

De Merchant, Lloyd Wendell

Private

**North Shore (New Brunswick)
Regiment**

Royal Canadian Infantry Corps

G53549



Lloyd Wendell DeMerchant was born January 1, 1924, in Perth, Victoria Co. NB, the son of William Herman DeMerchant and Maria Elizabeth Wallace. William was a farmer and ran a lumber business near Tobique Narrows. Lloyd was a descendant of Loyalists who moved to New Brunswick following the American Revolution and had a great, great uncle who fought in the war of 1812. Three cousins fought in WWI. Lloyd had eleven siblings Ralph, William, Reid, Gerald, Robert, Claude, John, Keith, Mary, Marion and Reta. Mary and Marion were twins and William died in a drowning accident at age ten. Four of the boys Ralph, Gerald, Reid, and Lloyd would enlist in the Canadian Armed Forces. Lloyd attended a local rural school and records show that he enjoyed both geography and history. After completing grade eight at age fifteen, he left school and went to work in his father's lumber business.

Lloyd turned eighteen in January 1942 and immediately enlisted with the Canadian Army in Fredericton. He completed basic training at Camp No.70 in Fredericton on April 4th, was then selected to be a Gunner and was transferred to the Canadian Artillery Training Centre (CATC) in Petawawa, Ontario. In May Lloyd was assigned to the Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA) that was training in Debert NS. Late 1942, all of 1943 and most of 1944 were spent in artillery training camps near Halifax.

During this time his brother Ralph had become a sergeant with the RCAF. He had a unique skill. Growing up across the river from the Tobique First

Nation Reserve, he became fluent in the Maliseet aboriginal language. The Allied command knew that the Germans would be unable to decode this aboriginal language and used Ralph and others for at least three years in top-secret positions to code and decode messages in aboriginal languages.

Lloyd's brother Gerald became a Corporal with the Engineering Corps of the Carleton & York Regiment. They built Bailey Bridges on the front lines in Italy to keep the Allies advancing. Gerald was wounded in December 1944 and was unable to return to duty.

His brother Reid attempted to enlist when he was under age but was rejected until he was eighteen. While training in the UK, Reid met an English girl Nancy Pilling, fell in love and they married. Nancy became pregnant but before the baby was born, Reid was transferred to active duty with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. On August 29, 1944, Reid was killed in action at Forêt de la Londe in France. His daughter Anita was born the same day. Anita and her mother moved to Canada after the war and lived here for a while, but eventually returned to England. The family still keeps in touch with their English cousins.

Lloyd was in Halifax when he received the news about Reid. He continued artillery training and also spent time working in the army kitchen. In November, Lloyd was notified that he was being shipped overseas. He embarked for the UK on Nov. 24th, arrived on December 5th and was assigned to an artillery reserve unit.

In the first six months following D-Day, the Canadians had suffered significant casualties, particularly in the infantry. By year end they were in need of reinforcements. As a result, Lloyd, like many, was transferred from other units to the Canadian Infantry Corps and to the front lines. Following further training, Lloyd was transferred to NW Europe and on Feb. 15th, assigned to the North Shore (NB) Regiment.

By this time the Canadians had crossed the border into Germany and were now clearing the Rhineland (western Germany south of the Rhine River). One of the deadliest battles in the Rhineland was fought for the capture of the village of Keppeln. Allied intelligence had reported that there was no significant enemy activity at Keppeln and the assistance of tanks would not be required. On February 26, 1945, Lt. Col. Rowley received orders to advance and sent the North Shore's "B" & "C" Companies across a thousand yards of open farmland to seize Keppeln. Intelligence was wrong. The Germans waited until the North Shores were 150 yards from the German line and then opened fire. Everywhere North Shore men were falling dead or wounded. There was nowhere to hide. "A" & "D" Companies

were at least a mile behind when news of the slaughter arrived. The North Shore would need armoured support and a plan was created in which "A" Company was to lead with a platoon of 42 North Shore soldiers mounted, exposed, on top of a squadron of tanks of the 1st Hussars Regiment. As the tanks approached the village the men were shooting like mad into the enemy trenches. Some of the tanks hit mines and blew up, some were destroyed by artillery and others got stuck in the mud. Only six of the fourteen tanks survived. Despite heavy losses the advance succeeded. Fighting continued house by house and by evening Keppeln belonged to the North Shore. The cost was 28 North Shore soldiers killed in action and 56 wounded.

In March 1945, the Canadians crossed the Rhine River into the heart of Germany. This was expected by many to be the second D-Day. On the evening of March 24th, the NSR, under the command of the 9th Brigade, prepared to cross the river near Rees, Germany. The men were loaded into troop carriers and driven to Kalcar, SW of Rees, where they transferred to Buffalos and Duks (all-terrain vehicles). At midnight the Buffalos and Duks headed for the Rhine River about 1 km west of Rees. While an artillery duel between the Germans and the Allies was still active, group after group were transported across the Rhine with little opposition. By 1:30 AM on March 25th the regiment was across the river and ready to fight, but again there was surprisingly little enemy activity on the opposite bank.

On the following morning, March 26th, the NSR prepared to move north with orders to capture the town of Millingen. The attack was to be launched after the Highland Light Infantry (HLI) had taken control of nearby Bienen. The resistance in Bienen, however, was much stronger than expected. The Germans had launched a counterattack assisted by 600 paratroopers and a constant heavy artillery barrage. After several delays, the North Shore attack was launched at 12 noon. They were assisted by the Allied artillery who laid a constantly advancing barrage 200 yards ahead of the advancing troops

During the fighting on March 26, 1945, Pte. Lloyd Wendell DeMerchant was killed in action. He was twenty-one years of age. In the same battle, the commander of the North Shore (NB) Regiment, Lt. Col. J. W. H. Rowley was also killed. Historian Ken Smith wrote that in the battle for Millingen almost 400 German paratroopers were captured along with 35 machine guns, several 75 mm self propelled guns and a number of tanks. North Shore casualties were recorded as 7 killed in action and 28 wounded.

For his service to Canada, Pte. Lloyd Wendell DeMerchant was awarded the following medals; the 1939-45 Star, France & Germany Star, War Medal 1939-45 and CVSM with Clasp. Private Lloyd Wendell DeMerchant is buried in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands. Plot **XVII. H. 12.**

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Biography made available for Faces To Graves, with courtesy of Bruce Morton.



Old grave.

Gives His Life



PTE. LLOYD WENDELL DE-MERCHANT,

who has been killed in action while serving overseas with the Canadian Army, according to word received by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. William DeMerchant of Tobique Narrows, near Perth. One of four brothers to join the colors, Pte. Lloyd is the second to make the supreme sacrifice, while a third is a hospital patient in England as a result of wounds suffered on Dec. 11, 1944. One brother, Pte. Reid DeMerchant, was killed in action on Aug. 29, 1944; Pte. Gerald is the brother in a hospital in England and Sgt. Ralph DeMerchant, R. C. A. F., recently returned to Canada after three years of overseas service. He has been stationed at Moncton. Pte. Lloyd DeMerchant enlisted in January of 1942 at the age of 17 years, going overseas in December of 1944. Besides his parents and two brothers in the service, he is survived by three sisters, Mary, Marion and Reta, and four brothers, Peter, Keith, Jack and Robert, all at home.