

Telegraphist Reynold Joseph Jeannotte, MiD, V-11421



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- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Cut Knife SK, 6 December 1918**
- **Enlisted: Saskatoon Division RCNVR, 27 May 1940**
- **Civilian Occupation: Salesman, Singer Sewing Machine Company**
- **Death Died of wounds as a result of enemy action at off Brest, France on 9 July 1944**
- **Mention in Despatches (MiD)**
- **Commemorated: Plymouth (Weston Mill) Cemetery, Sec. C. R.C. Plot. Grave 10883; and Jeannotte Lake named in his memory (Lat 54°40' N Long 106° 34' W)**

Reynold, known as Rennie, was the second last of six sons born to Germaine Forest Jeannotte and Aime Edward Jeannotte on 6 December 1916 in Cut Knife, Saskatchewan. Aime and Germaine were married in 1910 in Cut Knife where Aime farmed. The family moved several times, eventually settling in St. Walburg, Saskatchewan. There Aime operated a livery barn and worked as a construction labourer until 1923 when he was hired by the Canadian National Railway as a freight train crew member – a job he held until retirement in 1947.

The family was unduly visited by grief. One brother, Raymond, died within a year of his birth. In June 1926, his oldest brother drowned while swimming in a creek. Then, one month later, his mother and her newborn daughter both died within days of the birth. Unable to care for four boys ranging in age from 4 to 14 years and keep his job on the railway, Aime placed his sons in the care of nuns spread among three convents. This arrangement lasted until 1929 when Aime re-married and the boys were happily reunited with their father and stepmother. Shortly after the marriage the family adopted a baby girl christened Lorraine. Sadly, the marriage ended after two years when Alice died. The boys, however, were now old enough to fend for themselves and their new sister.

By 1935, the full effects of the Great Depression and drought were felt in Saskatchewan. Two older brothers left St. Walburg and rode the rods to Quebec to find work. The wooden framed box cars of the day had steel truss rods used to support the underside of the car. These truss

rods under the car floor ran the length of the car with about 18 inches clearance between the floor and the rods upon which men would lie -thus "ride the rods". During the Depression thousands of unemployed men, particularly in Western Canada, would travel seeking work in this very dangerous way.

Rennie remained in Saskatchewan and found work as a travelling sales man, or "commercial traveller" as they preferred to be called, selling Singer sewing machines. At least Rennie rode in passenger coaches. Very few of these men travelled by automobile.

In 1940, Rennie and two of his brothers enlisted. One older brother served in the Royal Canadian Air Force, his younger brother joined the Royal Canadian Navy, and Rennie joined the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve. Both of Rennie's brothers survived the war.

Rennie enlisted as an Ordinary Seaman on 27 May 1940 at the Saskatoon Division RCNVR. At the time of enlistment, he was 5'6 "with brown hair and blue eyes. He was 21 years old and single.

During his naval career he advanced from Ordinary Seaman to Telegraphist. Ordinary Seaman Jeannotte trained at HMCS *Naden* in Esquimalt followed by employment in HMCS *Chatham*: the convoy and patrol routing centre in Prince Rupert, and in the Bangor class minesweeper, HMCS *Outarde*. After *Naden*, he trained as a telegraphist at HMCS *Hyacinthe* in Quebec and his final phase of training was in Scotland. He was posted to the destroyer, HMCS *Qu'Appelle* on 8 February 1944 as a member of her commissioning crew.

Qu'Appelle served on D-Day conducting anti-submarine patrols. On 8 June, 1944, she was attacked by U-953. However, the acoustic torpedo fired exploded in her wake causing no damage. After D-Day HMCS *Qu'Appelle* participated in Operation *Dredger* against German U-boat support vessels off Brest. During the night of 5/6 Jul the 12th Escort Group, comprising of *Qu'Appelle* (senior ship), *Saskatchewan*, *Skeena* and *Restigouche*, attacked 3 support vessels at 0145. Over the course of the 55-minute engagement, the German vessels were sunk but not before returning well directed fire hitting *Qu'Appelle*, *Saskatchewan* and *Skeena* repeatedly. *Qu'Appelle* sustained one fatality and 16 wounded including Rennie and the escort group commander; *Saskatchewan* sustained one fatality and six wounded; and *Skeena* seven wounded. *Qu'Appelle* returned to Plymouth with her wounded where they were admitted to hospital. Rennie died on 9 July and was buried on 12 July at the nearby Weston Mills cemetery. He was 25 years old.

To measure others' opinion of Rennie, one can turn to two letters of condolences written about him: *"He never faltered, and he will always be remembered as one who never hesitated when duty called."* Telegraphist Bryan Young, Messmate HMCS *Qu'Appelle*. The Executive Officer, Lieutenant W.S.T. McCully wrote, *"I had been up to the hospital to see him...He recognized me and bravely smiled and spoke to me even though he was so gravely wounded...He was a very brave man in the face of both enemy fire and death."*

For his service, Telegraphist Reynold Joseph Jeannotte was awarded: the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, the War Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and was Mention in Despatches, *"For courage, skill and devotion to duty shown in H.M.C.S. Qu'Appelle in maintaining very efficient communications when under intense fire in an action, in*

which he was wounded, with a German Force of three armed Trawlers and two Submarines on the night of 5th- 6th July, 1944.”

Telegraphist Reynold Joseph Jeannotte's final resting place is at PLYMOUTH (WESTON MILL) CEMETERY, Sec C. R.C. Plot. Grave 10883. Additionally, Jeannotte Lake in northern Saskatchewan is named in his memory (Lat 54°40' N Long 106° 34' W)

Prepared By:

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Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission record for Telegraphist Reynold J Jeannotte
- Library and Archives Canada Service Record for Telegraphist Reynold J Jeannotte
- Canadian Virtual War Memorial – Profile page for Telegraphist Reynold J Jeannotte
- Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial -Profile page for Telegraphist Reynold J Jeannotte
- Jeannotte, Aime *Footprints of Yesterday & Today St. Walburg & Surrounding Districts Vol II*, Altona, Manitoba, Friesen Printers 1988
- For Posterity's Sake, *HMCS Qu'Appelle*. Retrieved September 18, 2021 from http://www.forposterityssake.ca/Navy/HMCS_QU'APPELLE_H69.htm
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