



Private Howard John LINNELL 01-A-13

Howard J. Linnell was born on January 27, 1923 the sixth of Olga and Lyman Linnell's ten children. The family lived on a farm close to the northern edge of the Canadian prairies near the village of

Keatley Saskatchewan. The family was athletically inclined and was well known locally for their skills in playing ball in summer and hockey in winter. One of Howard's sisters described their time in the Keatley area as "the good days" due mainly to the close work and personal connections that most people in their neighborhood had with each other. In that large and bustling household full of youthful energy Howard tended to be the calm one.

Most parents and other adults of the time however viewed their future prospects with real concern. The 1930's were troubling years with the threat of war in Europe and the depression which brought a catastrophic drop in prices for farm produce all of which was worsened by an almost decade long drought on the prairies. Many young people were forced at an early age to leave their family homes in an effort to seek some means of supporting themselves elsewhere. Howard lived most of his formative years in what came to be known as the Great Depression.

His oldest brother and sister had moved some 1600 km west to Vancouver British Columbia on the Pacific coast of Canada to find employment and start their own families. At the age of 19 he also traveled west to join them in the hope that prospects for employment would be better than on the depressed and parched prairies. He was fortunate in finding employment in a Vancouver

shipyard, work that was very different from the farm work that he was accustomed to.

In his home community of Keatley Saskatchewan Howard's family lived near a family by the name of Brown. One of their daughters, Dorothy, and Howard grew up in close proximity to each other and as adults began to date. After finding employment in Vancouver he wrote to Dorothy asking her to move to Vancouver and marry him. They subsequently lived for a time with Howard's older sister and her husband before finding a home of their own.

It was not long before Howard received his call into the Canadian army which was followed by four months of basic training in British Columbia. He was then transferred to Chippewa Ontario to be joined a couple of months later by his new wife. He was soon transferred again to another training camp and then to Europe with The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada at which time Dorothy return to their home community in Saskatchewan.

In about November or December 1944 two young soldiers by the name of Nels Soiseth and Kermit Nesseth happened to meet Howard Linnell in England. Being from the same district in Saskatchewan the three young men all knew each other. They had competed at sports events and had worked together on harvesting crews. Nels later reported to his family back home that Howard had been in very low spirits while in England suffering terribly from homesickness and worry. His wife Dorothy was expecting a child. His two friends tried to support and encourage him as much as they could but, given the circumstances, little could be done. Soiseth had just come from Belgium and after his training course in England was over both he and Nesseth were shipped to Holland as was Howard Linnell.

Details on the manner of his death are not entirely clear but our best information, which was passed on by one of his Saskatchewan friends who he had recently seen in England, is that on April 6th, 1945 Pte. Howard Linnell was sent out on night patrol for the purpose of gaining information on German positions. He was crossing a body of water, which we assume was a canal, when he touched a trip wire causing floodlights to come on leaving him fully exposed to German fire. He died alone at the age of 22 of multiple enemy gunshot wounds just one month and two days before VE day and one month and eight days after his son Dwaine Howard Linnell, whom he had never seen, was born.

When his former neighbors from Saskatchewan learned of his death they sought out his temporary grave and with a borrowed camera photographed it. They then mailed the photo to private Linnell's parents at Keatley Saskatchewan for whom it served as a small, though tragic, connection with their lost son.

Dorothy Linnell remarried in 1952 and his son was raised in a good farm home not far from his father's home at Keatley.

