

Lindstrom, Alvin Gordon

Private

**1st Canadian Parachute
Battalion**

Royal Canadian Infantry Corps

L/102238



Alvin Gordon Lindstrom, known as Gordon, was born in Ketchen, Saskatchewan, Canada on Wednesday October 26, 1921. Son of Anton George Lindstrom (1891-1949) and Alma Charlotte Lindstrom-Holte. They were married in Kamsack, Saskatchewan, Canada on November 22, 1917. The family also consisted of three brothers: Willard, Melford and Richard. And four sisters: Florence, Marian, Berdella and Clarice. They lived on a farm in Ketchen, Preeceville district, Saskatchewan, Canada. They cultivated fields and kept livestock there. The thickness of the land made it hard to make a living. The family was a member of the Lutheran Church.

He went to the Netchie Hills School where the first lesson was taught in 1908. The school was named after Native Americans called "Netchies" who lived on a hill north of the school. Alvin Gordon attended this school until Grade 7, but at age 15 he left school to work on a farm in Sturgis, Saskatchewan, Canada for five years. There he learned to drive a tractor, but also worked as a driver on a truck loaded with grain and wood.

Alvin Gordon liked to read magazines, liked music but did not play an instrument himself. He also liked to dance and play softball and hockey.

Alvin Gordon spoke English, but was also fluent in the Norwegian language. He had blue eyes, dark brown hair and a height of 5.9 ft. and he weighed 149 lb. He had a scar just below his right kneecap. On September 2, 1942, 20-year-old Alvin Gordon enlisted in the Canadian Army at No. 12 District Depot, Canadian Army Active Force in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. He stood the military inspection very well. He was seen to have swollen tonsils, but he indicated not to be bothered by it. When registering, he also indicated that he was interested in becoming a mechanic. Alvin Gordon had done quite a bit of overhaul work with his employer and liked this job. He was found suitable for the Royal Canadian Engineers. Two of his brothers had also enlisted in the Canadian Army and had been placed overseas. After the war, Alvin Gordon Lindstrom would have liked to start a farm himself.

On September 19, Alvin Gordon Lindstrom was assigned to # 120 Basic Training Center, but remained stationed at Regina. He spoke to a soldier who was rejected for the Parachute Battalion, and this appealed to him, and on November 6, 1942, he indicated in an interview that he preferred the Parachute Battalion. On December 17, 1942, he was posted to the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion. And a day later, December 18, he arrived in America at Fort Benning, Georgia, for his training as a paratrooper.

The four-week training program first of all focused on developing physical stamina and discipline, then on familiarizing recruits with the equipment and jumping techniques. In jumping exercises, a 33 ft. high tower was first used, high enough to give the impression of a great height, later a 250 ft. high tower and finally they jumped out of airplanes.

At least five successful jumps from an aircraft were required to qualify for a paratrooper 'wing'. Alvin Gordon Lindstrom got this wing on March 6, 1943.



On April 15, he returned to Camp Shilo, Manitoba for a short time, then he left for England with 31 officers and 548 men of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion on board the Queen Elizabeth on July 24, 1943. There they arrived after four days of sailing on July 28, 1943. In England the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion awaited more training, this time at Carter Barracks in Bulford, near Salisbury. The men had to work on their physical performance and had to participate in combat exercises up to battalion level. In August and September 1943 they ran 5 miles every morning.

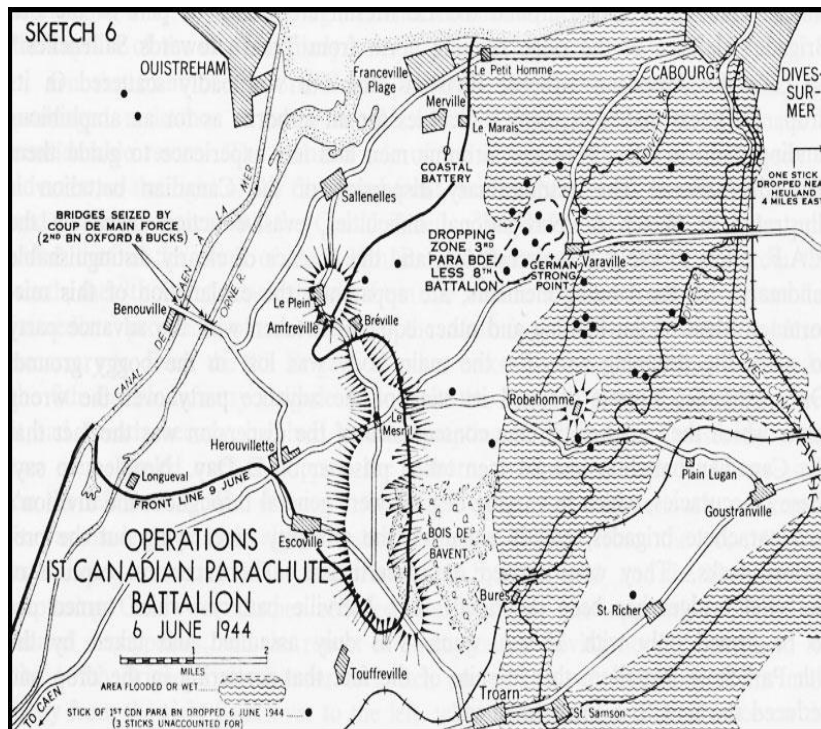
Each battalion had to be able to pass the following test: a 50 miles march with full equipment within 18 hours. The 1st Canadian Battalion covered this distance on November 19, 1943. Then, until April 1944, it participated in major combat exercises, in which a landing on the French coast was simulated. On May 24, 1944, the Battalion left Bulford for the Down Ampney transit camp to prepare for D-Day.



Violet and Gordon Christmas 1944.

Alvin Gordon Lindstrom had got acquainted with a woman in England and on February 24, 1944 he asked for permission to marry her. On April 1, 1944, he married Violet Ethel Lilian Elsmere. She worked on Women's Auxiliary Air Force Section R.A.F. Upavon Station, Wiltshire, England. It was a grass airfield, a military flight training academy and one of the administrative headquarters of the Royal Air Force.

During the night of June 5-6, 1944, they flew across the Channel and landed a few hours before the amphibious attack on the eastern flank of the area. Due to bad weather conditions and poor visibility, the soldiers landed scattered, sometimes quite far from the planned drop zone. Nevertheless, and despite the German resistance, the men of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion achieved their goals: occupying the bridges across the Rivers Dives and Divette in Varaville and Robehomme, protecting the left flank of the 9th Parachute Battalion from the German artillery line-up in Merville and occupying a strategic position at a crossroads in Le Mesnil. The Canadian battalion was later involved in



Map: www.definingmomentscanada.ca

ground operations to strengthen the bridgehead and support the advance of Allied troops to the River Seine. On September 6, 1944, they left Normandy and returned to the training camp in Bulford, England.

Of the 27 officers and 516 men of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, 24 officers and 343 men got killed on D-Day. The battalion had to be strengthened and trained to be ready for combat again. Airborne troops had to be trained in offensive combat, street combat and the capture of enemy positions. In December 1944, the paratroopers were ready again and sailed to Belgium on Christmas Day to participate in the battle in the Ardennes. Between January 22 and February 19, 1945 they defended the area near Roermond, the Netherlands, on the River Maas. On February 23, 1945, the battalion went back to England. On March 7, 1945, the battalion returned from leave to train for Operation Varsity.

On the morning of March 24, 1945, Operation Varsity started with airborne actions around Rees and Wesel. Wesel was located on the River Rhine, located between the Ruhr area and the Dutch border near Bocholt.

The purpose of the operation was to realize a bridgehead on the right bank of the Rhine to allow the Allied armies to cross. Operation Varsity was the last major air offensive of World War II and it remained the largest and most successful. In March 1945, the Allied troops prepared to enter Germany in order to end World War II. The Rhine got in the way and German defenders were ready to fight to the last man. Operation Varsity started on the morning of Saturday March 24 with a fleet of Allied

transport aircraft departing from air bases in France and England. In addition to towing more than 1,300 gliders, about 17,000 paratroopers were on board the aircrafts.

The paratroopers in the gliders and the Curtiss C-46 aircrafts were dropped on the right bank of the Rhine near the village of Hamminkeln, near Wesel, on the hills on the right bank of the Rhine, near the traffic and railway bridges across the River Issel and in the Diersfordter Wald.

Because the paratroopers and airborne troops were dropped near the front, about 5 miles behind the Rhine, they were shot at by German troops while landing, which caused heavy losses. Still, after 24 hours of fierce battle, they managed to get hold of their set goals and the crossing of the Rhine by Allied armies could start.

One of the allied victims was Alvin Gordon Lindstrom. He died at the age of 23. He was temporarily buried in Essen, Germany.

On March 8, 1946, Alvin Gordon Lindstrom was buried at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **XXII. C. 11.**

Awards Alvin Gordon Lindstrom:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France and Germany Star
- Defence Medal
- War Medal 1939-1945
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp.

Inscription on his gravestone:

"Fond Memories

Linger every day

Remembrance keeps him near.

Rest in Peace"



Photo Gijs Krist.

His wife Violet Ethel Lilian Elsmere got pregnant by Alvin Gordon Lindstrom and they had a son called Gordon, named after Alvin's father. This son, in turn, had three sons. After the war Violet lived in England, didn't have a job and had to take care of a baby. Alvin Gordon's mother asked her to come to Canada with the baby to marry one of Alvin Gordon's brothers. And so it happened. She married Willard. All his life Willard walked around with shrapnel in his buttocks, a souvenir of the time he spent in Groesbeek during the war. In September 1994 Violet visited the grave of her beloved Alvin Gordon in Groesbeek. After all these years, the grief was still there. Violet died since then and was buried in Lowestoft, England. Her ashes were buried in her brother's garden.



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

Sources:

George Zeegers photo's

Commonwealth War Graves

Library and Archives Canada

1st Canadian Parachute Battalion Museum

Canadiansoldiers.com

Wikipedia



Violet in 1994 visiting the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek.

Photos : George Zeegers.



Christmas Eve 'Candle Evening' George Zeegers placed a candle at the grave.