

Brezino, Joe

Private

2nd Canadian Infantry Division

Royal Hamilton Light Infantry

B 4985



Joe Brezino was born on 22 February 1923, in Pine Ridge, Manitoba. He grew up in a Roman Catholic family and they lived in Springwell, Manitoba. His parents, Dora and Anthony, were both Polish, they got married in Gimli, Manitoba in 1897 and got six children: Francis, Mike, Mary, Joe, Annie and Pauline. Joe was the only one to serve in the Canadian Army during the second World War.

Joe was fourteen years old when he left school, he did not finish Grade 7.



When he was only thirteen years old, in 1936, Joe started working as a lumberjack, he did this for several employers and couldn't remember exactly their names in his interview when he enlisted.

He was a lumberjack until he was seventeen, so he did this for three

years. Meanwhile, he had also worked on the farm together with his father in 1938, who was his employer for about a year. In his free time, Joe really liked to do sports, especially baseball and boxing.

On 26 January 1942, eighteen-year-old Joe enlisted in Sudbury, Ontario, for active duty in the Canadian Army. While enlisting he was medically examined; he was a healthy man of 5 feet and 9 ¾ inches, and he weighed 143 pounds. He had dark brown hair and brown eyes, although his eye color was not entirely clear because later documents showed different colors.

On 13 May 1942 Joe was posted to the Advanced Training Centre, Camp Borden in Ontario. In Borden he was educated and trained as a soldier within only a month. After he finished his training in Camp Borden on 10 June he was ready to go overseas to the United Kingdom to reinforce the Lorne Scots regiment. Five days later, had to get on the ship that took him to the United Kingdom. He arrived ten days later.



In the United Kingdom Joe started all his further training and became a really good soldier. The day after arrival he was medically examined again and he still was in good shape. He was placed with the Training Battalion of the Lorne Scots Regiment on 30 June 1942. He stayed in this training battalion for over half a year, and 10 February 1943, he went on leave for a month.

On 8 March 1943, he was admitted to the 5 Canadian General Hospital and after four days he was discharged, the reason for this hospital visit is unknown. On 18 April he started another month of training in the Lorne Scots training battalion.

On 18 November 1943, he was again medically examined in the United Kingdom, it appeared that he had gained 17 pounds of body weight which meant he probably gained more muscles and wasn't a young skinny boy anymore.

On 9 January 1944 he went to the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit and trained with them for about two months. Then he moved to the Headquarter 1 Canadian Army 2 Battalion on 7 May 1944, he stayed there for another two months and after this his stay in the United Kingdom had come to an end. After two years in the United Kingdom, Joe was

transported by boat to the mainland of Europe on 23 July 23 1944. Upon arrival in France, he was assigned to the regiment Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Regiment on 7 August 1944.

The first month in this regiment, he stayed in France. On 9 September, his Battalion reached the Belgian border, in the next months that followed they passed through Belgium and were engaged in several battles.



In November a part of the regiment arrived in Groesbeek, the Netherlands, so did Joe. He was involved in actions in Nijmegen, Mook and Cuijk.

Finally, at the beginning of February, the regiment arrived in Germany, near Kleve/Goch, in this area Joe fought his last battles.

The 19th and 20th February were very difficult and intense days, a lot had happened, and multiple fellow soldiers were killed. The weather in the morning of 21 February was much better, it was fair and clear, only the roads were still muddy from the rain, so transport was difficult. At half past nine in the morning, a heavy battle started in support of another regiment, the Calgary Highlanders, who were clearing the woods on their left.

At 11am Platoon 8 was heavily attacked and Lieutenant WV Smith was killed, but eventually the Platoon got the upper hand and took out a large number of enemies.

After this it was fairly quiet for a while until 4pm, Typhoons (fighter-bombers) of the Allied Air Force attacked various targets at the front. One hour later Cleve and the supply lines of the battalion were attacked by several jet-propelled planes, killing a lot of soldiers.

It is not clear when exactly, but Joe did not make it to the end of the day and was killed in action on 21 February 1945. It was only one day before he would have turned twenty-two.

His grave states that he was twenty-three when he died, but in all service files it is written that he was born on 22 February 1923 and killed on 21 February 1945.

His mother only got a simple telegram with the message her son wasn't coming home. On 9 March 1945 she did get a more personal letter from Major-General/Adjutant-General A.E. Walford. He wrote it was with deep regret that he learned of the death of her son, that any additional information would be communicated to her without delay, and he said that he paid tribute to the sacrifice her son so bravely made.

Private Joe Brezino was temporary buried along the road near Calcar in Germany and almost a year after his death, on 20 February 1946, he was reburied at the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek, grave **XX. D. 3**.

On his tombstone is the following text:

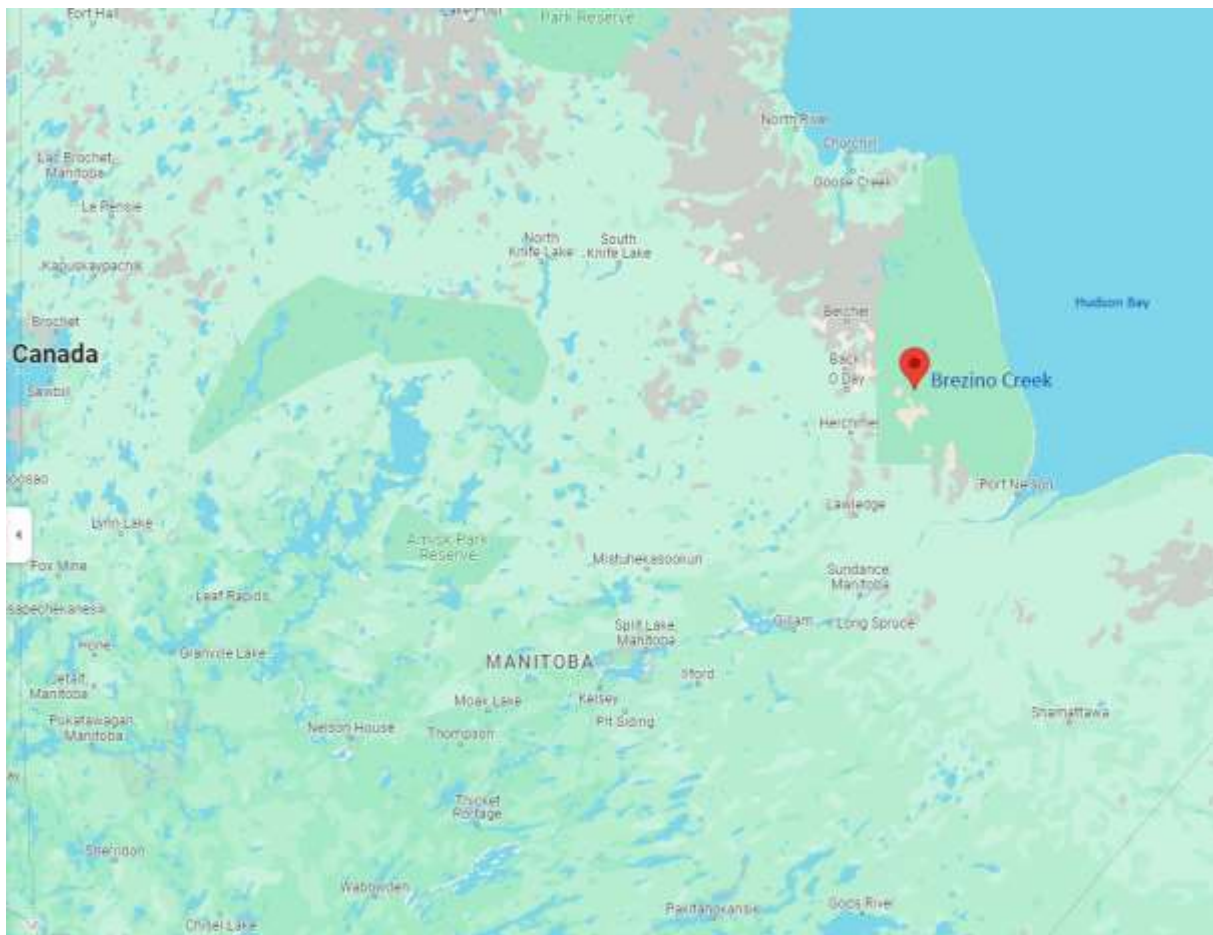
HERE LIES JOE
SON OF ANTON & DORA BREZINO
SPRINGWELL, MANITOBA,
CANADA.



Joe received the following awards:

- 1939-45 star
- France-Germany star
- Defence medal
- War medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and clasp

After the Second World War the Canadian government decided to name lakes, rivers, islands after soldiers who fell during the war. In 1964, Brezino Creek, which flows north into Silcox Creek, Manitoba was named after Joe Brezino.





FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek

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Source reference:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

* If you have a picture of this soldier or additional information, please contact info@facestograves.nl