Reid, Gordon Clayton (Private) 09 E 10



Gordon Clayton Reid was born on July 21, 1910, in Shelburne, Ontario, about 100 km northwest of Toronto. His parents, Albert Nelson Reid (1883–1942) and Margaret Ann McCoy (1888–1960), were both from the southern part of Hastings County, Ontario, about 250 km northeast of Toronto. They married in 1908 and had eight children, six of whom lived past the age of one: Nelson, Gordon, Ethel, Willard, and the twins Edith and Minerva. The family was Protestant and belonged to the United Church of Canada.

Gordon's parents were married in Marmora, in Hastings County. Not long after the birth of their eldest son, Nelson, they moved to Shelburne. After a few years, they returned to Hastings County, where they lived in several places. Around 1918, the family moved to the city of Belleville, which was experiencing strong economic growth after World War I. In the early 1930s, after the stock market crash of 1929 and during the ensuing economic depression, the family moved to Hamilton, where there was probably more work to be found.



Southern Ontario.
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Gordon attended *Belleville Public School* and left after seventh grade, when he was 16 years old. He then worked in various temporary jobs, including a year as a truck driver. For the last two and a half years before he enlisted in the military, he worked as a sheet metal worker at a *Canadian Westinghouse Company* factory in Hamilton. He was a member of the North American trade union *United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America*.

On August 12, 1942, Gordon enlisted in the army in Toronto after being drafted under the *National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA)*. His enrolment form lists the incorrect date of birth, July 21, 1911, which subsequently remained his official birth date in military records. During his medical examination, it was determined that his physical condition was sufficient for him to enter service,

although he frequently suffered from colds and his teeth were in very poor condition. His evaluation form stated that he was highly intelligent — he scored 161 on a scale of 211 on the M-test, which was used during recruit selection to assess learning ability and aptitude. An officer wrote on the form: "Apparently never had much opportunity — seems reliable and capable."



In late August 1942, Gordon was assigned to the *A4 Canadian Artillery Training Centre* in Brandon, Manitoba, where he received his basic and artillery training. His time in Brandon was an eventful period. In early October, he spent a week in the military hospital due to an abscess in his jaw; he may have received his false teeth at that time. On November 14, he married Gladys Theresa Parkinson, who was six years his junior. And a month and a half later, on December 28, his father died of stomach cancer in Hamilton.

After his training, Gordon was assigned to the 25th Field Regiment of the Artillery Corps. This unit played a role in home defense and had military bases throughout Western Canada. Gordon was stationed in Nanaimo, Alberni, Vernon, and Prince George in British Columbia, among other places, but spent most of his time as an NRMA soldier in Wainwright, Alberta. In Wainwright, he earned several driver's certifications; on July 31, 1944, he reached the highest category — Group C — as a *Driver Mechanic*.

On August 22, 1944, Gordon voluntarily enlisted in the active Canadian Army, which meant he could be deployed to the front lines. In late November, he was transferred from Wainwright to *No. 1 Transit Camp* in Windsor, Nova Scotia, a transit camp for soldiers being shipped to Europe. On December 23, he departed from Halifax for England, where he arrived on the last day of 1944.

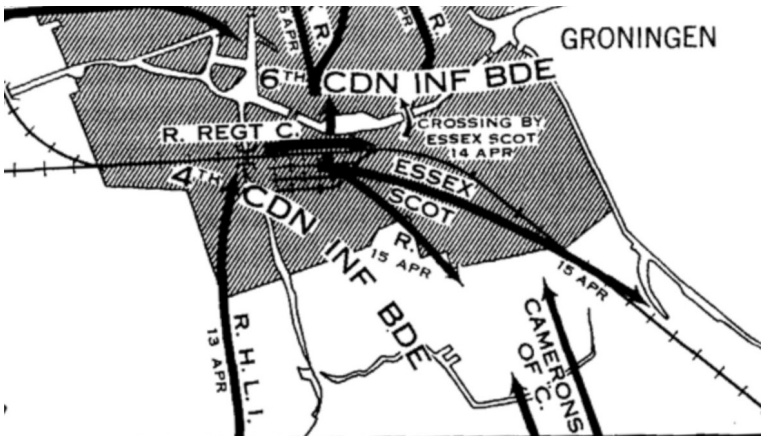
While Gordon was serving with the NRMA, his wife Gladys lived near him and moved with him whenever he was transferred. On December 3, 1943, their son Edward Albert was born in Vernon, British Columbia. In September 1944, Gladys moved with Edward — and four months pregnant with their second child — from Wainwright to Hamilton, where she initially went to live with her mother-in-law.

In England, Gordon was assigned to *2 CITR* — an infantry training regiment — in Aldershot, Hampshire. In late 1944 and early 1945, many soldiers were remustered from other army units to the infantry because it had suffered unexpectedly heavy losses in the fighting following D-Day on June 6, 1944. Gordon's file contains a report from his intake interview at 2 CITR, which states: "Has some trouble with legs and does not feel he can stand Rifleman's duties." The recommendation was to assign him as a Driver Mechanic in a transport unit.

Presumably Gordon underwent several weeks of infantry conversion training at 2 CITR. On February 22, two weeks after his daughter Patricia Anne was born, he was deployed to mainland Europe. On March 1, Gordon joined his unit, the *Royal Regiment of Canada*, part of the 4th Brigade of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division. The *Royals* took part in the Rhineland Offensive and were engaged in fierce fighting in the Hochwald forest, near Xanten in Germany. It seems unlikely that he participated in that battle — integrating reinforcements into the ranks took time, and there was little opportunity for that at the time. After Xanten was captured on March 11, the Royals were withdrawn to Kranenburg, on the northern edge of the Reichswald forest. By the end of March, they crossed the Rhine at Rees after a bridgehead had been established on the opposite bank of the river.

From April 2 through April 4, the Royals fought near Almen, about 10 km east of Zutphen, to cross the Twente Canal. They suffered heavy losses: 13 killed, 27 wounded, and 4 taken prisoner. This must have been Gordon's first combat experience.

On April 13, 1945, after Assen had been liberated, the 2nd Infantry Division advanced toward Groningen. The lead troops consisted of a column of tanks from the *Fort Garry Horse,* followed by 'Kangaroos' — tanks without turrets — with soldiers from the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, the *Rileys.* At the city limits, they came under fire from *Flak* anti-aircraft guns and machine guns. This marked the beginning of the Battle of Groningen, which would last until April 16.



Attack on the southern part of Groningen by the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division.

Source: C.P. Stacey, The Victory Campaign (1960).

The Rileys managed to break the resistance in the City Park and around the Paterswoldseweg, south of the Parkweg. They also tried, but failed, to capture the strategically important Parkbrug bridge over the Noord-Willemskanaal.

On April 14, the entire 4th Infantry Brigade was deployed in the southwest of Groningen. The Rileys fought on the north side of Paterswoldseweg. Between 4:00 and 4:30 a.m. two companies of the Royals managed to cross the canal south of the Parkbrug by boat, thereby opening a second front. By 7:00 a.m. they had secured the bridge.

For the rest of the day, the Royals were clearing the area east of the Noord-Willemskanaal and south of the Verbindingskanaal and the nearby railroad tracks. Late in the morning, the Essex Scottish were deployed to support the Royals. The Canadians fought fierce house-to-house battles to drive out the defenders — Germans and Dutch SS troops. The defenders had entrenched themselves on the top floors of the apartment buildings. The Canadians also faced heavy fire from strategically placed Flak anti-aircraft guns, which the Germans used to shell the Parkweg and the Parkbrug from the Hereweg. Only after several tanks from the Fort Garry Horse had neutralized the German guns were the Canadians able to advance and achieve their objective for the day.

Gordon was wounded during the fighting in Groningen on April 14, 1945. He was transported to No. 5 Canadian Field Dressing Station but died there from his injuries.

Gordon was buried at the Zuiderbegraafplaats cemetery in Assen. In 1946, he was reburied at the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten, where he now rests in grave 09.E.10. The inscription on his headstone reads

> THERE IS A LINK
> DEATH CANNOT SEVER
> LOVE AND REMEMBRANCE
> LAST FOR EVER

On August 12, 1944, exactly two years after he had enlisted, Gordon Reid was awarded a *Good Conduct Badge* for his impeccable service record. After his death, he was awarded the following Canadian military decorations: the *1939–1945 Star*, the *France and Germany Star*, the *War Medal 1939–1945*, and the *Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp*.

Gordon's wife, Gladys, did not remarry. She died in 1996, a few days after her eightieth birthday.



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