



JAMES GILBERT REASON

B/38730

Family affairs:

James Gilbert Reason was born on October 14, 1922, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. He was the older brother of George Campbell Reason (b. 1925) and sister Joan Wilma Reason (b. 1938). His father, Thomas Gilbert Reason, was born in London, UK, on July 12, 1888, and his mother, Sarah Gladdys Reason-Campbell, was born on September 21, 1896, in Grey, Derby, Ontario.

His father Thomas served in Europe during World War I, also with the Signals, and died in Toronto on December 25, 1951. His mother, Gladdys, died in 1980.

After primary school, James attended three years of high school, which he left at 17. He then went to work as a Shipping Clerk at ACME Farmers Dairy Ltd., a dairy in Toronto that operated until 1966.

James volunteered as a signaller in Toronto on July 15, 1942.

He was considered athletic and had no other special hobbies, but was described as a good-looking young man who would make a good soldier.

Military affairs:

James Gilbert Reason died approximately two and a half years after enlisting in the RCCS Signal Corps. He spent two years of that time in training camps in Canada and England, and only five months on the European mainland.

After enlisting at the 2nd District Depot in Toronto, Ontario, he went to the 24th Basic Training Centre in Brampton, Ontario, on January 8, 1943, and then to Barriefield, the Canadian Signal Training Centre in Kingston,

Ontario, on March 9, 1943, for training as a signalman. On June 16, 1943, he was qualified as Driver I C, Class III for driver duties.

Next, on July 1, 1943, he went to the 6th District Depot in Halifax, Nova Scotia, also known as "Chebucto Barracks," for further training in telegraphy and radiotelephony. In preparation for transport to England, he finally boarded the five-day boat trip via Transit Camp Windsor in Nova Scotia on August 27, 1943.

Once in England, like most other signals officers, he went to the 1 CSRU (Canadian Signals Reinforcement Unit) at Southwood/Blanford Camp, Cove, Farnborough, Hampshire.

On November 25, 1943, he was assigned to the FCAS (1st Canadian Army Signals), after which he received the First Good Conduct award on his badge on July 15, 1944. On July 25, 1944, he embarked for France. After his arrival there on July 27, 1944, nothing is known about his actions on the mainland until his death on December 16, 1944.

That Saturday, December 16, 1944, was a dark day for the Allies and the inhabitants of Antwerp. Hoping to halt the Allied advance and regain control of the port of Antwerp, the Germans began their Ardennes Offensive, supported by massive launches of V-1 and V-2 weapons aimed at Antwerp and Liège.

Antwerp had been attacked with V-weapons since October 1944, but this day is remembered as the one with the highest number of casualties.

There are records of at least nine other V-bomb impacts in the city that day, killing a total of 679 people, and many other bombs falling that caused only material damage.

The most dramatic was the V2 that struck Cinema Rex at 3:23 p.m., where approximately 1,200 spectators were watching the film "The Plainsman" with Gary Cooper. The projectile's explosive charge, weighing over 730 kg, claimed 567 lives: 296 soldiers and 271 civilians.

That afternoon, James Gilbert Reason and others were returning from leave in Brussels with a 60cwt truck when it was hit by a V1 flying bomb near Brasschaat/Maria-ter-Heide. Thirteen people were killed, including James, and nine others were injured. James died from multiple skull wounds and severe brain damage. Of the 13 casualties, 11 were other Signalmen from the RCCS, and the other two were from other regiments. They were all ultimately buried in Bergen op Zoom. Six of the Sigs are buried side by side in row 05 G, and the others are all buried in the surrounding area.

Remarks:

James's brother, George Campbell Reason, born in 1925, was a Pilot Officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force (J/90353) and served with 415 (Swordfish) Squadron. He was killed on July 29, 1944, during a bombing raid on Hamburg. He was a radio operator in a Halifax III LW-595 when it was shot down by a night fighter on its return flight and crashed near Stotel, south of Bremerhaven. All crew members were killed; he is buried at Becklingen War Cemetery, Heidekreis, Germany, grave 24 A10.

A total of approximately 9,000 V-bombs landed in Belgium between October 1944 and March 1945, causing approximately 8,000 casualties. For Antwerp, this meant an average of 36 V-bombs per day.

The V2 that destroyed Cinema Rex was launched at 3:17 PM by Battery 500 from Hellendoorn, Netherlands.

James Gilbert Reason and his fellow soldiers were killed by a V1 impact. Pieter Serrien's website about the V-weapon attacks on Antwerp mentions Bomb 288, dated December 16, 1944, without mentioning the bomb type, but with 10 victims. On the website "Vergeltungswaffen.be," it is listed as "V1 VB0463." Two V2s (VB2568 and VB2569) landed near this location in January 1945, destroying the nearby Cavalry School, apparently without casualties.

Source:

Books of remembrance

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/books/page?page=273&book=2&sort=pageAsc>

Foto 1 CSRU, Southwood/Blanford Camp, Cove, Farnborough, Hampshire.

http://www.rcsig.s.ca/index.php/RCCS_WW2_Cairn_-_United_Kingdom

Information George Campbell Reason:

<https://caspir.warplane.com/personnel/unit-search/p/600016747>

<https://losses.internationalbcc.co.uk/loss/223346/>

Websites V1 and V2 attacks in Belgium:

<https://pieterserrien.be/boeken/elke-dag-angst/overzicht-v-inslagen-op-belgie/>

<https://www.vergeltungswaffen.be/>

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