

**Babeckis, Pius**

**Rifleman**

**The Regina Rifle Regiment**

**Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**

**M/107494**



Pius Babeckis was born 27 August 1904 at Marijampole, Lithuania. Pius grew up on a farm and his father died while he was still young. Pius's education was interrupted during the Great War and he quit after 7 years of public school, age fifteen. He joined the Lithuanian Cavalry and rose to the rank of Sergeant after two years with them.



*Lithuanian Cavalry*

Pius emigrated to Canada independently in 1928, leaving his Roman Catholic mother Elizabeth behind. He had a sister-in-law at Sydney Mines, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia (NS) and took employment there as a coal miner.



*Sydney Mines, NS circa 1930*

Pius taught himself to speak English and was naturalized as a Canadian citizen in 1934. He migrated west to Alberta (AB) in 1937, living at Falun near Wetaskiwin where he farmed in the summers and worked for the Blue Point Coal Mine south of Edmonton in the winters for several years. Pius had his 1<sup>st</sup> Class Miner's Certificate when he decided to join the Canadian Army.



*Edmonton area coal miner*

Pius attested 2 April 1943 at Edmonton, age 38. His medical examination described him as being 5'9" tall, 152 lbs with brown eyes and fair complexion, also noting he had an appendectomy in 1936. Pius was allocated to the Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA) and completed his basic training at Camrose, AB.

He was stationed at Elkins Barracks, Halifax, NS 13 June 1943 as a Gunner and assigned to their Light Anti-Aircraft "A" Battery. Pius was given Miner's leave that August and drafted for overseas service upon his return, reporting to the Transit Camp at Windsor, NS 31 December 1943.

Pius was re-interviewed at Windsor 27 January 1944, with his Army Examiner determining that he was not suitable for overseas service with the RCA, Armoured, or Infantry Corps given his low PULHEMS army test score and age approaching 40. Pius was still willing to serve in the Army so was re-allocated to the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (RCAMC) and sent to Peterborough, Ontario for retraining 16 March 1944. His next stop was Camp Borden for advanced training 1 July 1944.

Pius was cleared for overseas service that fall, disembarking 5 October 1944 in the UK where he reported to the Canadian General Reinforcement Unit. He was remustered a few weeks later from RCAMC to Infantry and assigned to the Rocky Mountain Rangers for training 27 October. Pius spent a few days admitted to 19 Canadian General Hospital in November and was sent to Northwest Europe at the end of January in the New Year, where he was taken on strength with The Regina Rifle Regiment (RRR) 24 February 1945.

The RRR, also known as the 'Farmer Johns' or Reginas, along with the other 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade battalions (The Royal Winnipeg Rifles and The Canadian Scottish) of 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division were among the first Commonwealth infantry units to land at Juno Beach (Courseulles-sur-Mer) and suffered heavy D-Day losses. The RRR battled their way through Normandy, helped liberate Channel ports and participated in the Battle for the Scheldt before being placed into static operations near Nijmegen, Netherlands in November 1944.

They finally moved out with their 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade and 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division 8 February 1945 under First Canadian Army as part of Operation VERITABLE. They advanced through bombed out Cleve, Germany mounted on Kangaroo armoured personnel carriers and spent five days clearing the Germans from Moyland Wood 16-21 February 1945. First The Regina Rifles and then The

Canadian Scottish had attacked but were stalemated and repulsed by determined German paratroopers. It fell to The Royal Winnipeg Rifles to finish the job. The RRR were at rest around Bedburg, Germany when Pius joined them as a replacement Rifleman. In summarizing events for February, the Regina's War Diarist commented that in addition to a number of casualties, they also experienced a high percentage of Battle Exhaustion cases.



*Moyland Wood, Germany February 1945*

The RRR and 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade were out of action during the next phase of the Rhine offensive, Operation BLOCKBUSTER.



The Allies decided to seize two crossings over the Rhine River with the main effort in the north in the Emmerich-Wesel sector for Operation PLUNDER. The Reginas were on the move the evening of 27 March, crossing the Rhine by means of a pontoon bridge that the engineers had constructed.

*Rhine River pontoon bridge 1945*

Pius got his first taste of battle with the Reginas at Emmerich at the end of March, with the three battalions of 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade suffering a combined 172 casualties, 44 of them fatal. 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade headed north from Emmerich to their next objectives, the liberation of Wehl and Zutphen, Netherlands. Pius was killed in action 5 April 1945 north of the Twente Canal in the Zutphen vicinity, age 40.

**KILLED IN ACTION**  
**Alberta Regiment**  
 BABECKIS, Pius, Rfn., M107494,  
 Miss Isabell Puida (niece), 4254  
 Jackson St., Detroit, Mich., U.S.A.

*Calgary Albertan May 1945*



1st Canadian Division				3rd Canadian Division			
1st Brigade	2nd Brigade	3rd Brigade	4th Brigade	1st Brigade	2nd Brigade	3rd Brigade	4th Brigade
ACR	PPCLI	Par. & PDR	8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C	FL of C	8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C
8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C	FL of C	8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C	FL of C	8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C
8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C	FL of C	8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C	FL of C	8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C
8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C	FL of C	8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C	FL of C	8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C
8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C	FL of C	8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C	FL of C	8th Wg. Bde	QOR of C

14th April, 1945.

Miss Isabell Puida,  
4254 Jackson Street,  
Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A.

Dear Miss Puida:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your uncle, M107404 Rifleman Pius Sabockis, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 5th day of April, 1945.

From official information we have received, your uncle was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement.

We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Yours sincerely,

(A.E. Telford),  
Major-General,  
Adjutant-General.

*mem x mother  
6-7-4-45*

The Canadian Army provided notice of Pius's death to his next of kin niece Isobel Puida but were unable to contact his mother Elizabeth in Russian occupied Lithuania.



Rifleman P. Babeckis was temporarily buried at Laag Keppel and later relocated to Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands, grave reference **XIX. C. 13.**

Pius Babeckis's campaign medals:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France-Germany Star
- War Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.



*Photo credit [www.lestweforget1945.org](http://www.lestweforget1945.org)*



Pius Babeckis is remembered as one of their local WW2 fallen at the Wetaskiwin, AB Cenotaph

*Wetaskiwin, AB Cenotaph*



**FACES TO GRAVES**

*Stichting Faces to Canadian  
War Graves Groesbeek*

Biography by Jim Little, Research Team Faces to Graves.

### Sources Consulted:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada, accessed through Ancestry.ca

Veteran Affairs Canada – Canadian Virtual War Memorial

Rifleman Pius Babeckis information <https://ww2memorial.nl/pius-babeckis-p92954.html>

Newspapers.com

Lithuanian Cavalry picture

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lietuvos\\_kavalerija.Lithuanian\\_cavalry.jpg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lietuvos_kavalerija.Lithuanian_cavalry.jpg)

Sydney Mines, NS coal mining 1930 picture <https://beatoninstitute.com/coal-mining-during-depression-2>

Edmonton, AB coal miner picture

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/mapping-edmonton-s-long-forgotten-coal-mines-1.3455285>

Kevin Lambie, Regina Rifles WWII <http://www.reginarifles.ca/index.htm>

Reid, Brian (2010). Named by the Enemy - A History of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles

Regina Rifles Moyland Wood information <https://www.junobeach.org/canada-in-wwii/articles/liberation-of-the-netherlands-and-capitulation-of-germany/regina-rifle-regiment-war-diary-16-18-february-1945/>

Rhine River pontoon bridge 1945 picture

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pontoon\\_bridge\\_Rhine\\_River\\_1945.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pontoon_bridge_Rhine_River_1945.jpg)

Operation Plunder information

<https://www.canadiansoldiers.com/history/battlehonours/northwesteurope/rhine.htm>

Zuehlke, Mark (2010). On To Victory – The Canadian Liberation of the Netherlands, March 23 – May 5, 1945

Zutphen & Deventer, Netherlands April 1945 map and information

<https://www.canadiansoldiers.com/history/battlehonours/northwesteurope/zutphen.htm>

Wetaskiwin, AB Cenotaph picture

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/national-inventory-canadian-memorials/details/4828>

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

OTTAWA, 3 February 1948.

DVA. 405-B-38169 (R.3(a))

Consul General,  
Lithuanian Consulate General,  
110 St. George Street,  
TORONTO 5, Ontario.

Re: M-107494 Rfmn. Pius BABECKIS  
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Dear Sir:

Receipt is acknowledged of your letter dated 27 January 1948, your file 3-B-217, regarding one Pijus Babeckas.

In reply thereto, you are advised from the information given it is believed he is the marginally named.

In this connection, you are further advised with deep regret he gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 5th day of April, 1945.

Yours truly,

AWD/RS

  
A. Director,  
War Service Records.