

John Daniel MacEachern - WW2



(photo enhanced with AI technology)

Personal Profile

- Name: John Daniel MacEachern (p. 1)
- Service Number: F/13170 (p. 2)
- Rank: Gunner (equivalent to Private) (p. 4)
- Born: August 1, 1915, in Ballantyne's Cove, Cape George, Nova Scotia (p. 2)
- Pre-War Trade: Fisherman (p. 2)
- Next of Kin: Ronald MacEachern (father) (p. 2)
- Physical Description: 5 feet 9¾ inches, 159 pounds (p. 2)

Enlistment and Units

- September 4, 1939: Enlisted with the 86th Heavy (Coastal) Battery in Antigonish, NS (p. 2).
- October 7, 1939: Attested for active service (CASF) (p. 2). Performed general duties at Beacon Battery (p. 2).
- January 22, 1942: Transferred to the 87th Canadian Field Battery, RCA at Camp Sussex, NB, at his own request to better himself and be with friends (p. 2).
- May 20, 1942: Taken on strength by the 3rd Medium Regiment, RCA at Petawawa, ON, and posted back to the 87th Battery (p. 2).

Deployment and Training in the UK

- June 24, 1942: Arrived in the United Kingdom (p. 3).
- July 1, 1942: Promoted to Lance Bombardier, but reverted to Private at his own request two weeks later (p. 3).
- March 1943 Training Accident: Attached to the 4th Canadian Medium Regiment for the massive "Spartan" training exercise (p. 3). On March 11, 1943, while planting explosive "thunder flashes" for a counter-battery drill, a device malfunctioned and shot backward like a rocket (p. 3). It struck him in the face, causing a severe hemorrhage in his left eye (p. 3). An official inquiry cleared him of any blame (p. 3).
- June 17, 1943: Rejoined the 3rd Medium Regiment after recovering (p. 3).
- Conduct: His record notes a few minor disciplinary infractions, including being confined to barracks for being absent without leave (AWL) on a few occasions (pp. 2-3), and a 28-day pay/field punishment for a first-offense drunkenness charge in March 1944 (p. 4).

Combat in France & Severe Wounding

- July 6–8, 1944: Departed the UK and landed in Normandy, France (p. 4).
- July 29, 1944 (Wounded in Action): At 2000 hours near Caen, France, Gunner MacEachern was severely wounded by high-explosive shrapnel (p. 4).

The regiment's exact movements and actions on that specific day are confirmed by military history and the personal service profile of Gunner John Daniel MacEachern:

- Arrival and Positioning: The 3rd Medium Regiment crossed from the UK and landed in Normandy between July 6 and July 8, 1944 (p. 4). Operating under the 2nd Army Group Royal Artillery (2nd AGRA) and supporting the II Canadian Corps, they immediately moved into heavy firing positions in the fields and orchards just north and south of the Orne River around the ruined city of Caen.
- The Strategic Situation on July 29: Following the bloody infantry engagements of *Operation Atlantic* and *Operation Spring* (which had concluded just two days prior on July 27), the frontline south of Caen around Verrières Ridge had temporarily stabilized into an intense artillery war. Canadian artillery regiments were engaged in constant, heavy counter-battery duels to silence German 88mm guns and heavy panzer units hidden in the surrounding villages.
- The Fatal Hour: The medical record confirms that at exactly 20:00 hours (8:00 PM) on July 29, 1944, Gunner MacEachern was "wounded in the field near Caen, France". His position was hit by incoming German high-explosive shellfire or mortar shrapnel.

This confirms that the 3rd Medium Regiment's BL 5.5-inch guns were heavily engaged in the Caen sector on that exact date, trading heavy fire with the German army in one of the most violent artillery environments of the Normandy campaign.

- The Injuries:
 - A penetrating wound to the skull frontal bone above his left eye, leaving a large five-centimetre bone defect (pp. 4, 7).
 - Severe trauma to his left foot, resulting in a partial traumatic amputation of his 4th and 5th toes (pp. 4-5).
 - Multiple shrapnel wounds to his face, chest, both arms, and legs (pp. 4-5).



Medical Evacuation and Rehabilitation (1944–1945)

- August 2, 1944: Evacuated by air from France to Basingstoke Neuroplastic Hospital in the UK, initially placed on the "Seriously Ill" list (p. 4). He underwent multiple complex surgeries to graft skin onto his left foot and treat his severe head cavity (p. 5).
- October 1944: Repatriated back to Canada (p. 6). He spent the next year bouncing between Camp Hill Hospital in Halifax, Ste. Anne's Hospital, and the Montreal Neurological Institute (pp. 6-7).
- Long-Term Complications:
 - Head: The skull defect left a persistent nasal fistula (air escaped his forehead when blowing his nose), loss of smell, occasional headaches, and post-traumatic memory disturbances (pp. 6-8). X-rays later revealed a piece of shrapnel remained embedded in his right frontal lobe (p. 6).
 - Vision: He developed a traumatic cataract in his left eye, resulting in total loss of vision (p. 7).
 - Foot: His left foot suffered rigid tarsal joints and intense pain (p. 7). Specialists eventually recommended a Syme's amputation (ankle disarticulation) (p. 7).



Discharge and Post-War

- Awards: Awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp (January 15, 1944) (p. 8).
- August 4, 1945: Medically discharged from the military as physically unfit for further service (p. 8). He was classified as a Class 1 pensioner (p. 8).
- Death: John Daniel MacEachern passed away on June 21, 1947, less than two years after his discharge. He was fishing off the shores of Cape George when he was observed to topple over while standing on his little boat, and fall into the water. By the time rescuers were able to get to him, he had drowned. The Canadian Pension Commission ruled his death was not directly related to his military service (p. 8).