



Harold Archibald Kenney was born on September 7, 1922, in Lower Argyle, a fishing village about 30 km from the port city of Yarmouth in Nova Scotia. His parents, Harold Archibald Kenney Sr. (1891–1955) and Eva Lillian Harding (1893–1935), were from the same region. They married in 1916 and had four children: Elinor, Harold, Olive, and Earlon.

Harold's parents were married shortly before his father enlisted to fight in World War I. Harold Sr. served with the *Canadian Railway Troops*, a unit responsible for building and maintaining railroads behind the front lines. In November 1918, he was seriously injured while working near Arras in northern France. He hit a mustard gas bomb, causing it to ignite and leaving him with second-degree burns. He spent three months in hospital recovering.

In October 1919, six months after Harold's father returned from Europe, his parents moved to Boston, Massachusetts, USA, where their daughter Elinor was born in 1921. Not long after, Harold's mother returned to Lower Argyle with Elinor. She probably felt more at home in the countryside, close to her family. Harold's father was away from home most of the time. At first, he worked as a sailor; later, he worked at a shipyard in Boston. In 1929, he became a naturalized U.S. citizen. The other children — Harold, Olive, and Earlon — were all born in Lower Argyle.



In December 1935, Harold's mother died of uterine cancer. During her illness and after her death, her youngest sister, Veda, likely took on the responsibility of caring for the family. In December 1936, Harold's father remarried Florence Goodwin, who was about twenty years younger than him. Harold Sr. and Florence had two children, both of whom were born in Lower Argyle. It wasn't until 1942 that Florence moved to Boston to join her husband, along with the three children who were still living at home.

Harold completed eight years of *public school* in 1936, when he was 14 years old. The following year, he left Nova Scotia. He likely had little reason to stay

there — his mother had passed away and his father was absent. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, there were also better job prospects in a city. He settled in the port city of Saint John, New Brunswick, and made a life for himself there. He found work as a shipping room clerk at *George E. Barbour Co.*, a wholesale and food-processing company operating in Atlantic Canada and Quebec.

Harold was an active member of the *Douglas Avenue Christian Church* in Saint John, where he taught Sunday school and served as president of the Young People's Society. He intended going "into the Missionary" after World War II. It was at that church that he met Vera Beurle McEachern.



In 1942, Harold volunteered for the Canadian Army. Prior to that, he had served from July 1939 to August 1940 in the *2nd Battalion, Saint John Fusiliers*. He entered active duty on November 16, 1942. A month later, he requested and received permission to get married. On January 22, 1943, he married Vera McEachern at the Douglas Avenue Christian Church.

Harold completed basic training in Edmundston, New Brunswick. He was then transferred to the *Coast Defence and Anti-Aircraft Artillery Training Centre* in Halifax, where he completed eight weeks of artillery training and was assigned to defend the important naval port.

After five months, he sailed from Halifax to England, where he disembarked on July 21, 1943. He remained there for over a year before being deployed to mainland Europe. During this period, he trained as a *Driver Mechanic (MV)*, a specialist who drove vehicles and performed minor repairs on his own and other vehicles. In July 1944, he earned his highest-level qualification, 'C'.

On October 5, 1944, Harold left England. Eleven days later, he joined the *Royal Hamilton Light Infantry*, also known as the *Rileys*, part of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division. At that time, the Rileys were fighting on Zuid-Beveland in the Battle of the Scheldt — the offensive to capture the banks of the Scheldt from the Germans so that the port of Antwerp could be used to supply the army.

From November 1944 to January 1945, the 2nd Infantry Division spent the winter near Nijmegen. Following Operation Market Garden, a static front had developed there, with a bulge into German territory known as the *Nijmegen Salient*. In February 1945, the Rhineland Offensive began, which aimed to capture the western bank of the Rhine north of the Ruhr from the Germans. The Rileys were first deployed on February 17. During the fighting, which lasted until Xanten was captured on March 11, the Rileys, like other Canadian regiments, sustained heavy losses. It was in this period that Harold was promoted to *Acting Corporal*.

After the Rhineland Offensive, the Rileys were withdrawn to the Reichswald forest near Kleve to rest and incorporate reinforcements into their ranks. In late March, the 2nd Infantry Division was able to cross the Rhine at Rees after a bridgehead had been established on the opposite bank. A rapid advance into the northern Netherlands began.

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.



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

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

As dusk fell, the Fort Garry Horse's tanks withdrew: they were too vulnerable to anti-tank weapons. The Rileys continued fighting and managed to clear the Paterswoldseweg south of the Parkweg and capture the Stadspark. However, they were unable to capture the strategically important Parkbrug bridge over the Noord-Willemskanaal.

Seven soldiers from the Rileys were killed in the fighting on April 13 in Groningen, including Harold Kenney. He was wounded and died that same day. His service record lists the cause of death as "died whilst in service" rather than "died of wounds received in action," which suggests that he was involved in an accident while driving a vehicle. Harold was temporarily buried at the Zuiderbegraafplaats cemetery in Assen.

In May 1945, a memorial service for Harold was held at the Douglas Avenue Christian Church in Saint John. His father-in-law served as chairman of the memorial committee. His father from Boston, his sister Elinor, and his aunt Veda from Lower Argyle also attended the service.

In 1946, Harold was reinterred at the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten, where he rests in grave 10.E.16. The personal inscription on his headstone reads:

A HELPING HAND
TO ALL HE KNEW
HE WAS SO KIND
SO GENEROUS AND TRUE.

In Canada, Harold is commemorated at the Yarmouth War Memorial, a monument honoring the men and women from Yarmouth County, Nova Scotia, who lost their lives in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War.

After his death, Harold Kenney was awarded the following Canadian military decorations: the *1935-1945 Star*, the *France and Germany Star*, the *War Medal 1935-1945* and the *Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp*.



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