



Franklyn was born in Collingwood, Ontario, on May 31, 1919, the son of John Franklin and Alma May Zimmerman, née Parson.

His father died young in 1931, after which his mother remarried.

In the blended family, Franklyn had a half-brother, two sisters, and two half-sisters.

A half-sister died in 1915, and a one-month-old brother in 1918.

The Zimmerman family is Baptist, and the official language is English.

Prior to enlisting for active duty on July 21, 1941, in Noranda, Quebec, Franklyn served as a reservist with the 3rd Pioneer Battalion from August 1940.

After elementary school, he attended four years of high school, but did not complete it. Franklyn did have work experience. He worked as an apprentice in plate shop and took courses in welding and mechanical draughting.

His medical report states that he is 5'9" tall and weighs 165 lbs.

Franklyn has blond hair and light blue eyes. A striking note is that he has a gold tooth in his upper jaw.

In July 1941, Franklyn was assigned to the 4th Battalion of the Royal Canadian Engineers in Petawawa, Ontario. This was the Engineers' training camp.

On September 19, 1941, he boarded the ship and departed for Scotland, arriving there on September 27, 1941. Franklyn and his colleagues traveled on to Guillemont Barracks in Minley, Hampshire.

The handwritten notes in Franklyn's file, dated 1941 and 1942, are rather unclear. What is clear is that he was assigned to B-Company of the 4th Battalion of the Royal Canadian Engineers.

Several training courses followed one another, for example, the one for "Surveyor Construction Engineering". In November 1941, Franklyn was granted a week's leave.


He most likely spent New Year's Eve 1941/42 in the barracks.

In early February 1942, Franklyn left for Winterbourne Gunner near Salisbury, Wiltshire, for a few weeks.

This was where the Army Gas School (AGS) was located. At that school the "students" were introduced to chemical warfare.

Franklyn qualified there according to the Q1 standard.

Certificate No. 153.
Course No. 20th R.I.
Date 8th Sept. 1940.


ARMY GAS SCHOOL
(WINTERBOURNE GUNNER WING)

This is to certify that Army No. _____
(Rank) _____ (Name) _____
of the (Unit) _____
attended a Regimental Instructor's Course from _____
to 6.9.1940, and obtained the qualification Q1.

R. S. Anderson
Lieut.-Colonel,
Chief Instructor,
Army Gas School,
Winterbourne Gunner Wing.

Winterbourne Gunner,
Salisbury, Wilts.

Distinguished ("D").
Instructional ability and knowledge of the subject is outstanding.

"Q1."
Considered capable of carrying out the duties of Instructor to Unit
anti-gas _____ Cadre classes.

"Q2."
Capable of fitting and inspecting respirators, and of instructing those
under his command in individual anti-gas _____ training.

402 1102 W13035/0114 7M P.A. Gp. 608 2.4075

This meant he was 'considered capable of carrying out the duties of an instructor' in a unit.

In mid-April 1942, he ended up at No. 14 General Hospital. His file lacks the separate hospitalization card and the reason for his admission remains unknown. A week later, he returns to his unit.

Effective May 18, 1942, Franklyn was promoted to corporal. He received further training at the Army Gas School.

In the second half of 1942, Franklyn was shuffled around administratively.

At the end of March 1943, he was taken on strength by the Canadian Engineers Reserve Unit. The reason was that he had been designated for officer training, and as of April 19, 1943, he was registered as a Cadet Lieutenant.

He must have successfully completed this training. As of October 30, 1943, he was registered as a lieutenant. He was subsequently granted 10 days' leave.

Franklyn's file then jumps forward in time to July 1944.

He landed in Normandy on July 25, 1944, with the bulk of the 8th Field Squadron of the Engineers.

Lieutenant Franklyn Neil Zimmerman is then Commanding Officer (CO) of No. 2 Troop. They land at Arromanches.

Franklyn witnessed the entire advance through France and Belgium.

As a section of No. 2 Troop accompanied a patrol of the Lake Superior Regiment Franklyn and two of his men were wounded by shrapnel from an exploding landmine. The lieutenant remained at his post, one of his men later died from his wounds.

Franklyn survived all the operations in the southwest Netherlands unscathed, although the Engineers suffered a considerable number of casualties.

In early November 1944, Franklyn departed for Ripon, North Yorkshire, United Kingdom, for further training. It was called the "Bailey Bridging" course.

To clarify:

In 1945, the British city of Ripon was a key military hub during World War II. The School of Military Engineering trained soldiers, and Harper Barracks housed units that practiced river crossings and amphibious landings on the River Ure.

Franklyn remained in England until the end of February 1945 when, again, he set foot on land on the mainland of Western Europe.

He was reassigned to the 8th Field Squadron of the Engineers at a base just south of Cleef, Germany.



Sappers of the Royal Canadian Engineers lay decking on the Blackfriars Bridge over the Rhine near Rees, Germany. March 30, 1945.

© Library and Archives Canada

The Rhineland offensive had already been underway for several weeks. Once the Rhine crossing was completed, the course of the advance changed.

On April 2, 1945, the unit crossed the German-Dutch border, their destination: the village of Ruurlo and finally the Twente Canal near Lochem.

Along the way, the destination changed. The new order was: support for a crossing of the Twente Canal just south of Delden.

The Squadron endured considerable damage during that action.

It is unclear to what extent No. 2 Troop, commanded by Franklyn Zimmerman, was involved.

A bicycle lying on the side of the road turned out to be booby-trapped.

(A booby trap is an improvised weapon that, like a landmine, is concealed and activated by the victim.)

How the explosive was triggered is unclear, but it is clear that seventeen Engineers were injured by the explosion. Another two men were injured in a jeep accident near Delden, two men had a motorcycle accident, and one man got struck between two trucks.

The advance continued after crossing the Twente Canal through the city of Almelo, crossing the German border to the city of Meppen, and at 6:00 PM on April 9, 1945, the Engineers arrived in Sögel, Germany.

The 8th Field Squadron headquarters was established just north of the village, near a cluster of buildings and a road intersection.

The following text is from an eyewitness. A member of the 8th Field Squadron kept a sort of diary.

"On April 10, 1945, shortly after 8:00 AM, gunfire rang out. The visibility was poor due to heavy mist and we were used hearing Allied troops discharging enemy small arms. This fact hampered early detection of the attack.

The attack was very sudden, only 15 or 20 men, all ranks, were able to procure their weapons. About 20 Germans fanned out to flank us and apparently snipers were already on our flanks".

The report continues with the course of the shooting. The attackers were successfully stopped, and after two Sherman tanks arrived, the battle was quickly over.

Everyone who could handle a weapon came into action. Lieutenant Franklyn Neil Zimmerman had obtained a brengun and fought well until he was wounded and had to be evacuated.



Sherman tanks in Sögel. Original photo.
Archive of the Municipality of S.

Franklyn Zimmerman was transferred to the 6th Field Dressing Station in Meppen. From there, he was sent to the hospital in Almelo. Unfortunately, nothing more could be done for him there, and he died on April 14, 1945.

He was given a temporary grave in Almelo and was later transferred to the CWGC Canadian Cemetery in Holten. The grave reference is: Plot 6, Row A, Grave 15.

The inscription on his headstone:

**Sleep soldier
Your task is done
A glorious dawn awaits you**

*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; www.ancestry.com; www.canada.ca/library-archives, www.myheritage