

Pte Melvin Jannack

8-C-11



Melvin Jannack was born 20 January 1922 or 1923 in Kemptville, Ontario as the son of Alexander Jannack and Alma Winnifred Best of North Gower. His father was a labourer. The family were followers of the United Church. Melvin left school at age 13, having completed Grade 6 or 8 at Malakoff. His parents had married in Worthing, Sussex, England on 2 September 1917, while his father was a member of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

At the time of Melvin Jannack's death, his father was 56 and his mother 50. He was the second eldest child in the family, with four brothers Howard R. (24), was overseas too as a trooper with. 4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards in Germany, Edwin Gordon (19), Kenneth (17) and Ralph (15), and a sister, Gwenneth (13). Melvin lived twelve years in North Gower and eleven in Kemptville.

At the time of his enlistment he was single and was living in North Gower Township. He had worked as a labourer for six years for Harold McCready, a trucker at R.R. 1, Malakoff.

He enlisted in the 1st Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery, on 16 November 1941 in Ottawa as a Gunner. At that time, the Battery had just been designated as part of the 6th Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, whose batteries were still scattered across Canada.

On 5 December 1941 he was attached to no. 31 Canadian Army (Basic) Training Centre in Cornwall, Ont., where he remained until 4 February 1942 when he was taken on strength of the 6th Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, then concentrated in Petawawa, Ont. In early 1942 the Regiment received its first Bofors 40 mm. anti-aircraft gun, which would be its equipment throughout its service life.

From 19 May to 3 June Jannack was on leave, and again on embarkation leave 17 to 21 September. He was hospitalized in Petawawa 28 August - 4 September for tonsillitis. On 27 October 1942 he embarked for the United Kingdom with his Regiment, arriving on 5 November and initially being stationed in Colchester, Essex.

Until June 1943 he seems to have spent much of his time either on leave or hospitalized again with acute tonsillitis. About the same time the 6th Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment was designated as part of the II Canadian Corps for the invasion of Europe.

On 30 January 1944 he was sentenced to seven days field punishment and seven days loss of pay for urinating in the public thoroughfare.

On 6 July 1944 the 6th Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment deployed to France, landing two days later. Jannack seems to have served with the artillery throughout the battle for Normandy, and was returned to the United Kingdom on 16 October.

On 28 October he remustered to the Winnipeg Grenadiers as an infantry Private. On 18 November he was taken on strength of no. 3 Canadian Infantry Training Regiment and completed a four week remuster training course. He qualified on the rifle, light machine gun, the PIAT anti-tank weapon and the Sten submachine gun. Again on 28 December 1944 he embarked for North West Europe, arriving the next day.

Eventually, he was taken on strength of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment on 27 March 1945.

He was joining a veteran infantry battalion, part of 4th Canadian Armoured Division, which had been in action since July 1944. It had spent the winter fighting in the flooded Dutch polders where tanks and artillery could give limited assistance to the infantrymen's battle. Now, spring had come to the Netherlands and the Regiment was absorbing reinforcements and retraining at Best. For the first time conscript soldiers, as well as those like Jannack, remustered into the infantry, were joining the unit, which created tensions with the more experienced infantrymen. As well, it was becoming obvious that the war was coming to an end, and there was a feeling of "Let's not get killed in the last two weeks."

The Regiment began its part in Operation Haymaker, the breakout east and north from the Rhine bridgehead, crossing the Rhine on a pontoon bridge on 31 March.

Jannack's first week in action was in the Netherlands, as the Regiment cleared the towns of Neede, Delden and Almelo. German resistance could still be stiff - the Regiment suffered 67 casualties getting into Delden.

The last actions were fought as the Lincoln and Welland moved northeast across the border into Germany. Small groups of Germans, out of touch with each other and with the overall situation, faced Canadian company-sized columns of armour and infantry, and often fought hard in defence of their homeland.¹⁰ The Canadians advanced in a series of bounds from Sögel to Friesoythe, across the Küsten Canal to Bad Zwischenahn.

On 20 April 1945 Jannack was killed in action, one of 32 men lost by the Regiment in two day's fighting near the Küsten Canal. He was initially buried in a temporary grave near Friesoythe, Germany, but on March 9 1946 his remains were removed to the Holten Canadian Military Cemetery in Holten.

His medals, the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the War Medal and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp were sent to his mother in 1949. His mother had previously received the Memorial Cross.

On his headstone: Too dearly loved To be forgotten Mother and dad Sister and brothers



Owen Cooke
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