



Bernard, as he was called, was born on January 16, 1918 in Saint-Théophile, as the son of Joseph Edouard Poulin and Joséphine Poulin, née Vigneault. Saint-Théophile is a municipality in the Beauce region in the province of Quebec.

The Roman Catholic family had three more children. Bernard had one older brother and two younger ones. Bernard had attended school for seven years at the Frères de Sacré Coeur in Kenogami, Quebec. According to his own statement, his reading and speaking French was very good and a pretty good knowledge English.

His favourite sports were hockey, baseball, boxing and wrestling.

He liked to read books, mainly detectives and romantic stories in both French and English.

He had four years of work experience at Price Brothers in forestry and he had worked for two years, in the summer months, at a hotel.

Upon his enlistment in 1940, Bernard was assigned to the 18th Field Ambulance in Quebec for initial training. The second step was his assignment to the 6th Detachment of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (RCAMC).

In May 1941, he moved to Lester's Field Military Hospital in Newfoundland, where he expanded the workforce. Bernard stayed there for a long time.

He was moved back and forth between different departments. Always deployed as support for the different services. The administrative change was mainly to assign him somewhere for "barracks".

In July 1942, still in Newfoundland, Bernard received a light sentence for an offence: "confined to barracks for 7 days and 5-days' pay".

In the meantime, his pay had been increased several times based on the time he had served. The increases were then 10-dollar cents per day.

In 1943 Bernard's records mentioned some changes, although he was still in Newfoundland.

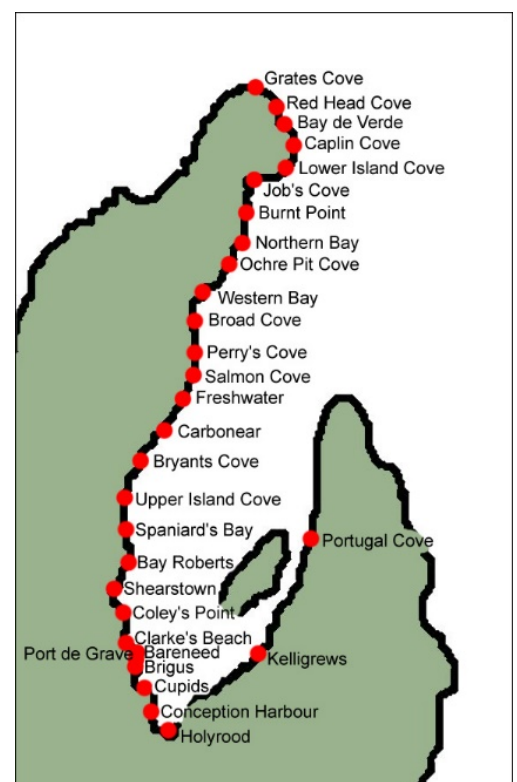
His mother moved to Chicoutimi, Quebec.

Bernard had also apparently found a girlfriend in Newfoundland.

Early in July he had two weeks vacation and it turned out that he had asked permission to marry.

This was granted and Violet Marion Percy, born February 2, 1916, of Brigus, Conception Bay, Newfoundland became Mrs. Poulin on July 3, 1943.

In his application Bernard stated that he had known



her for about two years. It is striking that, in a second interview, it was stated that he was the father of a child. However, no mention of a birth was made in his records.

At the end of July 1943, he returned from a few weeks' leave. In the meantime, the pay had risen to \$2.50 per day. Bernard was again transferred administratively, this time to the Régiment de Joliette. He enjoyed Christmas leave and was transferred again, to a new unit: Régiment de Montagny, in early February 1944.

Then Bernard was sent to Europe, first to the United Kingdom and then to France. Via Debert and No.1 Transit Camp Windsor, Nova Scotia, he arrived in England on July 27, 1944 and landed in France on August 13, 1944. There he was taken on strength by Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal (FMR). Bernard did not survive the advance of the regiment completely unscathed. On September 12, 1944, during the fighting north of Dunkirk, at Bray Dunes on the Belgian border, his left ear was "pierced", his records stated. After a few days in hospital, he reported back to his unit.

Bernard was booked as a "stretcher-bearer". Undoubtedly because of his long experiences in Lester's Field Military Hospital.

Bernard had survived the "Battle of the Scheldt" and the long, cold winter of 1944/1945 reasonably well. During these winter months, the Netherlands were divided in two parts. The southern part of the Netherlands had been liberated during Operation Market-Garden, but the Netherlands north of the river Waal had to endure several more months of occupation. At the front, the soldiers wintered in foxholes and trenches.

Then the Rhineland offensive followed, also for the FMR. Undoubtedly a time when Bernard, as a stretcher-bearer, was often deployed. At the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek we found 27 victims of the FMR, killed in action during the Rhineland offensive.

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 to the east side of the river Rhine. The offensive had three phases. "Operation Veritable" started on February 8, 1945 with the attack on the Reichswald. After the capture of Kleve and Goch, the restart was made with "Operation Blockbuster" and "Operation Grenade" to make contact with the 9th American Army at Geldern-Germany.

Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal had to clear the road to the city of Xanten. A tough action for the regiment. The fighting continued until the Rhine was crossed with amphibious vehicles at Wezel and Rees in the night of 23 to 24 March 1945. In support, 16,000 paratroopers had landed on the eastern bank of the Rhine. The largest Airborne action in one day. On March 29, 1945, the Rhine crossing was completed. The toll: approximately 25,000 Allied casualties and approximately 60,000 German.

The Canadian troops changed the direction of their advance and headed north. They continued to operate on the left flank of the Allied advance, as they had done since Normandy. Their mission was to liberate the eastern and northern parts of the Netherlands, to protect the left flank of the Allied advance and to secure supply routes.

As a bonus, their advance would make the launch of V1 and V2 rockets impossible. The launch sites were mainly located in the eastern part of the Netherlands.

And, added to that: a rapid advance to the Wadden Sea in the north, would also cut off the road to the "Heimat" for the German troops in Holland.

At the end of March 1945, Bernard was on his way to the German-Dutch border with Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal. After crossing the border, during the advance to Gendringen, the FMR regiment encountered stiff resistance on March 31, 1945 and lost a number of men. On April 4, 1945, the regiment sent out a strong combat patrol to test the defences of Zutphen. The regiment did not participate in the heavy fighting at Laren, Gelderland. During the advance from Laren towards Holten the Schipbeek Canal had to be crossed. The Germans had made a strong defensive line of it, by digging in on the north side of the canal.

The Canadian troops, and also Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal, suffered many casualties here.

Joseph Olivier Bernard Poulin was also among the fallen.

After a temporary burial near Lochem, he was given a grave at the CWGC Canadian Cemetery in Holten, reference 11-F-8.



Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal on the south wall of the Schipbeek Canal

He was awarded:

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

