

**Chapman, Richard Harker**  
**Private**  
**South Saskatchewan Regiment**  
**Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**  
**L/13363**



*Jean and James Chapman*

Richard Harker Chapman was born 31 March 1915 at Ponteix in southwestern Saskatchewan. His father James Harker Chapman was an American of English stock, and married Mary Jean Freeland of Irish heritage at Buffalo, New York in 1909. The Presbyterian couple migrated from Toronto to Western Canada in 1914 where they farmed in the Swift Current area and raised their family of six children: Elmer, Donald, Leona, Richard, Jim and Gerald. Father James Harker was a grain buyer and mother Mary Jean ran a rooming house for many years.

Richard and some of his siblings were likely born in the Hospital Gabriel De Saint Joseph (pictured) at Ponteix, which was originally called Notre Name D'Auvergne until the town name change in 1914. Richard was active in sports growing up, including baseball, hockey, bowling, golf and hunting.



The Chapman family moved to Estevan in 1928 where Richard attended



Valley View School, completing grade 8 before going to work full time age seventeen. He was an apprentice butcher for several years during the Great Depression, earning \$20 weekly. Richard struck out on his own as an independent butcher in

1938, increasing his income four-fold. Richard decided to join the Army with some pals after World War Two broke out and planned to return to Estevan and open a General Store with one of his brothers when the war was over.

Richard attested 17 June 1940 at Estevan, age 25. His medical examination recorded him as being 5'7" tall, 150 lbs with fair complexion, blue eyes and light brown hair. Richard completed his basic training in Winnipeg that summer and was home in uniform dress when a family photo was taken.



*Chapman Family Estevan, Saskatchewan 1940. Front Row L-R: Don, Leona, Richard, Jean, Gerald. Back Row: James, Elmer, Jim*

Richard was taken on strength by his home battalion the South Saskatchewan Regiment (SSR) 16 October 1940 and joined them in Toronto for advanced infantry training. There is a note in Richard's service file dated 7 November 1940 that he was given permission to marry with no mention of the woman's name. The couple either ran out of time to wed or broke off their engagement before Richard shipped out overseas the next month with his regiment, disembarking in the U.K. Christmas Day, 25 December 1940.

Recognizing Richard's work history, he was enrolled in a Butcher's course April 1941 in the U.K. In 1942 responsibility for catering and other support functions was switched from the regimental level to the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC). Richard was held back in the U.K. when elements of the SSR and other 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division battalions participated in the disastrous Dieppe Raid that summer. He was attached to the RCASC in May 1943 while remaining posted to the SSR. Richard's older brothers Don and Jim were serving overseas by then, with Don rising to the rank of Lieutenant in the Canadian Army and Jim a Leading Aircraftman (LAC), Royal Canadian Air Force (R.C.A.F.). Richard may have been able to spend some of his leave time with his brother Jim while they were stationed in the U.K.



*LAC Jim Chapman – R.C.A.F.*

Richard was given an assessment in spring 1944, with the interviewing officer writing in his personnel file: "Responsible, capable man who learns new duties very quickly... Very adaptable – can fit in almost anywhere. Good tradesman and soldier". The SSR and 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which included the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada and Les Fusiliers Mont Royal Regiments, were held back from the June 1944 D-Day Normandy landings. Richard was with the SSR when they disembarked in France around 8 July. 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade moved through the rubble of bombed out Caen and were formed up for an attack on St. Andre-sur-Orne 20 July 1944. The SSR suffered 208 casualties that day in heavy fighting and were taken out of battle to reform around Verrieres. Richard was attached to his Regimental Headquarters and kept busy trying to scrounge beef to feed his hungry comrades who had mostly been living on Army field rations, according to a letter from his mother Jean.



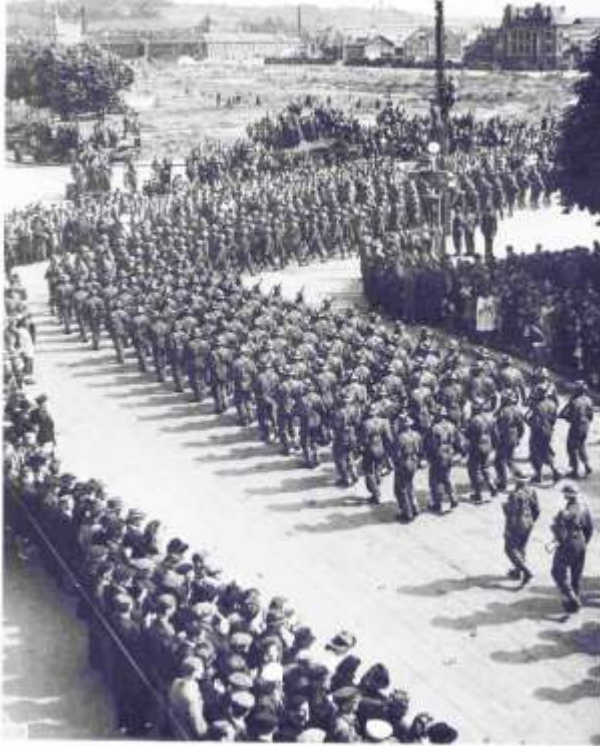
*RCASC soldier cooking a beef roast in the field, Normandy 1944*

The SSR were in the centre of the four mile long start line for Operation TOTALIZE in which 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Corps was to break through German lines. Their orders were to take Rocquancourt, supported by concentrated artillery fire from regiments up to the Army Group level. At 23:00 hours on 7 August 1944 the bombing commenced with the armoured column and infantry moving forward shortly afterward. The SSR achieved their objective, at the cost of 45 casualties while capturing 40 enemy prisoners.

*SSR Soldiers, Rocquancourt, France August 1944*



*Rocquancourt, France*



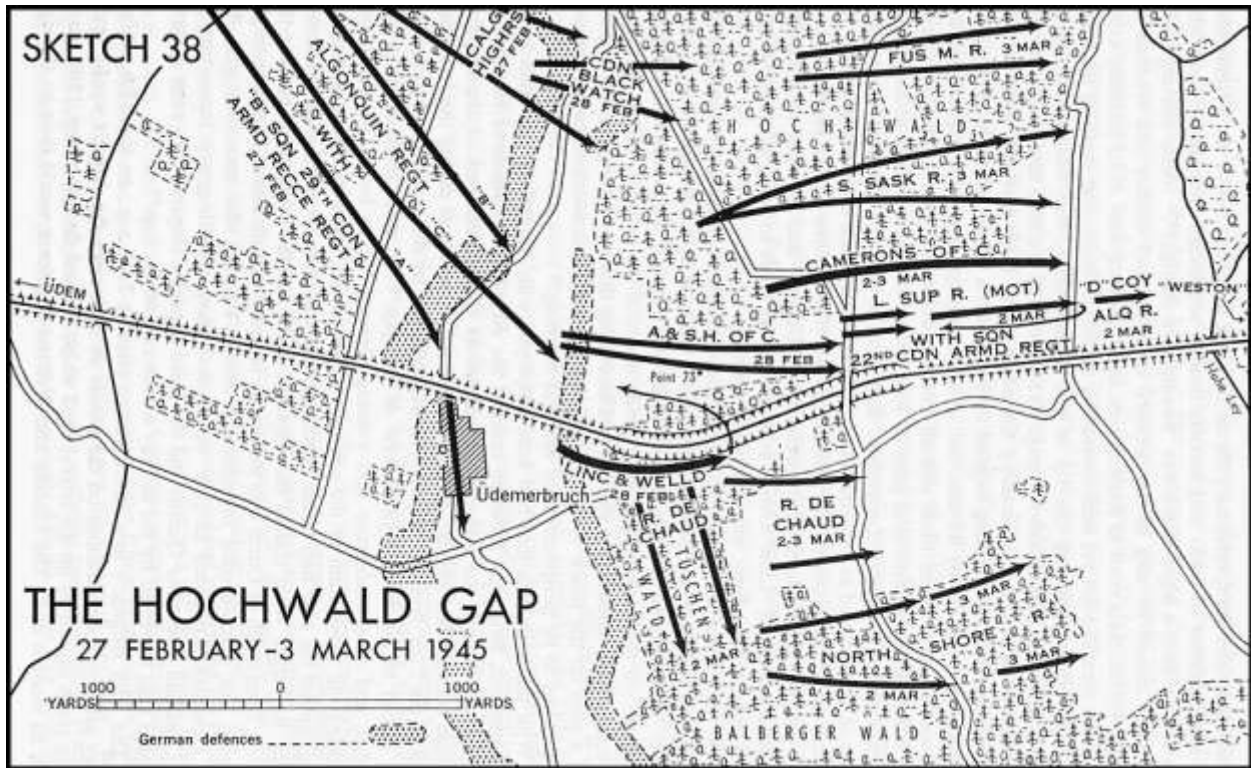
The SSR fought at Falaise that month and after helping drive the Germans out of Normandy were given the honour as part of 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division to liberate Dieppe in early September 1944.

They participated in the Battle for the Scheldt in October and were assigned to static operations around Nijmegen, Netherlands in November 1944. Most of the activity in the area consisted of patrolling and sniping against a well-entrenched enemy.

The Allies finally broke out from their winter positions 8 February 1945 with the Operation VERITABLE offensive, which involved the use of Kangaroos (RAM tanks) to transport

infantry troops. The SSR travelled through battered Cleve, Germany which had been heavily shelled and bombed. Once the Reichswald had been taken they were staged around Bedburg, Germany for the next phase, Operation BLOCKBUSTER. 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade was ordered to take the high ground just south of Calcar and crossed the starting line at 04:00 hours 26 February 1945. Ground conditions were very muddy with intense rain while the enemy provided heavy mortar and small arms fire. Some of the Kangaroos bogged down in the mud and the troops had to transfer to other vehicles. All of 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade's objectives were quickly taken with 68 prisoners and approximately 100 enemy dead.

The SSR and 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade's next major attack as part of BLOCKBUSTER was at the Hochwald Gap 3 March 1945. 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade were to clear the woods to the east side, with the Camerons' first attempt to get into the Forest met with heavy fire and opposition, forcing them back. The SSR began the second attack on the stronghold supported by a squadron of Sherbrooke Fusiliers tanks and were able to secure their objectives while sustaining a number of casualties. A total of 24 prisoners of war and 18 enemy dead were counted. The Fusiliers Mont Royal passed through to secure the eastern edges of the Forest, later supported by the Camerons in a mop up operation. The SSR advanced until forced to settle down in a group of farm buildings about one thousand yards from the outskirts of town.



Later that day, a SSR Headquarters Echelon suffered one killed and three wounded (two seriously) when a shell landed in their area.

Instructions regarding preparation of War Diaries (which will be kept from first copy of substantiation, creation or modification) are contained in F.S. Regs. Vol. 1.

**WAR DIARY**  
OR  
**INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY**

(Exact heading not required)  
South Saskatchewan Regiment

Original, duplicate and triplicate to be forwarded to C. I.'s 2nd Division for deposit.

Title pages will be prepared.

FIVE

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Observations	Remarks, references to Appendixes and initials
HOCHWALD E. 043411 1-4304	3 Mar 45		<p>patrol to area HQ 056419. B and C coys in contact with other every hour.</p> <p>At 1900 hrs the Fus HQ reported only one of their day objectives taken. All other coys were very close to their objectives, but because of heavy shelling, digging in was ordered.</p> <p>At 2330 hrs A coys fighting patrol under command of Lt Kerr reported in. An enemy MG was found in the bidgs and the gunner was killed.</p> <p>During the day the bn lost 1 officer and 5 ORs killed and 1 officer and 33 ORs wounded. The bn took 35 PRs and killed 35 Ferries. 13 civilians were sent to the rear area.</p> <p>Pl Coy suffered 1 killed and 3 wounded, 2 of them seriously, when a shell landed in their area.</p> <p>Weather: Overcast with scattered showers.</p>	
	4 Mar 45		<p>Contact patrols carried on during the night with HQR. Heavy shelling continued throughout the night.</p> <p>At 0500 hrs two hrs were sent to Camp Post from A coys. They were identified as coming from 16 Palschen Sugar Fact. They were sent to H. O. Cdn Inf Bde under escort.</p> <p>At 0800 hrs an officer from HQ visited Camp Post to see if there was any paths or roads to be opened. After contacting H. O. Cdn Inf Bde he was given the job of opening the road with 200 lbs shells.</p>	

Richard Chapman was among the casualties that day. He was taken to 18 Canadian Field Ambulance and died of his wounds, age 29.



*German Prisoners of War burying Canadian Casualties, Hochwald Gap 3 March 1945*

Private R.H. Chapman was temporarily buried at Calcar, Germany and later relocated to Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery near Nijmegen, Netherlands, grave reference **XXI. G. 7.**



The inscription on his headstone reads:

THE JOYS THAT HE MISSED  
ON LIFE'S HIGHWAY  
MAY BE A FIND  
IN GOD'S GARDEN OF REST

*Regina Leader-Post March 1945*



*Photo courtesy of Frans van Cappellen*

Richard Chapman's campaign medals:

- 1939-45 Star
- France-Germany Star
- Defence Medal
- War Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal/Clasp

**KILLED:** Pte. Richard (Dick) Chapman, R.C.A.S.C., attached to the South Saskatchewan Regiment, was killed in action in Germany March 3, according to word received by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. James H. Chapman, Estevan. He enlisted with the S.S.R., July 1, 1940, and landed in England Christmas Day in 1940. He was born in Ponteix March 31, 1915, and came with his parents to Estevan in 1928. He attended Valley View school. Besides his parents, one sister, Mrs. Robert H. Sands of Estevan; four brothers, Lieut. Donald Chapman, overseas; LAC. James, R.C.A.F., overseas; Coder Gerald, R.C.N.V.R., and Elmer, of Estevan, survive.

Chapman Island in Sisipuk Lake, Saskatchewan was named after Richard as a geo-memorial site.





Biography by Jim Little, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources Consulted:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Veteran Affairs Canada – Canadian Virtual War Memorial

Ancestry public trees

Newspapers.com

Ponteix, Saskatchewan Hospital picture and information <http://www.prairie-towns.com/ponteix-images.html>

Valley View School, Estevan, Saskatchewan picture <http://www.prairie-towns.com/estevan-images.html>

South Saskatchewan Regiment cap badge, war diary, images and information <http://www.saskatchewanmilitarymuseum.ca/SSR/>

Buchanan, G.B. (1957). The March of the Prairie Men. Digital version: <http://www.saskatchewanmilitarymuseum.ca/SSR/history/mpm.html>

Royal Canadian Army Service Corps information and picture <https://www.junobeach.org/canada-in-wwii/articles/supplying-canadas-field-army-overseas/the-royal-canadian-army-service-corps/>

The Rhineland Operation Blockbuster map and information <https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/UN/Canada/CA/Victory/Victory-19.html>

Hochwald Gap graves picture 3 March 1945 <https://canadianheroes.org/private-loren-nelson/the-battle-of-the-hochwald-gap/4>

<https://svwm.ca/casualty-display/?ID=A000007126>

\* If you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact [info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl)

Richard's mother Jean Chapman wrote a letter to the Canadian Army almost three years after her son died. While she felt fortunate that her other sons who served survived the war, she was still heartbroken over the death of Richard, who she thought should have been away on leave in England when he was killed. Jean passed away two years later.

*Regina Leader-Post 1950*

*PA*  
 D.K. W. 405-C-29748  
 R. 4(B)  
 F. B. Rading  
 Dear Sir

*Estevan Sask  
 Jan 23/48*

*Noted WSK (W/S)  
 No reply initiated*

**P.A.**

*Did intend writing sooner, thanking you for the nice photo you sent me of my dear son's grave L. 13363, Pte Richard Harker Chapman. It was indeed a terrible shock to me when I received word of his death. As he was a butcher in the 2nd Div. he had no right to be where he was sent by a cruel officer from Duxbury Sask. he had signed up the latter part of June 1940, and left Toronto Dec. 1940 for overseas, when he should of been on his way home for his first furlough. The dear lad he was done out of everything while in the service. on July 6/44 he went into France, he might of had a 90 in Brussels, but I know he should of given a home day leave to England on Dec 1/44, instead he was done out of it, and mit*

## Rites held at Estevan

ESTEVAN, Sask., (Staff). — Funeral service for Mrs. James Chapman, 57, who died in hospital Friday following a stroke suffered on the street the previous week, was conducted here Sunday in St. Paul's United church by Rev. Ellis King. Burial was in Estevan cemetery.

The Rebekah lodge held a service in the Estevan funeral home prior to the church service and the Canadian Legion ladies' auxiliary held a service in the church.

Born Mary Jean Freeland at Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, Mrs. Chapman was married at Buffalo, New York, in 1909. The couple lived in Toronto until 1914 when they moved to Swift Current. They also lived at Governor, Admiral, and Ponteix before coming to Estevan in 1928.

Organizations in which Mrs. Chapman was active included the Rebekah lodge, of which she was recording secretary, the ladies' auxiliary of the Canadian Legion, the women's auxiliary and the missionary society of St. Paul's United church.

Surviving are her husband; four sons, Elmer, Donald, James, and Gerald, all of Estevan, and a daughter, Mrs. Leona Sands, Estevan. A son, Richard, was killed in Second World War. There are two sisters, Mrs. Margaret Johnston, Ponteix, and Emily Freeland, Toronto; also a brother, James Freeland, or Capreol, Ont.



November 2016 - cemetery find

## Richard Harker Chapman

(L13363)

*Richard Harker Chapman was born on 1915-03-31 in Penton, Saskatchewan and in 1945-03-03 he died in Germany because of wounds received in combat. He was originally buried behind a shoe factory in Germany before being moved to the Grossbeck Canadian Cemetery. He was the son of James Harker Chapman and Mary Jean Chapman. He was a private in the South Saskatchewan Regiment.*

*We should remember these soldiers because they gave their lives for ours. They were willing to die so that other people would live. The soldiers here today succeeded to save others lives but sadly they lost theirs. The soldiers lying here today did not know the people they were saving, but were brave enough to give up their life. Many of these soldiers died before age 20. They gave up their whole life just so others could live theirs. They are the superheroes of this world. Thank you*

This document was written by students from AJNorth International School, not all of the above information could be cross-referenced.