



Thomas Allen Rapier was born on April 23, 1914 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. His parents were Harold George Rapier and Minnie Louise. He had a brother Jack and two sisters, Evelyn and Helen. His parents died when Thomas was still young, his mother in 1922 and his father in 1935.

After going through High School, he attended Dominion Business College for 3 months. He then worked for a year at the city of Winnipeg in the Public Welfare department as a Junior Hollerith Operator. He is an apprentice for operating a so-called Hollerith Machine. An electromechanical machine designed to help summarise information stored on punch cards. They were widely used for business applications such as accounting and inventory management. A kind of early version of a computer, you might say.

On July 18, 1942, he volunteered with the Canadian Army. He is 1.64m tall, weighs 58kg, has a light complexion, blonde hair, blue eyes and is quite healthy. He indicates that he would like to return to his old job after his service. But he also has the ambition to become a salesman.

His education and experience in calculations will have contributed to the function assigned to him by the army. He is assigned to the artillery as a Gunner with A Company, Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA). There he trained as an "Artillery signaller". A signaller is a liaison officer who provides communication between the battery and the commander of his unit. There, all information from the batteries is collected and used to give more direct and precise fire. He also gets his motorcycle license.

Like so many other Canadian soldiers, he was transferred to the United Kingdom in July 1943. There he was assigned to the 6th Field Regiment, RCA in October 1943. The United Kingdom was full of Allied soldiers training and preparing for the invasion of mainland Europe. You just had to wait and see when you would be deployed at the front. The only striking thing in his file is that he has shown insufficient respect to an officer for which he was punished with a fine of two days' pay. After D-Day (June 6, 1944), Allied reinforcements are badly needed for the further advance through Northwestern Europe and Thomas arrives in France a month later, on July 6, 1944.

On October 5, 1944, he was "Qualified Driver Operator Class "C". That is a driver/operator of an armoured vehicle.

Towards the end of the war, he gets another 10 days of leave and spends it in the United Kingdom. When he returns, his unit is located between Cloppenburg and Oldenburg in Germany. After the liberation of the Netherlands, the Canadians had fought their way through Germany with the aim of conquering the militarily important North Sea ports of Wilhelmshaven and Bremen.

Despite the fact that the war is coming to an end, the Germans still offered a lot of resistance. That was accompanied by heavy losses on the side of the Canadian infantry in particular.

But even as an artilleryman you were not safe, according to the regiment's war diary of May 1, 1945:

"Wet and cold again with some snow and hail. A very bad day for the Regiment. Major J Else, OC 21 Battery and three of his crew members were killed when their armoured vehicle was blown up by a mine and Gunner Terhune was injured. We had the hope of moving further today, but the roads were so bad in some places that driving heavy vehicles didn't work, even jeeps got stuck."

In addition to Major Jim Else, the three Gunners Thomas Rapier, Ambrose Coulas and Earl Hoover are also killed. They were temporarily buried in Sandhatten and were reburied in March 1946 on the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten. Here they lie together in plot 11. On the gravestones of Else, Rapier and Hoover, the date of death is May 1, 1945, on Coulas' May 2, 1945.

His family has the text "Always in our hearts" engraved in his gravestone. In 1994, Rapier Lake, Manitoba was named after him.

Awards:
1939-45 Star
France & Germany Star
War Medal
Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp

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Sources:

ancestry.ca

Wikipedia

<https://www.cwgc.org>