

Colonel Armine John Kerry, OBE, CD



Armine John Kerry was born in 1905. His father, John George Gale Kerry was a noted hydroelectric engineer with major hydroelectric projects in Manitoba and Ontario, as well as writing important technical publications, to his credit. While both his father and mother were born in Canada, they appear to have spent considerable time in England where they married in London in 1899.

John attended Bradford School in Berkshire and when he entered RMC in 1923, he had a distinct English accent. He got on well at RMC. He was a prolific sports writer and assistant editor of the Review. He was also an excellent student, winning prizes for academic achievement including a Governor-General's Medal. On graduating in 1927, he was one of two cadets to enter the Permanent Force and was posted to No. Detachment Halifax, N.S., on his appointment to the Royal Canadian Engineers.

Captain Kerry earned a Bachelor of Applied Science (Civil) in 1936. He was transferred to the Canadian Active Service Force at the outbreak of the Second World War and soon promoted to major and appointed District Engineering Officer for Military District 4 headquarters in Montreal. With a staff of one officer, one foreman of works, two works sergeants, one draughtsman, two accountant clerks and one stenographer, he, along with all the other DEOs across the country, was given the task of building camps and other facilities needed to support the mobilization.

His first command position was of 'A' Company, 1st Battalion, RCE formed in Toronto in April 1940. The battalion soon made its way to England and was employed primarily on works projects – airfields, accommodations, hospitals and some defensive works. He was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in March 1942 and took command of the battalion. In March 1944 the 1st Battalion was re-organized as 2nd Army Troops Engineers. Kerry became CRE and the companies reorganized as the 32nd, 33rd, 34th Field Companies and 11th Field Park Company. By the end of July 1944, they were in France as part of the 2nd Canadian Corps and later, 1st Canadian Army. Their tasks were primarily Line of Communications and included extensive road and bridge construction from the Normandy Beachhead into Germany. In January 1945, Kerry was promoted to colonel and returned to England to command the Canadian Engineer Reinforcement Unit in Cove, Hampshire. With the end of the war approaching, he was charged with organizing the demobilization of the Canadian Army in Europe. He started by sending over 1200 reinforcements to the Continent to release older soldiers from duties and give them an early return

home. Unfortunately, casualties were higher than anticipated and only a few soldiers got an early release from the front lines. Colonel Kerry was awarded the Order of the British Empire for his accomplishments over this wartime service.

On returning to Canada, Colonel Kerry was appointed Director of Works and Construction on 4 August 1945 and retired from the Army the following year. He was an active member of the RMC Club and the Military Engineers Association of Canada, the predecessor of the CMEA. As chair of the board set up in Holland in 1944 to establish The Royal Canadian Engineers' Memorial Scholarship Fund, he is regarded as a founding member of what has become the CMEA Bursary Fund.

Colonel Armine John Kerry, OBE, CD, died on 19 Jan 1996 in Woodstock, Oxfordshire, England. His English wife Kathleen, who he married in 1943, had died a year before him in Woodstock.