



Private Gael VISSER

Pte. Gael Visser was born on August 28, 1921 in Haskerhorn, Friesland, The Netherlands. In the 1930's the family Visser emigrated to Canada and made their home in the small town of Millgrove, Ontario. Throughout his life Gael was a very popular and gifted young man. He had great knowledge of the Bible and had a strong faith in God, which was easily read in his letters sent home during the war. A farmhand at heart, Gael was employed by Woodhall Dairy in Hamilton before the war. When he wasn't driving around on the tractor, ploughing the fields and more, he loved to trek through the forests around his home. He could play guitar and sing and was even taking violin lessons. But above all he loved hockey or skate for hours over the frozen canals. Gael enlisted in 1941, because it felt like the honourable thing to do! The propaganda on the home-front was very encouraging to the young men to sign up and go overseas with the armed forces. Most of all Gael was patriotic and willing to fight for his country. When he was in the army his mom said: "Gael is not a man to kill, he is so soft." Sure enough, he once tried to be transferred to First Aid, so that he would not have to shoot and kill the enemy. During training he had been through various camps. Before he went overseas he visited his sister in the U.S. Finally the day came for him to leave. His mother and grandfather took him to the Hamilton Central Railway Station, never to see him again....Gael first joined the Dufferin Haldimand Rifles in

1941, where he was promoted from Private to Lance Corporal. However he did not like of having such a responsibility over the lives of his men, so he got transferred as private to the Algonquin Regiment in 1942.

During the war, any letters that were written back home were censored of any military intelligence or information deemed unsafe for the eyes and ears of those back home. And so Gaele's family could never know exactly where he was or what he was doing. From the letter he wrote from April 16 they could figure out that he was somewhere in the eastern part of The Netherlands

"April 16, 1945

. . . I am back deep in enemy territory. The country is very flat. Please let me know if you received my Victory bond. If I get a pass, I'll go to England. I should get time off in two weeks. If Friesland has been liberated, I'll go there. Dad, a farmer in Almelo, Gelderland told me he sent his milk to the same person you used to go to. The disadvantage of fighting in a canal is that the German side has the higher wall and they can shoot down at us. We move along blood-soaked ditches at night. The soil is soggy, and it's hard to move. If God wills, I'll write a little more next time. Until then, under his wings my soul shall abide."

Love, Gaele

On April 23, 1945, Gaele and his company were clearing buildings of the enemy near Willemshaven, Germany. On that day Gaele entered into a building in front of his commanding officer, and in the doorway, he was gunned down. It was one week before the Algonquin Regiment would stop fighting and two weeks before Germany would fully surrender. Gaele was first buried in Germany before moved to the Netherlands