



La Fleche, Wood River, Saskatchewan is Norman's birthplace. He is born on March 17, 1923, to Lemuel Alexander Robinson (a watchmaker) and Annie Robinson (maiden name Graham). English is spoken at home, and the family attends the United Church.

Norman is the youngest; he has three older brothers, and his sister is also older.

When Norman enlisted for active duty on November 13, 1942, the family lived in Souris, Manitoba. Two of his brothers had already enlisted.

Souris is a small town that felt the impact of the Second World War. An airfield was built nearby as part of the British Commonwealth Pilot Training Program.

Norman attended school until he was 15, completing 9th grade, the last year of which is considered high school. After that, he started working. He first worked in a café for about two and a half years. He then joined the government at the Department of Transportation and also worked on airport construction for about two and a half years. His job title is somewhat unclear.

In his enlisting form Norman describes it himself as a "civil engineer."

His medical report states: 1.80 m tall, weighs 75 kg, brown eyes, and brown hair. Distinctive features: a scar on his right side and left foot.

Norman was an athletic figure, as revealed later in an interview. He was a Boy Scout, captained a hockey team, and once won a 3-mile race as a member of a swimming club.

Norman started his military time at the district depot in Winnipeg on November 13, 1942, and was immediately granted leave to report later. On December 4, 1942, he reported for basic training in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. He was granted a few days' leave during the New Year's Eve of 1942/1943. In January 1943, he spent a week in the hospital after sustaining a foot injury.

In early February 1943, Norman was transferred to the infantry training center Camp Shilo, Manitoba.

Norman remained at Camp Shilo until November 1943, when he was assigned to Brockville, Ontario, and reported at the Officers' Training Center (OTC).

An initial assessment recommended him for officer training, though with some reservations.



Norman didn't stay long at the OTC. After two months, at the end of December 1943, he was assigned to Camp Barriefield, Ontario, the training center of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. (RCCS)

After a short training period at Barriefield, Norman was transferred to Camp Shilo, Manitoba, the training center of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, in early February 1944.

He applied for this with the approval of his parents and was found suitable during the usual supplementary examinations and interviews.

At the end of March 1944, Norman received his paratrooper badge and was granted embarkation leave before departing for the United Kingdom.

On April 19, 1944, Norman arrived in the UK.

After a few weeks stationed at a transit station, he was taken on strength by the Airborne Forces Depot/School at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, the training center for parachute troops, at the end of April 1944.

He had to familiarize himself with British equipment and disciplines.

Tactical training for parachute troops was also practiced here.

Norman received his final jump training at the Airfield Detachment at RAF Ringway.



Practicing a mass drop at Ringway

A month later, Norman also successfully completed his training in the UK. His file then jumps to August 1944. Norman was not dropped in Normandy in June 1944. He traveled by ship to France, where he arrived on August 29, 1944.

Norman apparently survived his stay in France well. There are no records of any irregularities or injuries in his file. The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion returned to England on September 7, 1944.

Just before Christmas 1944, 1CPB was alerted regarding the Ardennes Offensive launched by the Germans. Due to poor weather conditions, they were not parachuted but instead sailed to Belgium.

To clarify:

On December 16, 1944, the Germans launched a final large-scale offensive on the Western Front. No fewer than 24 German divisions were involved in the offensive.

The objective of the German attack was a breakthrough through the Ardennes that would split the Allied forces. The objective was then to push on to Antwerp and recapture the port city.

The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion was the only Canadian unit to see action in the Battle of the Bulge, which was primarily an American-German battle.

On December 26, 1944, the troops arrived in Belgium and were transported by truck to the Ardennes. The German advance had by then almost come to a standstill.

Conducting patrols and clearing the assigned area of enemy groups was the task for 1CPB. In doing so, the paratroopers also encountered the brutality of some enemy units.

To clarify:

During their patrol through the town of Bande, the men discovered one of the many atrocities that had taken place during the war. Thirty-seven elderly men, children, and women were herded into the cellar of a house and then slaughtered with rifle fire and grenades.

On February 26, 1945, the battalion returned to Carter Barracks in Bulford, England, and Norman was granted leave until March 6.

Norman's file then only reads two more entries:

1. Boarded a plane and parachuted into Germany on March 24, 1945.
2. The final entry is dated March 30, 1945: Killed in Action.

The paratroopers had by then penetrated deep into Germany.

To clarify the movement of the 1CPB, the following information:

On March 26 and 27, 1945, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion began moving from Bergerfürth, near Wesel, Germany. Their final destination: the Baltic coast near Wismar, if feasible.

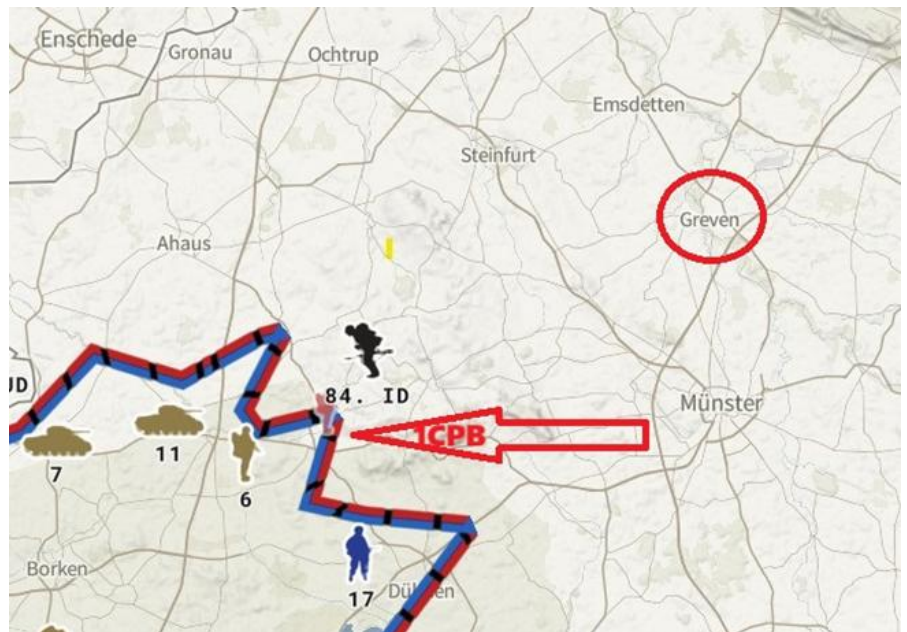
Their mission was to keep the Red Army out of Denmark, and preferably even further away. Over the next six weeks, the men of 1CPB covered the 480 kilometers.

On May 2, 1945, they arrived in Wismar, just a few hours before a Russian reconnaissance group arrived.

Where was the unit on March 30, 1945, the fateful day for Private Norman Wesley Robinson? A quote from the war diary of 1CPB:

B Company attacked GREVEN and crossed a bridge that was thought to be a target. Due to an unfortunate map-reading error, the company stopped at the first bridge, even though they could have continued to the second bridge without any problems.

Shortly afterwards, a large explosion was heard, severely damaging the second bridge, which turned out to be the actual target. This significantly hampered their advance.



However, A Company performed admirably during the capture of the town and suffered few casualties. The rest of the battalion entered the town shortly thereafter. Heavy enemy shell fire occurred during the night, resulting in several casualties.

One of those casualties near Greven (Germany) must have been Norman Wesley Robinson.

In the files of Norman also March 31, 1945, is mentioned as the date of his death. The paratroopers suffered at least five casualties in two days. Norman was given a temporary grave near Greven on April 1, 1945.

On August 7, 1946, his final resting place became the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten. The grave reference is: Plot 12, Row H, Grave 10.

He was awarded:

The 1939-1934 Star; the France-Germany Star; the Defence Medal; the 1939-1945 War Medal; and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp.

His headstone reads:
**A token of love
and remembrance
of a son
we shall never forget**



Sources:

www.cwgc.org; www.ancestry.com; www.canada.ca/library-archives, project '44