

Albert Guy Andre, Corporal Governor General's Foot Guards

Albert Guy Andre was born on October 20th, 1921 in Smiths Falls, Ontario Canadaⁱ. He was the youngest of six children of Joseph and Philomene Andre. The Andre's were a strong Roman Catholic family. Like many other young men during the Depression years, Albert left school at the age of 16 and later enlisted in the army at the age of 18 working as an engineer. He had 2 years of high school completed before enlisting in the military. The Andre family contributed four members of the family to enlist and fight in the war.



Photo from Veteran Affairs

Prior to the outbreak of war in 1939, Albert attended annual military training in 1938 when he was a member "C" Coy of the Lanark & Renfrew Scottish Regiment (LRSC). Shortly after the outbreak of war, Albert enlisted in the Canadian army on December 4th 1939 in Pembroke Ontarioⁱⁱ. Was T.O.S. on transfer from L & R.S.R. and was transferred to the Governor General's Foot Guards (G.G.F.G) on April 7th 1940.

Albert passed his training course to become a tank driver on January 22nd 1942. On August 4th 1942 Albert qualified as a Driver Class I.C. class III (W). On April 6th 1943 he was in a course for driving a truck and passed the course in May 13th 1943ⁱⁱⁱ. Albert changed his next in kin from his dad to his mom just before being sent overseas to the United Kingdom (U.K.). While in the U.K. Albert was in another course to become a gun operator. The course started on the 15th April 1944 and ended on 25th April 1944. Albert would successfully pass his course and be ready for the action that would take place after the Canadians landed on the Normandy Beaches in June 1944.

Albert was a gun operator on a Sherman tank actively participating in the fighting throughout Normandy, France in the summer months of 1944 as well as in Belgium. The first time he was fighting was on August 15th 1944 then again ten days later. Albert and the GGFG's would see continuous action until he was killed in the fighting along the Rhine River in eastern part of Holland.

Albert and the rest of the Governor General's Foot Guards slowly moved through the Hochwald Forest facing stiff opposition in the fight for the Hochwald Gap.^{iv} The Hochwald Gap was a fight to get the flat lands along the Rhine. This joint tank and infantry action was called Operation Blockbuster. During the battle the Canadians were exposed to considerable German mortar, anti-tank and artillery fire because the Germans knew the Hochwald Forest like the back of their hand. On the 27th of February the G.G.F.G. were relieved by the Queen's Own Rifles and allowed to move to an area near Kersel for some much needed rest. The fighting here in the Hochwald

Forest had been bitter as the German army was backed up against the Rhine trying to hold off the Allied offensive that was preparing to push into Germany proper.^v

In July 1944 Albert Guy Andre landed on the Normandy Beaches as a part of the new armor that will push deep into France then push eastward into Holland. On March 1st, 1945, phase one of Operation Blockbuster tasked the Canadians to use night fall to their advantage and head towards the northernmost offensive area near the town of Calcar located due east of the Rhine River and Germany.^{vi} Immediately the Regiment came under heavy shelling and the tank crews became disoriented in the mayhem forcing the G.G.F.G. to stop opposite the town of Udem but still under fire from enemy snipers. Udem is southwest of the town of Calcar and is strategic as it is on the railway line that moves east-west and north-south. The Canadians spent the night with minefields under them and artillery above them.



Map courtesy of the Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards

In the early hours of the morning on 2 March the main force of Canadian armour would head straight through the clearing that divided the forest in two. Another unit of armour and infantry would head towards the town of Udem.^{vii} Udem was even deadlier than Calcar, as the town had vast deep ditches leading up to Udem. The ditches were designed so that the Canadians couldn't drive through the town without falling into the ditches. The Canadians would have to take a narrow road between the ditches and when the Canadians moved to control the road the Germans attacked. According to the Regimental History of the Governor

General's Foot Guards the enemy positions were supported by anti-tank guns which devastated the tanks that were engaged in the attack. The battle involving the GGFG and the infantry of the Lake Superior Regiment raged on throughout the early morning hours with the tanks and crews suffering heavy casualties. It is here on the edge of what is known as the Hochwald Gap that Corporal Albert Guy Andre's tank was "holed" during the battle killing him instantly.^{viii}

It should be mentioned that the Canadians had difficulty using air superiority in the engagement as the weather was poor. When the weather cleared the Canadians were supported by Typhoon fighter bombers and called it in to where the German tanks position which resulted in several days of bombing of the town of Xanten.^{ix} By the end of the bombing about 15% of the city still stood among the rubble and remaining city. On March 10th Xanten, which was directly on the Rhine River was captured which enabled the Canadians to link up with the British army. The battle for the Hochwald Gap was finally over and two months later the war in Europe had ended with Germany's

unconditional surrender. The battle of the Hochwald Gap was one of the bloodiest battles in the history of the entire war.^x

Albert Guy Andre received the following medals: the 1939-1945 Star, France & Germany Campaign Star, the Defence Medal, and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal (C.V.S.M.) & Clasp. His medals were split up between his mom and dad. Albert Guy Andre is buried in Groesbeek Canadian Military Cemetery in the Neatherlands. His burial reference is Grave XVII, Row C, and Plot 12.^{xi} Albert was 24 years old when he was killed in action.

By: Isaac Taylor

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ⁱ Military file of Albert Guy Andre, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Record Group (RG) 24, Volume 25332.

ⁱⁱ Military file of Albert Guy Andre

ⁱⁱⁱ Military file of Albert Guy Andre

^{iv} Military File of Albert Guy Andre

^v The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards, (Ottawa: Mortimer Limited, 1948) pg. 184

^{vi} Battle for the Hochwald Gap (February 26th – March 10th). Website accessed: [http://www.theotaku.com/worlds/someguy_pro/view/259608/battle_for_the_hochwald_gap_\(February_26_-_March_10\)/](http://www.theotaku.com/worlds/someguy_pro/view/259608/battle_for_the_hochwald_gap_(February_26_-_March_10)/) Accessed on January, 17th, 2013

^{vii}Ibid

^{viii} The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards. pg. 186

^{ix}Battle for the Hochwald Gap (February 26th- March 10th)

^xIbid

^{xi} The Canadian Virtual War Memorial. Website accessed: <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2662540?Albert%20Andre> Accessed on January 17th, 2013