

**Allen, Arnold Reilston**  
**Trooper**  
**South Alberta Regiment**  
**29<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured**  
**Reconnaissance Regiment**  
**G4546**



**SOUTH ALBERTA REGIMENT**  
(29th Cdn Arm'd Recce Regt.)

Arnold Reilston Allen was born 19 July 1923 in Bayfield, Westmoreland County, New Brunswick, a small community on the Northumberland Strait, near Cape Tormentine, where he spent most of his young life until he went into the army in 1943. He was the son of Herman Allen, a carpenter and Minnie, both born in 1898 and married in Port Elgin, New Brunswick on 29 May 1918. They also had one daughter, Ina May who was five years younger than Arnold. The family belonged to the United Church of Canada.



*Tormentine, postcard that was sent to Anna van Overbeek after war.*

Arnold went to the local school for eight years and left at the age of 15. In 1942, six months before he joined up at the age of 19, he took up a trade apprenticeship as a machinist in Amherst, Nova Scotia, the nearest town to Bayfield. It went well and he hoped to continue it after the war. Like his father, he was interested in carpentry.

On 4 February 1943 he travelled to Fredericton, New Brunswick and registered in the army as a Private and began his basic training. He was 5ft 10ins tall and weighed 160lbs; he had brown eyes and black hair. His health was good and he was classified as A1. Arnold very soon met Gwendolyn Eileen Chase in Fredericton and was given permission to marry her in September, but in October he was moved to Camp Borden in Ontario and remained a single man.



During the next six months, he trained as a Gunner Operator and qualified in February 1944. In April he returned to Nova Scotia and the Windsor Transit Camp, preparing for the journey to the United Kingdom, where he arrived on 7 May. Placed with the Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit, he received his C certificate as a Wireless Operator and qualified as a Tank Gunner in August.



Arnold arrived in France on 8 September and a month later joined the 29<sup>th</sup> Canadian Army Reconnaissance Regiment, the South Alberta Regiment (SAR). The Battle of Normandy was over in which the tanks of the SAR had distinguished themselves, but with a heavy loss of men. The regiment moved eastward to Belgium and the Netherlands, having taken part in the fighting to free Ostende in the second week of September.

When Arnold joined them on or about 8 October, the SAR was near the Leopold canal in Zeeuws Vlaanderen - the month-long Battle of the Scheldt had begun and Arnold experienced his first taste of war.



In the middle of the month, the tanks were moved to the north of Antwerp and on 20 October, Operation Suitcase began with the drive north to Bergen op Zoom (NL).

At first, there was little enemy resistance but the mines and roadblocks were a considerable hindrance. As the week progressed, fierce fighting developed before Bergen op Zoom was finally taken on 27 October, by the tanks of the South Albertas and the infantry of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment.



THE SUPREME COMMANDER VISITS CANADIAN TROOPS

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, accompanied by General Crerar, inspects a guard of honour of the 29th Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (The South Alberta Regiment) at Best, near 's-Hertogenbosch, Holland, on 29 November 1944. The guard commander is Capt. K. E. Perrin, killed later in the Rhineland battle.

In the winter months, troops were stationed north of the river Maas in the Dutch province of North Brabant, carrying out regular patrols in order to prevent enemy incursion across the river.

*Photo: Victory Campaign, Col Stacey*

On 29 November, the South Alberta Regiment formed a guard of honour for General Eisenhower in Best, near Eindhoven.

At the end of January 1945, with snow on the ground, the SAR took part in the Kapelsche Veer battle which took place at the site of a ferry on the Maas river, near the village of Kapelle. According to the Official Summary of the Canadian Army, there were 'five icy days of thoroughly nasty fighting' with heavy casualties on both sides resulting from this action.

Soon after this, Arnold Allen was billeted in the home of the family A. van Overbeek in the village of Nieuwkuik near Heusden, not far from Nijmegen. Piet van Overbeek, then a child, remembers how warmly the family felt about Arnold and his comrades. The two families corresponded for some time.

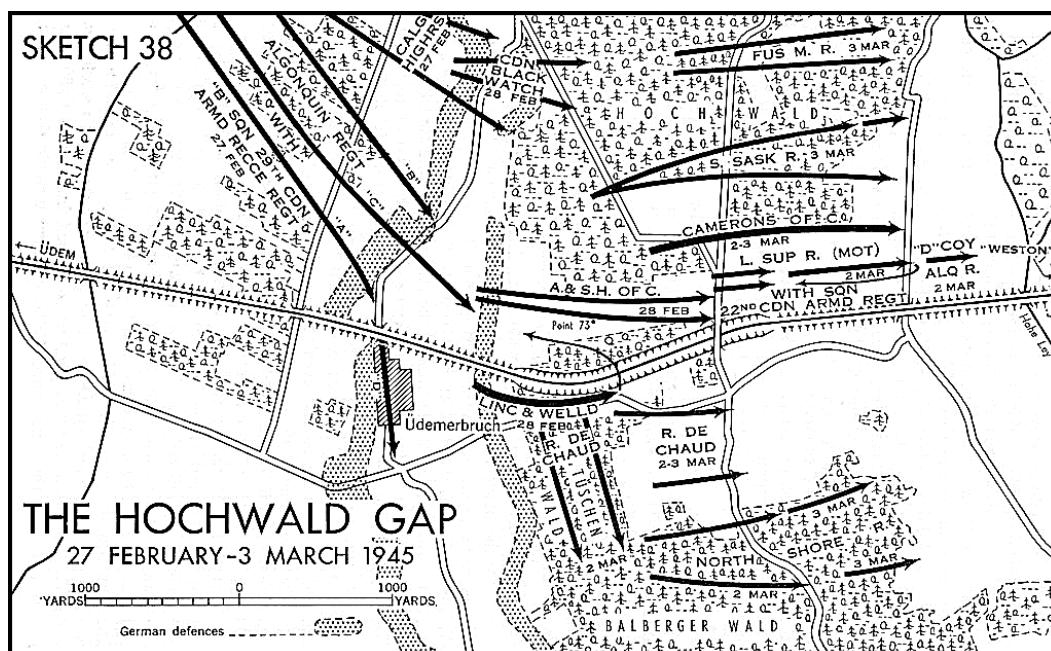


*Canadian soldiers at the house of the 'van Overbeek' family*

On 8 February, Operation Veritable was launched from the Nijmegen area; massive forces were involved in the invasion into Germany, the intention being to clear the enemy out of the area between the rivers Rhine and Maas to the eastern side of the Rhine. Weather conditions were mostly bad for this month-long operation - heavy rain had caused rivers to overflow and flat land was flooded often to a depth of a meter; vehicles quickly turned the forest floor to impassable mud.. The Germans, fighting on their own territory, held on grimly.

Afterwards, General Eisenhower commented that this 'was some of the fiercest fighting of the whole war' and 'a bitter slugging match in which the enemy had to be forced back, yard by yard.'

The 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Division of which the SAR was a part, was engaged in Operation Veritable. Once the Reichswald was taken, the last stage, under the name Operation Blockbuster began on 22 February. The old Roman city of Xanten near the Rhine was approached but the Hochwald ridge blocked the way; this forested area, two kilometres deep and four kilometres wide, with a gap in between, over which a single track railway ran. It would take nearly two weeks to capture the area and open the way to Xanten. The South Alberta tanks were called in to assist the Algonquin infantry regiment.



Between 4-9 March 1945 an action took place around the village of Veen, some five kilometres to the south of Xanten. It was thought to be lightly defended but the Canadians found themselves faced with heavy enemy fire from houses which had been turned into pillboxes. The war diary described the fighting as bitter and fierce and the German resistance as 'fanatic.'

Arnold Reilston Allen was killed in this action on 5 March and was buried the next day nearby, in the Sonsbeck military cemetery, 'on the north edge of town, behind the chapel.'

On 22 August 1945, Arnold was reburied in the Netherlands at the Canadian War Cemetery, Groesbeek, grave reference **IV. D. 6.**

#### AWARDS

- 1939-45 Star
- France and Germany Star
- War Medal
- CVSM and Clasp

After the war the family van Overbeek adopted Arnold's grave.



*Mother Cornelia van Overbeek (left) and father Adriaan van Overbeek (right) with their eldest son*







Life story: Gwyn de Jong, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Acknowledgements:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Official History of Canadian Army: The Victory Campaign, Vol.3 Col. E.P. Stacey

Wikipedia

Photo's provided by Piet van Overbeek

\* If you are related to Arnold Allen, please contact [info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl)

The van Overbeek family would like to get in touch!



*Left at the grave in 2015*

