



**SUPPLY
LINE**

Henry and Charles Byce

Canadian Army

Henry was 52 at the start of the Second World War. He was a soldier during the First World War, but was too old to enlist in 1939. Instead, he volunteered with the Veterans Guard of Canada.

His son Charles was 23 at the start of the Second World War. He followed in his father's footsteps by joining the military, and served in the army during the Second World War.



Sergeant Henry Charles Byce
during the Second World War
George Metcalf Archival Collection
Canadian War Museum 20080037-003



Charles Byce, shown at age 24
Courtesy of Veterans Affairs Canada

A Military Family

Henry Byce and his son Charles both had distinguished military careers.

Henry was born in Westmeath, Ontario, on July 25, 1887. In 1915, at the age of 28, he left his job as a fireman to join the **Canadian Expeditionary Force** (the army).

Henry's actions during the First World War earned him two high honours: the Distinguished Conduct Medal, and the French Médaille militaire, France's second-highest award for gallantry.

Henry's son Charles was born in March 1916. Charles would follow closely in his father's footsteps during the Second World War.

Second World War Military Service

Charles was born in Chapleau, Ontario. Although his father was not Indigenous, his mother, Louisa Saylor, was Cree, and Charles spent some of his childhood in the residential school system.

When the Second World War broke out, Charles enlisted with the Lake Superior Regiment. Meanwhile, his father Henry, now in his early fifties, joined up once again, serving with the Veterans Guard of Canada.

The Veterans Guard was a volunteer force composed primarily of First World War soldiers serving on the home front, including guarding **internment** and prisoner-of-war camps.

Although too old for the rigours of combat, veterans like Henry had valuable experience that could be put to use on the home front.

While Henry served at home, Charles was sent overseas. In the summer of 1944, he arrived in France with his regiment. During fighting in northwestern Europe, he showed great bravery in combat. Charles was awarded the Military Medal in January 1945 followed by the Distinguished Conduct Medal in March 1945, for two separate acts of gallantry.

Very few Canadians have been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, in addition to the Military Medal or its French equivalent, the Médaille militaire. Henry and Charles Byce are the only father-son combination ever to have earned both.

Remembrance and Recognition

For both Charles and Henry, their war service ended in 1945. Henry died in 1961, while Charles and his wife, Frances Antoinette DeGrasse, went on to raise a large family. Charles passed away in 1994.

In 2016, a commemorative monument dedicated to the memory of Charles Byce was unveiled in Chapleau, Ontario, outside the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. The Byce medals, father's and son's are now in the Canadian War Museum collection.

Vocabulaire

Canadian Expeditionary Force The entire overseas force fielded by Canada during the First World War. Of the 630,000 Canadians who enlisted for military service, 424,000 went overseas as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Internment The imprisonment of people, including enemy nationals, usually without criminal charges, in wartime. It is often used to describe the treatment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, even though it is not strictly speaking correct for almost all of them, but other terms are also used. They include uprooting, forced relocation, and incarceration.