

## Taylor, Kenneth Walton Albert. Private.

12-H-1



Kenneth Walton Albert Taylor, nicknamed Kenneth, was born in Toronto, Ontario. He is the son of Lawrence George Taylor and Edith Jane Taylor.

He has an older brother, Albert, and a younger brother, Eric.

Kenneth's father is a salesman. English is spoken at home, and the family attends the United Church.

Kenneth attended three years of high school and a year at the Radio College of Canada in Toronto.

Technology and wireless communications were the main focus of his studies.

On August 17, 1942, Kenneth enlisted for active duty.

His older brother, Albert, was already serving in the Canadian Air Force by then.

At the time Kenneth enlisted, he had already gained some work experience. He was employed by John Inglis Co., a company closely involved in the war industry. Kenneth reports that he had welding experience.



Kenneth's first assignment was to the Royal Canadian Engineers, starting at the district depot in Toronto.

After just a month, he was transferred to the basic training camp in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Still assigned to the Engineers, Kenneth was next transferred to Camp Petawawa before the end of 1942.

He was already destined for paratrooper training at Fort Benning, Georgia, USA. For Kenneth, no leave during the New Year's Eve of 1942/43.

On January 15, 1943, Kenneth was officially taken on strength by the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Parachute Battalion, which was training at Fort Benning.

The training there was very intensive.

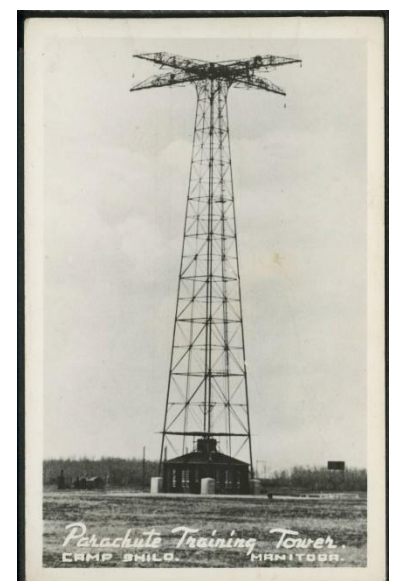
His file states that he completed the prescribed training and made the minimum number of jumps from an aircraft in mid-February 1943.

The training in the USA continued for several more weeks.

In the first half of April 1943, Kenneth was granted leave and returned to Canada.

On April 15, 1943, Kenneth reported to Camp Shilo, Manitoba.

A training facility had been established there by then for the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion. (1CPB)



Apparently, leave was scarce among the paratroopers. Kenneth took a "little time off" on his own initiative in May and June 1943.

In the army, this is called "Absent Without Leave" (AWL).

The consequences: a few days 'Confined to Barracks' (CB) and a few days' pay was withheld.

In mid-June 1943, he spent a few days in the Camp Shilo hospital with an ankle injury.

Kenneth's training then continued in the United Kingdom.

He received embarkation leave and left for the United Kingdom in July 1943, arriving there on July 29, 1943.

After several weeks of preparatory training, he arrived on September 21, 1943, at the Airborne Forces Depot/School at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, the training center for paratroopers.

Here he became familiar with British equipment and disciplines.

Tactical training for paratroopers was also provided there.

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



Mass drop training at Ringway



Barracks Bulford

He then reported to the 1CPB base at Carter Barracks in Bulford, England.

In November 1943, it is recorded that Kenneth had qualified as a regimental signalman.

He was permitted to wear the crossed flags on his uniform.

He spent the New Year's Eve of 1943/'44 in the barracks, but was on leave during the last week of January 1944.

Training continued, all focused on the airdrop preceding the planned D-Day landings.

The following entry in Kenneth's is only one line:

*"Boarded a plane and dropped into France during the night of June 5-6, 1944."*

The men of 1CPB encountered the harsh realities of war.

The battalion fought fierce battles in Normandy. On June 6, 1944, of the 534 paratroopers dropped, 21 men lost their lives, 94 were wounded, and 82 were taken prisoner of war.

Kenneth apparently coped well with his time in France. There are no records of any irregularities or injuries in his file.

On September 7, 1944, 1CPB returned to Bulford, England.

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 they travelled by ship to Belgium.

*Explanation:*

*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 aim was then to push on to Antwerp and recapture this port city. The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion was the only Canadian unit to see action in the Ardennes Offensive, which was primarily an American-German battle.*

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

The task of the 1CPB then became: patrolling and clearing the assigned area of enemy groups. In doing so, the paratroopers also faced the ferocity of some enemy units.

*Explanation:*

*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.*



Briefing paratroopers of 1CPB prior to a patrol during the Battle of the Bulge

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

In a letter home, he wrote:

*'I've seen the evidence of German atrocities and heard the stories of the locals. We know what we're fighting for. Fortunately, you're far away from it all at home.'*

Then, Kenneth's file reads only two more entries:

1. On March 24, 1945: 'Boarded a plane and parachuted into Germany'.
2. On March 31, 1945: 'Killed in Action'.

By then, the paratroopers had penetrated deep into Germany.

For a little more insight, here's some information about the movements of 1CPB.

On March 26 and 27, 1945, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion began its move from Bergerfürth, near Wesel, Germany.

Their final destination: the Baltic Sea coast near Wismar, if feasible.

Their primary objective 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 hours before a Russian reconnaissance group arrived.

Where was the unit on March 31, 1945, the fateful day for Private Kenneth W. A. Taylor?

The following information comes from the 1CPB war diary:

On March 30, 1CPB launched an attack on the town of Greven. They had already suffered some casualties. By evening, the town was cleared of enemy troops. They spent the night in Greven, regularly enduring enemy fire.

The next day, March 31, 1945 the advance continued. The next barrier they would encounter was the Dortmund-Ems Canal.

In the war diary of 1CPB only a few lines are recorded about this.

One of those killed on March 31, 1945, was Private Kenneth W. A. Taylor.

**31 MARCH 1945**

Weather cloudy with some rain during the day. At 1300 hrs unit started to advance on foot. During the advance enemy fired airburst - 2 casualties suffered. 8 and 9 Bns were heading the advance and after some delay the unit passed through them and took up posns on the West side of the DORTMUND-EMS Canal at 977907. Several casualties were caused by heavy enemy shelling during the night.

*signed*

G.F.Eadie. (Lt -Col.)

He was given a temporary grave in the southeast corner of a pine forest near Greven.

Kenneth was finally laid to rest in Holten at the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery. The grave reference is: 12-H-1.

*He was awarded:*

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



Sources:

[www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org); [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); [www.canada.ca/library-archives](http://www.canada.ca/library-archives); project '44.