



Walter Oscar Rintala, nicknamed Walter, is born on August 3, 1913, in Garson Mine/Village, Ontario. His parents are of Finnish descent.

His father's full name is Oskari Liinuksenpoika Rintala, known in Canada as 'Oscar'. His mother's name is Anna Rintala, née Niemi.

Walter is the eldest of four children.



The family also includes one more son and two daughters.

Garson Mine/Village, Ontario (Sudbury Region)

This area rapidly developed into a mining camp in the 1910s, driven by the nickel industry. Father Rintala worked as a carpenter at the nickel mine.



Walter leaves school at fifteen, having completed grade eighth. He takes on anything that would earn him money. At eighteen, he can get a job in the nickel mine.

This heavy work is not satisfying, and he is moving to Timmins, Ontario, in 1932. There, he finds a new job and starts to work for the Timmins Bottling Co.

On December 9, 1936, Walter marries Ida Aileen Nikumaa, four years younger than him. Their daughter, Eileen Ann, is born in June 1937.

Walter enlists on November 16, 1943; he is a salesman for Timmins Bottling at the time.

As usual for new recruits, Walter has to see the medics.

His dossier reads: length 5'9", weighed 176 lbs. A small, round scar on his right cheek is mentioned as 'characteristic'. He has brown eyes and brown hair.

Also noted that he has a slight squint, but he could distinguish colors well.

Conclusion: fit for service.

After his initial introduction to the army at the district depot in Toronto, he is transferred to Brantford, Ontario, in December 1943 for basic infantry training. He remains there for a relatively long time; in February 1944, he is transferred to Camp Borden, Ontario.

Walter is granted a few weeks' leave at the end of April 1944, but is recalled on May 8 '44. It is unclear whether this is due to the impending invasion of Normandy. He is assigned to No. 1 Training Brigade and proceeds to Camp Debert, the concentration camp for troops destined to cross to the United Kingdom (UK).

On June 3, 1944, along with many others, Walter boards a troop ship and arrives in the UK on June 11, 1944.

Walter is initially assigned to a reinforcement battalion. He quickly crosses over to France. On July 23, 1944, he lands on Juno Beach in Normandy and, a few days later, he is assigned to the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada (QOR).

Walter, just been promoted to Lance Corporal on August 19, 1944, is wounded in his right foot by shelling. The QOR are near Grand Mesnil in Normandy at the time. He is treated at the 6th British General Hospital, located in Bayeux. On September 16, 1944, he returns to the QOR.

At the end of October 1944, Walter is temporarily assigned to the headquarters of the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade. The QOR is then heavily involved in Operation Switchback, the battle to secure Antwerp as a supply port for the Allies. Not many notes are found in Walter's file after this. The War Diary of the QOR provides clarity about his experiences.

In November 1944, the regiment starts a long, nighttime, movement: via Lokeren, St. Nicholas and Antwerp in Belgium, they advance further into the Netherlands via Tilburg and 's-Hertogenbosch towards Nijmegen. The troops cover the final stretch to Berg en Dal on foot.



The winter months are often described as relatively quiet.

However, the diary reports daily patrols and fire contacts with the enemy. The QOR suffer more than 50 casualties during the winter (until the end of March 1945). The weather conditions were also far from pleasant. Meanwhile, a massive force was being built up in the region.

After the largely unsuccessful Operation Market Garden, a Canadian-British force of approximately 400,000 men and approximately 35,000 vehicles was built up in the Nijmegen region during the winter of 1944/1945. A similar American force was assembled near Roermond.

The goal: to push the German units back beyond the Rhine.

On February 8, the Canadians and British launched their attack on the Rhineland with Operation Veritable. They encountered fierce resistance in the Reichswald Forest. It became the bloodiest battle ever on German soil. By March 10, the western bank of the Rhine was almost completely cleared of German troops.

During the night of March 23 and 24, the Allies crossed the Rhine at Wesel and Rees using amphibious vehicles. On March 24, another 16,000 paratroopers landed on the other side of the Rhine. This was the largest single-day airborne operation ever. On March 29, the Rhine crossing was complete, and the Rhineland fell into Allied hands. The Rhineland Offensive claimed 25,000 Allied and over 60,000 German casualties.

After the start of Operation Veritable, the QOR took up defensive positions in and around Millingen aan de Rijn on February 9, 1945.

They remained there until the Allies had successfully crossed the Rhine.

Walter Oscar Rintala must have endured these operations without any major problems. Otherwise, it would certainly have been mentioned in his file.

The last entry for Walter: Killed in Action April 26, 1945.

Where are the QOR in April 1945?

After crossing the German-Dutch border the QOR advance north.

They fight at Laagkeppel from 3 until 5 April 1945; at Deventer from 9 until 11 April 1945; and at Wons, Pingjum and Witmarsum in Friesland from 16 until 18 April 1945.

On April 21, 1945, they cross the border into Germany in northeast Groningen.

On April 22, 1945, they liberate the hamlet Stapelmoor and push on to Holthusen and Bunde.

Then they continue their advance towards Ditzum and Ditzumer Verlaat.

On April 25, 1945, they are heavily affected by sniper fire and shelling.

That day, the regiment counts a total of eight wounded and four dead.

One of the wounded must have been Walter Oscar Rintala.

His medical record lists shrapnel wounds to his right shoulder, right arm, right leg, and left ankle. Despite undergoing rapid surgery, Walter dies on April 26, 1945.

He is given a temporary grave in Meppen, Germany.

The CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten becomes his final resting place. The grave reference is: plot 10, row D, grave 1.

He is awarded:

1939-1945 Star; France-Germany Star; War Medal 1939-1945; and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

His headstone reads:

SLEEP PEACEFULLY, DEAR DADDY

Sources:

www.cwgc.org; www.ancestry.com;
www.canada.ca/library-archives; wikipedia, project '44,
War Diary Queen's Own Rifles of Canada.

