

Pte William George Lally

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William George Lally was a private in the Algonquin regiment during the last months of the Second World War. William Lally was 24 years old in 1944 when he enlisted. He lived in Toronto with his father and four sisters before his sisters had married and moved out. William Lally was the middle child of all five siblings. He was born in Sudbury, where his parents had



moved to after immigrating to Canada from England. But soon after he was born they moved to Toronto for work. William's mother died at some point during his life though when and of what is unclear.

Life would have been hard For Lally, not only was he after year now alone with his father, after his sisters and mother were no longer around. Not only that he also had a personality disorder called Schizoid.

Schizoid is a disorder that causes the person to not find value in social relationships.

They can form them, they just find no reason to do so. People suffering from schizoid tend to have few friends or a

significant other. The lack of social relations would make for a lonely life, even more so, as all his family left one by one until it was just his father. It would be hard to be a soldier, but not wanting to befriend your fellow soldiers or if you finally find value in it being unable because you have no experience at it. That would make life sad and lonely, it would also make the last days and your death even more sad and lonely.

Pte Lally enlisted just after the D-day landings, while the battle for Normandy was still raging, it was not yet clear if the Allies were going to win. Due to the hard fighting that the allied forces predicted necessary to defeat Germany and to replace the heavy losses that the Canadian army had suffered so far, the Canadian military went on a new recruiting drive picking up those that were not quite good enough the last time. This is when William George Lally found himself accepted into the Canadian army. While it is unclear if he had tried to enlist before, but I feel that he had tried. Pte Lally spent his first months being shipped around to various bases for training. He arrived in Britain on the 27th of December, he then conducted his final training as well as training in specific fields like language and customs for the region that he would be deployed to. Upon shipping out across the channel to Europe, where he met up with the Algonquin regiment in Belgium. Pte Lally spent forty days with the Algonquins during the liberation of Belgium as they pushed the Germans back across the Rhine. Soon after Pte Lally arrived. Allied forces began planning some of the last major operations for Canada in the war. This was Operation Cannonshot and Operation Anger. These operations were to cross the IJsselmeer river and capture the cities of Apeldoorn and Arnhem. The true objective was to complete the encirclement of German forces in the Netherlands. Pte Lally would not die during these operations, instead he would die in the skirmishes with the surrounded German forces that continued until the 4th of May when they surrendered. Pte William Lally fought alongside his regiment for forty days before dying on April 18th, 1945. The war for Canada would end nineteen days later.

Pte William George Lally should not have been a soldier, he should not have died earning a measly \$1.40¹. He should have been allowed to continue living his life and not allow him to pay the ultimate price for his country. While ideally no one should have to die fighting for their country, this is not an idealistic objection to Pte Lally's enlistment. Canada's current recruitment policy states that anyone with any kind of mental impairment whether it directly affects their abilities or not, disqualifies you from service². Back then there was a similar policy but there were far fewer acknowledged mental illnesses back then, highlighting the severity of schizoid. The fact that he was accepted shows not only his desire to go and fight but the slackening of regulations by Canada. Not only did Pte Lally have Schizoid but he also had pains in his leg when it rains and according to his psychological profile he had a poor attention span as the report said he is easily distracted³. His death was a gamble for success by Canada, one that failed. We will never know if his death was caused at all by any of his problems or if he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

¹ "Lally-william_george soldier profile.pdf," Collections Canada http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item?op=pdf&redirect=1&app=kia&id=sw-26297-lally-william_george-b162225

² Croxall, Kevin and Selena

³ "Lally-william_george soldier profile.pdf," Collections Canada http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item?op=pdf&redirect=1&app=kia&id=sw-26297-lally-william_george-b162225

While there is much to be sad about with the circumstances of William Lally's enlistment and then his death, none of that can be changed but at the very least we can stop speculating on his life and see what he did. Pte Lally was in the Canadian army for just over seven months. For the first five months he was stationed in Canada doing his basic training. Pte Lally did his training at BTC Brantford. BTC Brantford was a military camp set up to increase the number of people able to be trained at one time. After completing his basic training Pvt Lally found himself on his way to England to receive more advanced training and be acclimatized for the theater of operation they would be fighting in. He trained throughout the winter, finally arriving in Europe and meeting up with the Algonquins on March 8th. He arrived just in time to take part in the operations to cross the Rhine river. Operation Cannonshot and Anger. Pte Lally fought through the battle for Arnhem and lived through the skirmishes of operation Clearwater, only to die 3 days later to some random encounter.

Pte Lally did not die to some random German he came across. No Pte William Gorge Lally died during the final German attack of any significance, carried out by German Paratroopers and Hardened remnants of the German army. After the completion of operation Anger, Cannonshot and Clearwater, German Army Group H was trapped in a pocket north of the IJsselmeer river. Unlike much of the German army in late 1944, it was not made up of the dregs of the barrel, it contained both the largely intact 15th infantry Army and the elite 5th Airborne Army. These units in conjunction with anything else that General Blaskowitz could get his hands on fought against the allies over the upper Rhine since operation Market Garden, where they held the offensive. The encirclement of Army Group H was the last straw, without any

available forces the German Reich surrendered, without any resistance. Pte lally fought in the engagement that finished off the Reich resistance.

William George Lally was not the smartest man and like most working-class families he did not get a full education before leaving school. Just because he did not have a great start with his education, dropping out after two years of high school, he still tried to learn. For three years he attended Torrville College in Toronto. He attended Torrville for night school while he worked as a clerk. Even though Lally had not been dealt a great hand he was working to improve it, both through school and work and unfortunately, we were never able to see what he would become due to his ultimate sacrifice.

Bibliography

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Kevin and Selena Croxall (retired Canadian Armed Forces) in discussion with author,
January-May

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