



William Howard Grant was born on March 6, 1918, in Yarmouth, a port town in the southwest of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. His parents, Edward Blake Grant (1881–1970) and Mary Regina Forsythe (1877–1972), were both from the Yarmouth area. They had five children: Donald, Hector, Viola, Dorothy, and — ten years later — William.

His parents' marriage was registered in 1904, but it likely took place earlier. William was the first child whose date of birth was officially recorded. The names and birth dates of the other children were recorded only

in the family Bible.

William started working after finishing eighth grade at Public School. At age sixteen, he took a one-year evening course in automobile mechanics at a technical school. For the last four years before he entered military service, he worked for his father, who was a blacksmith.

On December 28, 1941, William married Doris Pauline Kenney (1915-1997), who was born in Central Chebogue, about five kilometers southeast of Yarmouth.

In 1942, William volunteered for the Canadian Army in Yarmouth because he felt it was his duty. On April 20, he underwent a medical examination and was deemed fit for service overseas. He enlisted on May 12.

William said that he had first tried to enlist in the army in 1941 but had been turned down with an 'E' classification — permanently unfit for service. The reason for this was likely his low score on the M-test, which was used in personnel selection to assess learning ability and aptitude. In 1942, he also scored low on the M-test: 84 on a scale of 0 to 211, well below the average of 130 for Canadian soldiers.

The officer who evaluated William in 1942 still saw potential for William to be deployed. He summarized his findings as follows:

Well meaning, pleasant, appears ambitious. Grade 8 education. Free talker. Background of blacksmithing. Somewhat nervous and anxious. Low "M" score, which in this case does not seem to represent the man's true worth. Should be a conscientious and useful handy man.

Williams' military career would prove that this was not so simple. There are serious doubts as to whether he was truly motivated to carry out his military duties.

On June 16, 1942, William was transferred to the training center in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. He completed his basic training there in August. He was then transferred to Camp Borden, Ontario, for training with the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. After three weeks, he was granted six months of "industrial leave" to work in civilian life. This leave was later extended by another six months. On November 1, 1942, while on leave, Lois Ann, the daughter of William and Doris, was born.



Yarmouth, June 7, 1942.

In October 1943, William returned to the army; he was stationed at *No. 6 District Depot* in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In late April 1944, he was interviewed to determine what his role would be. Because there was a high demand for infantrymen and he needed to be retrained anyway, it was decided that he would be assigned to the infantry. After a week in Aldershot, Nova Scotia, he was temporarily assigned to the infantry training center in Yarmouth. There, he failed every part of the test following basic training — according to his commander, on purpose. On August 15, William returned to Aldershot. He remained there until late November 1944 to continue his infantry training.

Since his return in October 1943, William had been absent without leave (AWL) on several occasions for a few days at a time and had received a minor disciplinary penalty for it. In October 1944, however, he was absent without leave for 11 days. This time, the punishment was harsher: he forfeited his pay for those 11 days plus an additional 28 days. Immediately following this, he was given three weeks of unpaid leave. A week after this leave, it was decided that he had received sufficient training and was physically fit to be deployed overseas.

William left Halifax for England on December 19, 1944, and arrived there a week later. He was assigned to the *No. 3 Canadian Infantry Training Regiment* in Aldershot, Hampshire. There he completed his final training, after which he was sent to the front as reinforcement.

On February 12, 1945, William was flown to the mainland, but it wasn't until March 14 that he joined the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, also known as the *Rileys*, part of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division.

After the capture of Xanten on March 11, the 2nd Infantry Division had withdrawn to the Reichswald Forest near Kleve. Like other regiments, the Rileys had suffered heavy losses during the Rhineland Offensive. They were given two weeks to rest and to incorporate reinforcements — including William — into their ranks.

In late March, the 2nd Infantry Division was able to cross the Rhine near Rees after a bridgehead on the opposite bank had been established. A rapid advance into the northern Netherlands began.



*Elderswolde, April 13, 1945.
Rileys in 'Kangaroos' on their
way to Groningen.*

*Source: Groninger Archieven.
Photo: D. Guravich.*

On April 13, 1945, after Assen had been liberated, the 2nd Infantry Division advanced toward Groningen. The lead troops consisted of a column of tanks from the *Fort Garry Horse*, followed by 'Kangaroos' — tanks without turrets — which were used to transport soldiers from the Rileys. They approached the city from the southwest. At the city limits, the Canadians encountered a roadblock. They came under fire from machine guns and *Flak* anti-aircraft guns positioned near the Stadspark. This marked the beginning of the Battle of Groningen, which would last until April 16.

As dusk fell, the Fort Garry Horse's tanks withdrew: they were too vulnerable to anti-tank weapons. The Rileys, however, fought on and managed to clear the Paterswoldseweg south of the Parkweg and capture the Stadspark. They also attempted to capture the strategically important Parkbrug over the Noord-Willemskanaal, but failed to do so that day.

During these battles, the Rileys' D Company attacked the German defenders on Parkweg by flanking them from the west. They advanced along Peizerweg on the northern edge of the Stadspark. The commander, Major Lyle H. Dearing, wrote to Doris Grant on April 19:

Your husband was in the company jeep going forward to bring back casualties and prisoners when it was hit by a Panzerfaust, a bazooka type anti tank weapon. He died immediately, [...] he suffered no pain.

Seven soldiers from the Rileys were killed in the fighting on April 13; one soldier later died in an English hospital from the wounds he had sustained that day.

William was buried at Rozenburg farm on Peizerweg, near the spot where he was killed. In 1946, he was reinterred at the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten, where he rests in grave 05.E.10. The inscription on his headstone reads "HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED REST."

On March 25, 1945, Williams' son William Kenneth was born. A note to that effect was made in his service record on April 19. It is unclear whether the news reached William "in time."

After his death, William Grant was awarded the following Canadian military decorations: the *1939–1945 Star*, the *France and Germany Star*, the *War Medal 1939–1945*, and the *Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp*.

William is commemorated on the Yarmouth War Memorial; his name appears below that of his nephew Freeman Grant, who was killed in action in Italy at the age of 17. William's name is also inscribed on his parents' headstone at Yarmouth Mountain Cemetery.



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