prior to his transfer to the infantry training center in Aldershot, Nova Scotia.

His transfer to the United Kingdom is rapidly approaching.

Joe receives embarkation leave in the first

half of August 1944. At the end of that

month, he is transferred to Camp Debert, Nova Scotia, the concentration area for the troops departing for Europe.



In Debert, Joe is admitted to the hospital, this time for two weeks. Also, this time the reason is not listed in his file.

In mid-October 1944, Joe, along with many others, boards a troop ship for the United Kingdom (UK), arriving on October 20<sup>th</sup>. He is assigned to a reinforcement unit for an infantry regiment.

A month later, on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1944, Joe sets foot on the mainland of Western Europe.

He is taken on strength by the headquarters of the 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade.

In mid-March 1945, Joe is finally deployed to the infantry and taken on strength by the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada (QOR).

This entry in his file is followed by only two more:

he is reported missing on April 6, and reported 'Killed in Action' on April 6, 1945.

The QOR's war diary reveals that during the night of April 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945, they crossed the German-Dutch border via Elten and advanced towards the city of Doetinchem.

On April 3, 1944, the QOR had to halt near Laag-Keppel until the Bailey bridge over the river Oude IJssel was completed and they were able to continue their advance.

On April 4, 1945, they came under heavy fire, resulting in several casualties. When the QOR continued their advance along the east bank of the river IJssel towards the city of Zutphen on April 5, 1945, they faced heavy resistance in the hamlet of Rha.

The Germans had a vast trench system throughout the surrounding area.

Although the QOR partially occupied the hamlet, enemy pressure became so intense that they were forced to withdraw. One platoon was cut off and trapped in Rha.

2000 The end of the trenches was reached and 8 pl led off into town. It was getting night time but there was plenty of light from burning buildings. Our 6 pdrs had set them on fire earlier in the day. 8 pl took out the first group of houses against furious resistance. One feature of this resistance was the extensive use of Bazookas. Our own weapons were in very bad shape from the mud encountered in the trenches. 7 pl now went in and two sections got into a house near the centre of the village. Here they were counter-attacked and cut off from the rest of the Coy. Sjt Caverly got through and gave the story to the O.C. A Coy now got orders to withdraw to their original positions. Some more of 7 pl came back and the Coy withdrew. The final count of casualties was 5 wounded, five killed and six missing. Major Hogarth was wounded in the arm.



One man managed to return to his own lines and reported he situation.

When the balance is taken in the early hours of April 6, 1945, the regiment records five wounded, five killed, and six missing.

One of the missing, later confirmed as having been killed, is Michael Joseph McKenna.

Joe and the other victims are given a temporary grave near Rha.

In April 1946, he is laid to rest in plot 12, row F, grave 10, at the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten.

He is awarded:

*The 1939-1945 Star; the France-Germay Star; the 1939-1945 War Medal and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.*

The family had the following inscription placed on his headstone:

**In loving memory  
of one we shall never forget.  
May his soul rest in peace.**

*Monument in Rha.*

*The monument in Rha was unveiled in 2000 to commemorate The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada. Seven Canadians from this regiment lost their lives during the liberation.*

*Six members are buried in the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten.*

*John Gordon Kavanagh, who was identified much later, is buried in the General Cemetery in Steenderen.*

