



**SUPPLY  
LINE**

# Jean Pierre Antoine Normandin

Canadian Army

Jean Pierre was 20 when he joined the army. He worked as an instructor for new soldiers, but was killed in a training accident.



Jean Pierre Antoine Normandin  
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## Early Years

Jean Pierre was born in 1920 in the small Quebec town of Nicolet, halfway between Montréal and Québec City.

When war broke out, he was living in Montréal with his parents. He had recently finished high school, and was working as an accountant for the Imperial Life Insurance Company. His hobbies were classical music, mechanics and electronics.

## A Tragic Accident

Jean Pierre joined the army in 1940, and was sent overseas in 1941. He served in the Régiment de la Chaudière, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps, first as a Lieutenant, then as an Acting Captain.

Although he worked in an office before the war, accounting may not have been his ambition in life. He had been in the **militia**, and wrote on his enlistment papers that he would prefer to stay in the army after the war, in the permanent force.

His desire to make the army his career may have played a role in his assignment as a battle-drill instructor with No. 5 (Battle) Wing, part of the Canadian Training School in Hampshire, England. Battle-drill training simulated combat conditions, helping to prepare **infantry** soldiers for the experience of battle.

The training involved obstacle courses and simulated battlefields, live rounds fired over trainees' heads, controlled explosions, target practice, and dummies to bayonet.

The experience could be intense – as it was meant to be – and was meant to get raw recruits used to the rigours of combat.

On June 26, 1943, Jean Pierre was in charge of an assault course at the school. Like other battle-drill exercises, this one featured live fire from rifles and Bren guns, explosive charges buried in the ground, barbed wire, trenches, targets, and dummies.

They set off, explosions occurring around them, creating dust and confusion, as in real combat. Something went terribly wrong, and an order to fire was mistakenly given. Jean Pierre, who was overseeing the course, was shot in the stomach. He fell into a trench filled with barbed wire.

The exercise was immediately called to a halt, and men rushed to help Jean Pierre. He was hauled from the trench, given first aid, and taken to a nearby ambulance. It was too late. The bullet had entered his stomach and passed through his liver, killing him. He was 23 years old.

## Remembrance and Recognition

The inquiry into the events that took Jean Pierre's life involved many witnesses. In the end, it was determined that inexperience, fatigue, and miscommunication had caused his death, not improper conduct.

Captain Jean Pierre Normandin's death was judged accidental. He is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, in England.

## Vocabulary

### Infantry

Soldiers who engage in combat while on foot, instead of in other ways, such as in tanks or on horseback, although they often use vehicles for transportation. On some occasions (such as D-Day) infantry were sent into combat using landing craft which put them ashore on a beach, or as airborne infantry, who parachuted or rode gliders into landing areas.

### Militia

A term often used to refer to army units of volunteers recruited from local communities. In 1939 Canada, the term officially referred to what would soon be formally renamed the Canadian Army. The Permanent Active Militia was made up of a small number of full-time military personnel. The larger Non-Permanent Active Militia was made up of part-time volunteers.