

Bienvenue, Joseph Marcellin Gilles, Corporal (D3872)



- J. M. Gilles Bienvenue was born on 13 March 1922 in Stockholm, Saskatchewan. He was 21 years old when he was killed in action on 4 December 1944 in the Netherlands.
- On 21 April 1941, he enlisted at the Number 4 District Depot in Montreal-South and was immediately sent to Camp Debert, Nova Scotia, to join the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment. On 23 August 1941, he travelled with the unit to England. In England, he qualified as an anti-tank gunner, and, several years later, was deployed to France on 11 July 1944.
- He had no military experience prior to enlisting.
- He left school at the age of 15 after having attended 8 years of public school.
- Prior to enlisting, he was employed for 3 years at the Ideal Bottling Company in Saint-Hyacinthe. Prior to that, he had worked as a farm hand on the farm of Osa Lussier, near Saint-Hyacinthe.
- According to his medical examination, he was 5-foot 4¾ inches tall and weighed 141 pounds. He had dark hair and brown eyes. He was found fit for category A.
- He was the son of Mr. Ubald Bienvenue and Mrs. Orise Bienvenue, who lived at 38½ rue Raymond and then at 535 rue Concorde in Saint-Hyacinthe, Québec. He had two brothers, Joseph Louis Marcel Bienvenue (17) and Joseph Julien Jacques Bienvenue (15), and a sister, Marie Rita Huguette Bienvenue (6).
- Gilles was a bachelor and had no children.
- The sole beneficiary of Gilles' will was his mother.
- His body is buried in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Groesbeek, Netherlands (Ref I. H. 13.) (plot, row, grave)

Context

- In France, after D-Day, the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment took part in the battles of Caen, the River Laison, and the Falaise Gap. It then pursued the retreating German Forces through France, eventually helping to encircle and obtain the surrender of the large fortified German garrisons at Boulogne, Cap Gris Nez, and Calais along the English Channel. It then moved into Belgium and the Netherlands, where it participated in the battle of the Scheldt, where it helped clear the enemy from the Breskens Pocket, the low-lying land south of the

Scheldt Estuary. This operation was necessary to shorten the overextended supply lines from Normandy, and it gave the Allied Forces unrestricted access to the Port of Antwerp.

- After arriving in the Netherlands, the advance of the Allied Forces stalled for the winter of 1944-45 notably while they redirected their supply lines through the Port of Antwerp and built up their supplies of ammunition, fuel, and other essential elements, in anticipation of a thrust into northern Germany. While this was going on, the River Waal in Central Netherlands became the frontline.
- On 24 November, while the rest of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division held dug in positions several kilometres to the east of Nijmegen, the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment (17th Duke of York' Royal Canadian Hussars) was grouped with the 8th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment (14th Canadian Hussars) and the British 49th (West Riding) Reconnaissance Regiment to form a corps reconnaissance group. It then replaced a British unit along the River Waal in the Druten area, some 25 kilometres west of Nijmegen. "A" and "B" Squadrons were posted along the river, whereas "C" Squadron was held in reserve at Puiflijk, where Regimental Headquarters was also located.
- The 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment remained in the Druten-Puiflijk area for three weeks. All the troops along the Waal manned observation posts, and at night listening posts were set up. Apart from the shelling, which was intermittent, things tended to be quiet during the day but would heat up during the night, with outbursts of small arms fire, flares, and signal lights.
- On 4 December, Captain Cassidy was driving a jeep from Druten to Puiflijk during the late evening when his vehicle was fired upon by small arms. One of his three passengers was hit and killed. It was later found that the shooting came from friendly troops who had challenged the jeep without receiving the appropriate response (in fact, Cassidy had switched off the lights after the first shot). The deceased is almost certainly Corporal Gilles Bienvenue.

