

**Bienvenue, Joseph Marcellin Gilles**

**Corporal**

**17<sup>th</sup> Duke of York's Royal Canadian Hussars**

**7<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Regiment**

**Royal Canadian Armoured Corps**

**D 3872**



Joseph Bienvenue was born in Stockholm, Saskatchewan, Canada on March 13, 1922. Later the family moved to St. Hyacinthe, Quebec. Father Ubald Hector was a labourer and lived from 1896 to 1953. Mother Orise Cote was born in America in 1897 and died in St. Hyacinthe in 1975. The family were members of the Roman-Catholic church and they had four children, three boys and one girl. Joseph was the eldest, next Joseph Louis Marcel was born, followed by Joseph Julien Jacques in 1928 and daughter Marie Rita Hugnette, who was from 1938. On the parents' headstone a son is also mentioned: Marcel, who lived from 1925 to 1985 and was married to Gisele Courchesne.

Stockholm, Joseph's birthplace, is a small village in the middle of South Canada, established by Swedish colonists in 1905. St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, is a small town in the east of Canada, in the south of Quebec, near the border with the USA. It has existed since 1748 and there has always been a flourishing agricultural industry.



Joseph went to Public School for six years and left school at the age of fourteen or fifteen. He was born in Canada and spoke both English and French. After leaving school he went to work as a farmhand on a mixed farm in St. Hyacinthe and a few years as a labourer at Ideal Bottling & Co. in St. Hyacinthe, Quebec. Joseph did not want to go back to this company

and neither did he want to return to a farm. He very much wanted to become a mechanic after his military service. He was the eldest of the family.

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RÉPONDRE AU LONG À TOUTES LES QUESTIONS APPLICABLES

ÉTAT des noms, âges et adresses, ou dates de décès, de tous les parents du défunt, à chacun des degrés spécifiés ci-dessous.

Degrés de parenté	PARENTS à signaler	TÉMOIGNAGE DU DÉCLARANT		ADRESSE AU LONG de chaque parent survivant, en regard de son nom, et date du décès de tout parent décédé
		NOM ET PRÉNOMS de tout parent de chacun des degrés mentionnés	Age	
1	Veuve du défunt.....			
2	Enfants du défunt et dates de naissance.....			
3	Père du défunt.....			
4	Mère du défunt.....	M <sup>me</sup> Olive Bevrone	47	535, Concorde 11 <sup>me</sup> ave St. Hyacinthe
5	Frères du défunt	Frères germains	Joseph Louis, Marcel 17	11 ans 535, Concorde
			Joseph Julien, Jacques 18	11 ans 535, Concorde 11 <sup>me</sup> ave. St. Hyacinthe
		Demi-frères		
6	Sœurs du défunt	Sœurs germaines	Marié-Pat, Marguerite 6.	535, Concorde 11 <sup>me</sup> ave. St. Hyacinthe
				P <sup>me</sup>
		Demi-sœurs		
7	Noms des frères ou sœurs (germains ou non) du défunt, qui sont divorcés, et date de décès de chacun d'eux	Noms et âges de leurs enfants (le cas échéant)		Adresse de leurs enfants

In his army enlistment report dated April 1, 1941 it said that Joseph was colour blind and had flat feet, which did not bother him at all. He weighed 141 lbs and was almost 5ft 4 tall. Joseph had a light-brown skin, brown eyes and dark hair, he was a well-developed nineteen-year old young man.

Joseph voluntarily signed up for military service in Montreal South on April 21, 1941 and from April 27 he was assigned to the 17th Duke of York's Royal Canadian Hussars (17th). Here in Debart he took his training and a

few months later he was in Halifax, from where he left for the war in Europe. Joseph left by ship on August 23, 1941 and arrived in Glasgow, Scotland, on September 2. After that he was in Aldershot and had five days' leave. In December he was 'In The Field' and had seven days off with permission to travel. He switched battalions a few more times and continued his training with a week's leave every now and then.

17<sup>th</sup> Duke of York's Royal Canadian Hussars, 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division.

(the information below is mainly from the 17<sup>th</sup> Dyr War Diaries)

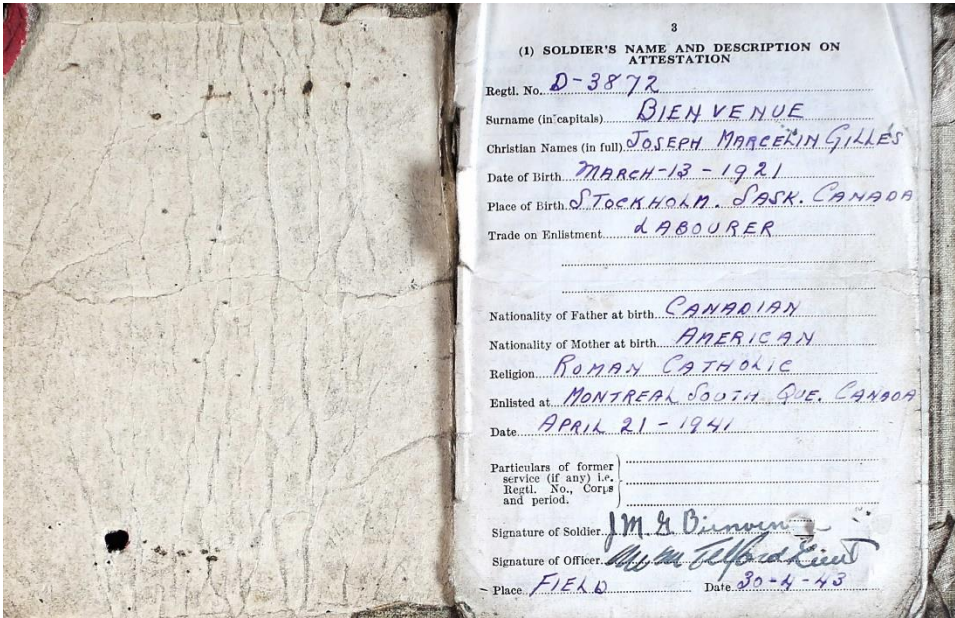
'A Reconnaissance Regiment was an armoured, allied cavalry of reconnaissance units. Each regiment consisted of 1,200 men, each squadron of 350 men. The armoured vehicles were light and fast and had considerable fire power. Without turning or rotating they were just as easily capable of moving backwards as fast as forwards. The officers did not wear medals, as they would then be recognizable and enemy targets. They were also called the antennae of the Canadian divisions. During the Second World War these reconnaissance units were more exposed to death and injury than others. They left from England, where they had their training, to France and took part in the Battle of Caen. Via Caen, Falaise, Le Havre, Cap Gris-Nez, Boulogne to Calais, where they experienced big problems. They continued via Belgium and were involved in the Battle of the Scheldt and the conquest of Antwerp. The Allies wanted to use this port for the badly needed supplies, but the Germans bombarded the port with heavy artillery. On November 1, 1944 they were in Lissewege, Belgium, and two days later they left for Blankenberge, where they set up their temporary headquarters. Via Gent they went to Deinze, where two film screenings were organised for the men. There were orders to march on and they advanced via the Dutch border to Nijmegen, in a five-mile long column with vehicles. The A Squadron stayed north of the River Waal, the B Squadron hid in houses and the C Squadron were stationed south of the bridge across the Waal. The enemy executed shellings on the town and the surroundings of the bridge, but there were no casualties. It was wet and cold when they arrived in Nijmegen on November 11. The 17<sup>th</sup> Hussars even mixed themselves drinks that they named 'The Nijmegen Bridge'.

On November 24 there were orders to go into the direction of Druten. The A Squadron entrenched in farmhouses south of the dike, the B Squadron were in Boven- and Beneden-Leeuwen and the C Squadron as a reserve in Puiflijk, just like the headquarters. The next day it was reported that the water kept rising due to the fact that the Germans had blown up the summer dike. They received orders to evacuate and move to higher

grounds. They moved into the church of Puiflijk and on November 28 the water did not seem to be rising any further. The regiment stayed in the area and carried out patrols in the region. The Germans and the Canadians kept observing each other and shelling each other with mortar grenades. On December 17 their positions were taken over and they were able to enjoy their well-deserved rest.

On Christmas Eve 1944 the men were in the school in Druten and plates, cutlery, food etc. were collected, also with the aid of the local population.

In the meantime in Nijmegen preparations were made by the army commanders for the big offensive: operations Blockbuster and Veritable. From February 8, 1945 the regiment was east of Nijmegen under the command of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. It was a wet area that they were only able to move through by means of boats and amphibious vehicles. The water was very deep too and for this reason they were called water rats. As the enemy did not expect them to approach via water, the attack succeeded. The villages of Millingen and Niel soon fell and they advanced across the border to Cleve and Goch. Conditions were hard, the weather was bad and the roads almost impassable. However, they gained more and more territory in the Reichswald and the 17<sup>th</sup> headed on to Sonsbeck via Udem. The enemy was beaten and the war was won.'



Page from Joseph's Soldier's Service Book

In the next report dated January 19, 1943 it said that Joseph was a clever and happy guy, who loved working with wood and loved doing heavy work. Serving in the army felt like a duty to him and so he was advised to join the Forestry Corps (forestry). He weighed 149 lbs and was over 5 ft 5 tall.



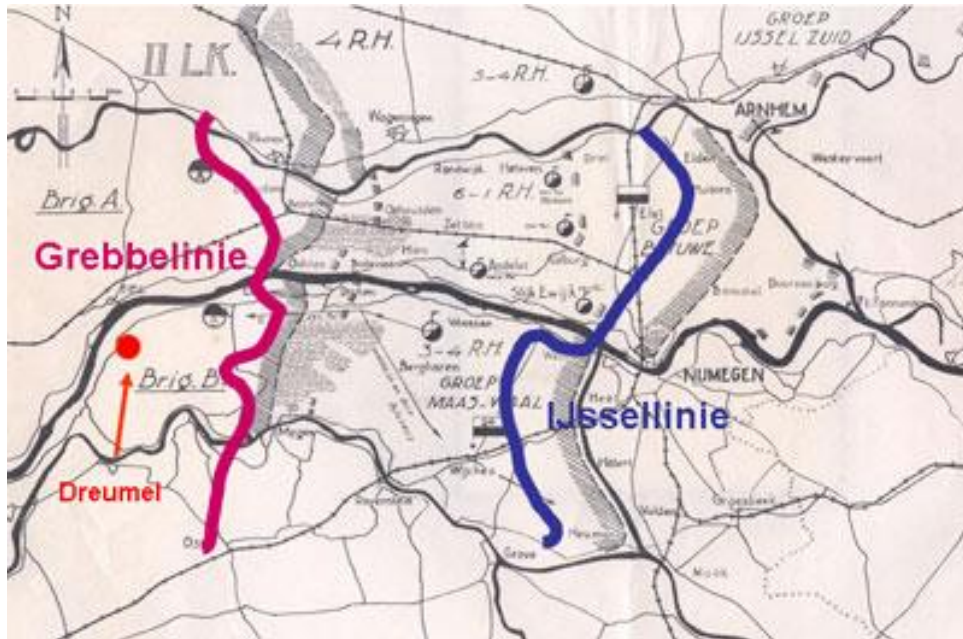
On April 21, 1943 Joseph was awarded the Good Conduct Badge, a badge that was awarded after two years of service in the army. It was worn on the left sleeve of the uniform jacket or the shirt, with its point up. It was a sort of salary bonus to which another bar was added every two years. On the other hand, in case of bad conduct a soldier could lose a bar again.

The next token of appreciation for his efforts was awarded to Joseph on January 15, 1944: the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

After a thorough training it was time to go to the war in the west of Europe. He left from the United Kingdom by ship and arrived in France on July 15, 1944. Here he was promoted to Lance Corporal and on November 28, he became an A/Corporal.

Shortly afterwards, on December 4, 1944, Joseph Bienvenue got killed in Dreumel, Holland. He died of his wounds when he was only twenty-two years old.

Card  
Grebbelinie  
Tremele.nl



Joseph Bienvenue was first buried in Nijmegen at the temporary Canadian War Cemetery of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Corps at Jonkerbosch.

On August 7, 1945 he was reburied at the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek, grave reference **I. H. 13.**

Joseph was awarded the following medals:

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

The Memorial Cross was sent to his mother Orise in Saint Hyacinthe, Qubec.



*Photo: Liesbeth Huisman*



Life story: Liesbeth Huisman-Arts, Research Team Faces To Graves.

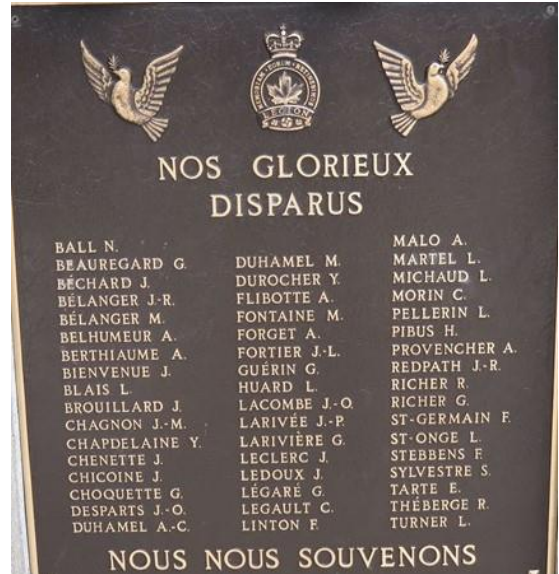
\* Do you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact [info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl)

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission  
Library and Archives Canada  
[www.tremele.nl](http://www.tremele.nl)  
[Veterans.gc.ca](http://Veterans.gc.ca)



Grave of his parents: Photo Veterans.gc.ca



Monument in St. Hyacinthe by the Royal Canadian Legion St. Hyacinthe.

Photo: Waymarking.com