

Johnson, Henry Carl

Private

The Calgary Highlanders, R.C.I.C.

K – 4072



According to the information given in his service files, Henry Carl Johnson was born In Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on 20 November,1920. There is some ambiguity here.

His younger sister, Asta Borghild McLean was born in Bergen, Norway and according to her obituary, had emigrated with the whole family to Canada when she was five years old in 1927. Henry Carl was then seven and could also have been born in Norway. He was the only son of Carl Johnson, born in Sweden and Borghild Hansen, born in Norway. He had an older sister, Carrie (Karen) Ramsay. The family was member of the United Church.

After eight years in the local school in South Westminster, British Columbia, he left in 1934 after grade 8, when he was 14, to work in a sawmill in New Westminister; after that he worked for eighteen months in a box factory and as a carpenter in a factory making window frames. At a certain point he got injured so that he was unable to work for a year and a half.

IN THE MILITARY

In 1940, the National Resources Mobilization Act came into force. All available men were called up to register for military service, in order to defend the homeland in the first place; later they were also sent for service overseas. One of these men was Henry Carl Johnson and on 16 April,1942 he reported for service in Vancouver. and was given the number K - 602152. He had been living with his parents at this point at 1504 Old Yale Road, RR#4 in New Westminister, BC.

At his medical examination he was reported as single, healthy, of average intelligence with blue eyes, brown hair and a light skin color. He was 1.72 m tall and weighed 65 kilo. As hobby, he liked to work on his car; he did not care for sport but went hunting and fishing occasionally. He did not read much but interestingly, he wrote on his application form that he read and spoke Norwegian. He had no preference for a particular branch of the army because he really wanted to work as a stoker in the Canadian marine. However, due to an internal injury he had suffered earlier, he was not considered fit enough for service overseas. He was advised to have an operation if he aimed for naval service.

His first eight week training took place in Vernon, BC (#110) followed by two months in Calgary, Alberta (A16). In Vernon he spent more than half the time in the Esquimalt Military Hospital and later in the Victoria Military Hospital. It is not clear why Carl Henry was admitted to hospital but it could have to do with the operation that was considered necessary for him to be able to serve overseas. On 22 September, 1942, after the completion of his training, he was placed with the Winnipeg Grenadiers in Prince Rupert, BC . The following year on 28 January, 1943, he was promoted to Lance Corporal and three months later to Corporal. He spent the first week of May in the Prince Rupert Military Hospital.

On 12 July he was transferred to the island of Kiska in Alaska, USA for special service; at that moment the island was occupied by the Japanese. Carl Henry was then part of a huge American-Canadian force that from Nanaimo was brought to Adak, Alaska by ship. The Canadian force, made up of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, the Rocky Mountain Rangers and the Canadian Fusiliers, was known as the Greenlight Force.



Embarkation to Kiska



Kiska Patch

On 16 August, Kiska was recaptured, the Japanese having already fled. The Greenlight force stayed on for some months in order to construct roads among other tasks. On 3 January, 1944 Carl Henry was sent back and was given paid leave for a month.

ITEMS 17, 18 AND 19 WILL NOT BE COMPLETED UNLESS A MAN ENLISTS FOR GENERAL SERVICE ANYWHERE.

17. **DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION**

I, Henry Carl Johnson, hereby engage to serve in any Active Formation or Unit of the Canadian Army so long as an emergency, i.e., war, invasion, riot or insurrection, real or apprehended, exists, and for the period of demobilization after said emergency ceases to exist, and in any event for a period of not less than one year, provided His Majesty should so require my services.

Date April 13th, 1944.

HC Johnson
(Signature of Recruit)

On 12 April that year, Carl Henry had completed two years' service and had to fill in a new application form in Gordon Head, BC to go on active service; he had a medical test and was given a new number K4072.

Although in an earlier medical test there had been no mention of a scar on his right buttock and a tear in his left, which probably happened during his army service, he was found fit for the service overseas he wanted.

A month later he boarded ship as a corporal in the Winnipeg Grenadiers; he arrived in England on 17 June. A day before arriving on the European mainland he himself asked to be reduced to the rank of private.

On 5 August he was placed with the Calgary Highlanders, at that time active in Normandy; a week later he was involved in the battle around Clair Tison, a village with some stone farmhouses, lying in a valley on the river de Laise. After a day walking in very warm weather, the Highlanders continued through the night without sleeping. At 1.45am, on a dark, misty night, the attack began. First of all, Le Mesnil was taken, a village to the north of Clair Tison. On 13 August at 14.00 hours the attack on Clair Tison began. The Canadians were fiercely attacked by German army units, but in the evening, the bridge over the de Laise river was taken by the Highlanders after considerable effort and they were able to get some rest.

After that, in September, they were involved in the battles round Dunkirk in France and Ostend on the Belgian coast. In the same month, the Highlanders continued on via Bruges to the eastern outskirts of Antwerp. in the direction of Hogeheide and the battle of the Schelde.

Henry Carl has been just a month in western Europe. The Schelde battle went on for five weeks with some of the hardest fighting of the whole war, but the Canadians, together with the Poles and British, succeeded in opening the mouth of the Schelde river so that their ships could get access to the port of Antwerp. After this battle, in which the Highlanders suffered heavy losses, the regiment prepared to spend a long winter in the surroundings of Nijmegen in the Netherlands.

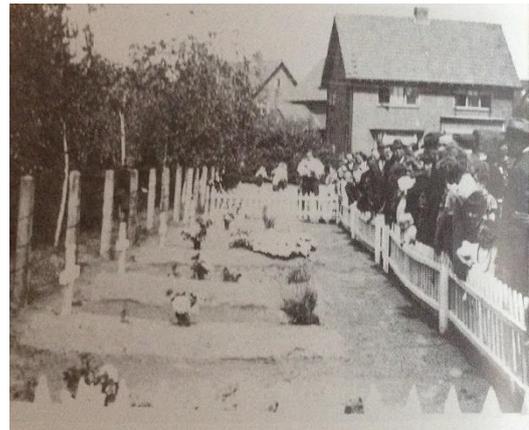
From 8 February, 1945, the Calgary Highlanders took part in Operation Veritable in the German Reichswald. After heavy fighting, it was finally possible for the troops to cross the Rhine and begin on the liberation of the eastern and northern Netherlands. The Canadians moved through Ulft, Terborg and Gaanderen in the direction of Doetinchem.

On Easter Sunday, 1 April, the Canadians reached Doetinchem via the Terborgseweg. Waiting for them on the eastern outskirts of the town were members of the resistance and after a short consultation, some soldiers continued on to the town centre, while a large force moved around the city. Fierce fighting developed in the centre; the Germans had blocked the roads with trams filled with concrete. The Canadians used flame throwers among other weapons in order to disable the enemy; dozens of Germans were killed and many buildings burned out. Nine Canadians also died and only on the following afternoon, Monday, 2 April was Doetinchem liberated.



Canadian troops at the Terborgseweg,
1 April 1945 (Photo: Hans Hendriksen ©)

One of the nine Canadians who died, was the 24 year old Henry Carl Johnson on Sunday, 1 April, killed in the streets of Doetinchem. He was buried temporarily next to school "Oosseld" at the Dennenweg in Doetinchem.



His mother, Borghild received a letter more than a year later on 27 July 1946 to say that her son has been reburied in Groesbeek. Plot **XIX. C .15.**

Henry Carl Johnson received the following awards:

- 1939 – 45 Star
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp
- France & Germany Star



Monument at the Mark Tennant Plantsoen, Doetinchem

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

LOVINGLY REMEMBERED

BY MOTHER, DAD AND SISTERS



FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story by: Sigrid Norde, Research Team Faces To Graves

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

National Library and Archives Canada

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