

Belanger, John George

Rifleman

Regina Rifle Regiment

L 27814



John George Belanger was born on 18 November, 1920 in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. In the Roman Catholic family of Joe and Mary Belanger, both French born, there were eleven children, six boys and five girls. John went to school for five years until he was twelve years old. Then he went out to work in the woods and on farms. He played ice hockey and softball in his spare time.

John joined the Regina Rifle Regiment in North Battleford, on 24 June, 1940 when he was nineteen years old. He was sent to Camp Dundum, Saskatchewan on 6 July, staying there until 29 September. Then he was transferred to Camp Debert, Nova Scotia for further training. In the military records he was described as having brown eyes and hair and that he spoke English and fluent French.

The next year, he was given special leave from 8 - 28 January, 1941. He left for England on 24 August and continued his training in Camp Hiltingbury, Southampton. He stayed in England for almost three years until on D day, 6 June 1944 he took part in the invasion of France, landing on Juno beach near Courseulles-sur-Mer. From there his regiment was involved in the fighting across northern France to Calais and then Zeebrugge in Belgium. On 26 July, John damaged a middle finger when he was cleaning his gun. Later, 17 September, he was wounded in his left arm.

The Regina Rifle Regiment was involved in the Battle of the Schelde in Zeeuws Vlanderen; after it was over, the regiment was sent to Groesbeek, in the Netherlands, near the German border, in preparation for the big Rhineland offensive that was to begin 8 February, 1945.

On Christmas Day, 1944, John damaged his right hand, breaking a middle finger during horseplay with his comrades. He wrote about it: "On 25 December '44 at approx 0200 hrs I was scuffling with one of the other soldiers in my unit. It was just in fun but we were probably hitting harder than we intended. I struck him on the shoulder and injured my hand."

John George Belanger died accidentally soon after the beginning of Operation Veritable on 12 February, 1945; a comrade in the bed next to him was cleaning his Sten gun, when it slipped out of his hands and discharged. The bullet hit Rifleman Belanger in his right side and killed him. His mother first received a telegram:

M.F.M. 267
50M-9-44 (5634)
H.Q. 1772-39-1989

**CANADIAN NATIONAL
TELEGRAPHS**

FILE H.Q. 405-B-16,163

CASUALTY (REPORT DELIVERY) OTTAWA 19 FEBRUARY 1945

TO:-
MRS MARY BELANGER
BOX 281
NORTH BATTLEFORD SASK

35245 REGRET DEEPLY L27814 RIFLEMAN JOHN GEORGE BELANGER
HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED TO HAVE DIED TWELFTH FEBRUARY 1945
AS RESULT OF ACCIDENT STOP YOU SHOULD RECEIVE FURTHER DETAILS BY
MAIL DIRECT FROM THE UNIT IN THE THEATRE OF WAR

PREPAID

DIRECTOR OF RECORDS

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H.Q. 405-B-16,163
D. R. 2 (B).

28 February 1945

Mrs. Mary Belanger,
North Battleford, Saskatchewan.

Dear Mrs. Belanger:

Further to my telegram of the 19th instant, informing you of the regretted death of your son L27814 Rifleman John George Belanger, I am directed to inform you that an additional report has now been received from Canadian Military Headquarters Overseas, stating that he was accidentally shot with a sten gun, sustaining a wound to the right side of the abdomen, and died shortly after.

Please accept my sincere and heartfelt sympathy for the irreparable loss you have suffered.

Yours truly,

mem x. matter

9-3-45

ND
ND:NB

18 21
(R.T.E. Hicks-Lyne) Colonel
Acting Director of Records
for Adjutant-General

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Only later did she get to hear the circumstances of his accidental death.

John was buried temporarily in the Jonkerbosch Military Cemetery, Nijmegen. Later the same year on 6 August, his body was transferred to the Canadian Military Cemetery, Groesbeek, plot **I. D. 8.**

Awards John George Belanger:

1939-45 Star

France Germany Star

War Medal

Canadian Volunteer Service Medal+Clasp



FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story: Fred Hulsman, Research Team Faces To Graves.

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Archives and Library Canada

<http://www.reginarifles.ca/>

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca>