

**Blackmon, Orville Kenneth
Alexander**

Trooper

8th Reconnaissance Regiment

14th Canadian Hussars

Royal Canadian Armoured Corps

H/14356



Orville Kenneth Alexander Blackmon, who went by the name of Ken, was born on December 9, 1924 in Stratford, Ontario, Canada. His parents were John Francis Blackmon and Mary Ellen Blackmon, who got married on July 1, 1916 in Owen Sound, Ontario. The family also included two brothers, Clifford Albert and Jarfield Theodore, and one sister, Amelia Gwendolyn Victoria Stephens. They lived at their farm in Owen Sound and belonged to the Presbyterian Church. Orville attended school from age 4 and left school at age 15 for financial reasons. He started work at the Owen Sound Furniture Factory, which he did for a year after which he continued his professional career at the Tool and Die Factory in Hamilton and at the Owen Sound Nut and Bolt Factory, for about 1.5 years. He then joined the Patterson Steamship Co. at Fort William as a sailor. After about six months he joined the Canadian Army at the age of 18 on September 16, 1943 in Winnipeg, Manitoba and got assigned to the Canadian Armored Corps. When registering, he stated that he had plans to marry Marie Elizabeth Cosgrave from Fort William, Ontario.

Orville was fond of reading detectives and western magazines and liked all kinds of music. He occasionally drank a few glasses of alcohol, liked most

sports as well as woodworking, but indicated that he had not done much of that lately. He wished to join the tanks, just like his brother-in-law, and to become a driver. Orville had blue eyes, blond hair, was 5.8 Ft tall and weighed 136 Lb. There was a scar on his left elbow.

On October 4, 1943, Orville left Winnipeg to go to the Basic Training Center in Brampton for further military training. He stayed there until December 6 and reported to # 3 Canadian Armored Corps in Borden a day later. On December 27, 1943, he married Marie Elizabeth Cosgrave, the love of his life, whom he had met in 1942 in Thunderbay. They later moved into 333 Wiley Street, Port Arthur, Ontario, Canada.



Source: Stichting Tremele.

After a 14 days marriage leave, Orville reported back to Camp Borden and succeeded as a qualified driver. On May 8, 1944 he left Canada to go to England for further training. On July 30, Orville and his regiment arrived in France and on August 8, he was assigned to the 8th Reconnaissance Regiment, whose main task was to conduct reconnaissance work for the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division.

The 8th Reconnaissance Regiment provided the reconnaissance function during the advance of the First Canadian Army eastwards from Normandy to and across the Seine. Their mobility and strength was clearly demonstrated during the liberation of Orbec in Normandy.



Source: cparama.com

From August 21 to 23, 1944, the infantry of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division managed to ascend eastward to the west bank of the Tourques River, but they were unable to extend an initial bridgehead over the river due to the presence of enemy positions in Orbec on the east bank.

Hundreds of soldiers from the 8th Reconnaissance Regiment had by now investigated potential river crossings northwest of the city. They managed to cross the River Tourques, return to Orbec and unexpectedly attack the German occupiers from the north and east. German resistance in the city was quickly overcome and the division's advance towards the Seine could be resumed. During the Allied advance, the regiment was responsible for liberating many other cities in northwestern Europe. They also fought during the battle of the Scheldt and liberate Woensdrecht.

After the failure of Operation Market Garden, the river Waal was the border between the occupied and liberated Netherlands. Stationed in the Nijmegen area, there were many explorations along the rivers with the Germans on one side and the Allied armies on the other side of the river. This was how Orville and the 8th Reconnaissance Regiment ended up in the village of Dreumel, where they found accommodation at the bakery of the Lemmers family.



Nov. 1944: Men of the 8th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment at the home of the Rutten family in Dreumel. Crouching and 2nd from left: Ken Blackmon.

Source: Stichting Tremele.

On the website tremele.nl, Sergeant Earl Wrightman described what happened on December 9, 1944 with Orville Kenneth Alexander Blackmon in Dreumel:

"We have heard that there is a lot of activity across the river at night as we are billeted in the bakery shop. (Bakery Piet Lemmers, Rooijsestraat 4) We often mention this in our reports to our squadron headquarters. One day an order is given to fire at the other side.

In preparation, I send Corporal Ray Smith to check the shooting results with his binoculars and report the results to me via the field phone. The officer in charge of the shelling has placed his mortar weapons on the dike just opposite the bakery. We are stationed in the adjacent garage. I complain to my officer and ask him to arrange for the grenade launcher to be placed elsewhere, because we could be at risk from German counter fire. When he comes back he tells me that his request has been rejected and since the other officer has the same rank as him, he cannot do anything.

After a few shots, Corporal Smith reports that the shots don't hit. I walk to the officer at the grenade launcher to report the corrections, but he is

already moving his belongings in a hurry. He says it is irresponsible to stay there.

It is now about twelve o'clock and I decide that it is time to have something to eat. That's why I give Trooper Blackmon the order to peel potatoes. He normally never complains when he gets orders, but now he says, "But Sergeant, I did that yesterday too!" I answer him, "Sorry Blacky," (the soldiers usually only know each other by their first or last name), "but everyone is busy now, so we have no choice. But I promise I will make up for it. " Blacky accepts this and - sitting on a ration box - he goes to work.

Dutch houses have solid floors. While we are billeted here, we have already looked at our escape route to the basement as a precaution against possible shellfire. At that time a number of German grenades are close to our position. One explodes on the path just outside the garage. Immediately we jump up and dive into the basement. I can just see Blacky falling over from his ration box, and I think he's taking cover. When the grenade stops, I realize we've been lucky. I order to check that everyone is OK. Then Corporal Smith tells me Blacky isn't here. I ask the corporal to go find him. He comes back pretty soon and says, "Earl, Blacky is dead!" I say, "That's impossible, because I have not seen it hit." The corporal takes me upstairs and then I see he's right. Black blood flows from a wound behind his right ear. I'm sorry to tell you this in such detail, because war is no fun at all.

Trooper Blackmon is the driver of Corporal Smith. Ironically, he dies in Holland on his 21st birthday. Two days later we are allowed to bury him. With a group of twelve, we accompany Blacky, on the back of a truck, to his grave. It is the first time that we have had the opportunity to pay tribute to one of our deceased comrades. I have always wondered if his family knows about all this and how we miss this nice young man. I believe he was buried at the Canadian cemetery near Nijmegen. I am happy to be able to tell this story, because I believe that the inhabitants of Dreumel should be notified of his death".

Earl Wrightman, Belleville, Ontario (Canada) Sergeant C Squadron, 11 Troop, 8th Canadian Recce Regiment.

Trooper Blackmon was buried at Nijmegen Canadian War Cemetery Jonkerbos. He left behind a wife and son, Peter Francis Blackmon, who was born on August 23, 1944 and was 5 months old.

On August 1, 1945, Orville Kenneth Alexander Blackmon was reburied at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **III. E. 4.**

"He died that his son might live in a world of peace"



Photo: Gijs Krist.

Awards: Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, War Medal 1939 - 1945, 1939-1945 Star, France and Germany Star.



Life story: Gijs Krist, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves
Library and Archives Canada
Canadiansoldiers.com
Wikipedia
Earl Wrightman, Belleville, Ontario
Archives Stichting Tremele
<https://tremele.nl/Oorlog/wo2/00nedindex/nindex.htm>



September 8, 1944
Ken Blackmon wrote:

"My dear son,

You are much too young to read but may your mother give you my love and God keeps you safe.

Till this job is done and I can come home to you both.

Love xxxxxxxxxxxxxxje

Your father



Source : Stichting Tremele

The letter below was sent by Orville's son to the chairman of the Tremele Foundation of Dreumel:

"Dear Mr. van Koolwijk, enclosed you will find a photo of my father and his 1943 national registration card. It says that my father was born in Stratford, Ontario on December 9, 1924. He met my mother in Thunderbay (Porth Arthur) in 1942 and he sailed on the Great Lakes as a sailor. He worked as a ship's servant.

He volunteered in 1942 in Thunderbay. He married my mother in Owensound in September 1943. When he went to Europe they kept in touch through letters.

My father was overjoyed when I was born. (August 23, 1944) Also included is a card that he sent to my mother for me. I would appreciate it if you would take this card to his grave to let him know that I received it and still cherish it.

My mother never went to the Netherlands; I visited his grave in 1995. My wife and I were very impressed by the respect that people in the Netherlands show for the fallen soldiers who are buried there. I am happy that the memory is kept alive. Thank you for that.

Sincerely, Peter F. Blackmon"

photo's Alice van Bekkum



Every year teacher Jos van Koolwijk from Dreumel takes his group to his grave to pay respect to Ken Blackmon.