

**Propp, Frederick Edwin**  
**Lieutenant**  
**South Saskatchewan Regiment**  
**Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**  
**L 65058**



Frederick Edwin Propp was born on 26 November, 1919 in Runnymede, Saskatchewan, a hamlet some 150 miles southwest of Regina. He was the oldest child of Philip and Maria Susanna Propp. Philip, of German descent, was born in Russia in 1894 and his wife, four years younger, also had parents of Russian-German origin. They had married in Runnymede and ran a farm there. The family spoke German at home and belonged to the Lutheran church. Frederick (Fred) had two sisters and a brother, Edward, born in 1926. He completed primary school and went on to study in High School for three years, gaining his Junior Matriculation diploma at the age of 17; he was fluent in both English and German.

Frederick went to work for the Dominion Construction Company in Dauphin, Manitoba, more than 200 miles from home. In 1940, he was maintaining sewer and water lines in Rivers airport and a year later, he was a foreman on a digger. At the time he enlisted, he was a timekeeper working with the Highways Department; he wanted to return to the company after the war and was promised employment by the company. He could repair motors and his interests lay in 'anything mechanical'.

On 19 April, 1941 he joined the army in Regina at the National Resources Clearing Depot no.12 and within a month was promoted to the rank of Acting Lance Corporal.

After two month's training he was taken on the staff as an instructor. In October he was given leave for two weeks in order to marry Emma Hildermann in Togo, Saskatchewan, a village near Runnymede.



*Wedding of Fred and Emma.*

On 23 January 1942, Frederick enlisted for active service in the army. He had earlier expressed a preference for the Air Force and aircrew and on another occasion for the military police but his army service was to take place in the infantry. He was found to be in good health, around 6ft. tall and weighing 185 lb. with blue eyes and light brown hair. After four months of basic training in Regina, he was promoted to the rank of Acting Corporal and sent to a small arms training course in Nanaimo, a large military camp on Vancouver Island.

*On Dec. 13 1942 the twins were born.*



*Emma, Fred and the twins Angela (Pound) and Grace (Bowley)*

He also attended a special gas course. In June he was able to spend four months at home at the end of which he became an Acting Sergeant. Meanwhile, Frederick was being considered for an officer's training course in Quebec. One report said of him: 'he showed himself to be a capable instructor, a good disciplinarian and possessed of leadership and initiative.' In the words of another: 'this is a stable man who will make a good fighting officer'. The training course in Three Rivers, lasted three months and his way of instruction was praised with words such as: clear lessons, well prepared, good class control, painstaking. He became a second Lieutenant in February 1943 and was promoted to Lieutenant six weeks later with the South Saskatchewan Regiment.

For the next three months Frederick spent time in the Prince Albert Camp in Saskatchewan and Shilo, an artillery training camp in Manitoba, probably as an instructor. On 23 June 1943, while in Shilo, he was mentioned in despatches; unfortunately, no details are available.



*The oak leaf, signifying 'mentioned in despatches'.*

A week later he was in Halifax, Nova Scotia, preparing for the voyage to Europe; on 22 July he landed in the United Kingdom where he spent the next 14 months, serving mainly with the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). Soon after his arrival, he was hospitalized for five weeks and operated on for a hernia; post operational problems led to another week in hospital in November and again, for almost a month over Christmas and the new year.

*Fred.*





Some three months after D-day, Frederick was sent to France, arriving on 25 September, and joined up with the South Saskatchewan Regiment five days later. At this point the SSR had reached Belgium in the vicinity of Antwerp, having fought its way across northern France. In September alone, 6 officers and 18 soldiers had been killed and 120 injured.



Although Antwerp had been liberated earlier in the month, the Germans were still in the outskirts of the city and in the surrounding area. Frederick was immediately involved in fierce fighting at close quarters.

*Fred.*

At the end of September the Regiment was situated south of the Antwerp-Turnhout canal and days of fighting were needed before they could cross it. By 2 October they had captured the village of Lochtenburg and the next day in Brasschaat, the people welcomed them with 'flowers, apples, beer, smiles and kisses'. Fighting continued throughout the month and the SSR had little respite as they battled by Score, Biezelinghe and finally Nisse on the South Beveland island in the Netherlands on 30 October. Just before it was liberated on 2 November, the Regiment was transported out to Willebroek, south of Antwerp for a well-earned rest. In the month of October, the regiment had lost 15 officers and 220 other ranks.



*Fred, on the left.*

In the night of 8/9 November, the South Saskatchewan Regiment moved to the Nijmegen area, a journey of some 170 kilometres. The three month period from November to early February 1945 was to be a relatively 'static' period and a welcome one for the exhausted SSR. It was used for further training, preparing for the next big operation Veritable and a certain amount of entertainment. However, there was work to be done on the German border nearby, where there were frequent skirmishes with the enemy. Constant patrolling was necessary and this was carried out in two week periods with one week free in between.

Early in the morning of 18 December, the officers of D company, of whom Frederick was one, arrived at a forward position and spent the day there, with the enemy only 150 yards away. They were studying the ground in preparation for Operation Dynamite, it was to take place in the night of 19/20 December. The men spent part of the next day in silent crawling practice along paths; there was a fair amount of sporadic enemy fire.

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, at 2 in the morning, with poor visibility, the operation began and 16 platoons crept forward to clear out an enemy position. They were harassed by small arms fire and there was no cover but one German prisoner was taken. Two officers and several soldiers were wounded. At around 3 am, Frederick was seen leading his section back to the forming-up point after the attack. He then tended Private A. Springer, who had been badly wounded (and later died). Later, Cpl. G H Paul saw him moving at the side of a house before he disappeared.

His body was found two months later and he was temporarily buried in Nijmegen on 26 February 1945.



Some eighteen months later, he was reburied in the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek, plot **I. G. 10.**

**AWARDS:** 1939-45 Star, France and Germany Star, Defence Medal, War Medal, CVSM and Clasp.

Daughter Angela says: "I know his men loved him as one of the last ones alive was with us at his grave and his son let me know when he passed away some years ago. His name was Cecil Law."

Angela: "Fred's brother married widow Emma later."



Life story Gwyn de Jong, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Acknowledgements :

Photos with courtesy to Angela Pound, daughter

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives, Canada

War Diaries, South Saskatchewan Regiment

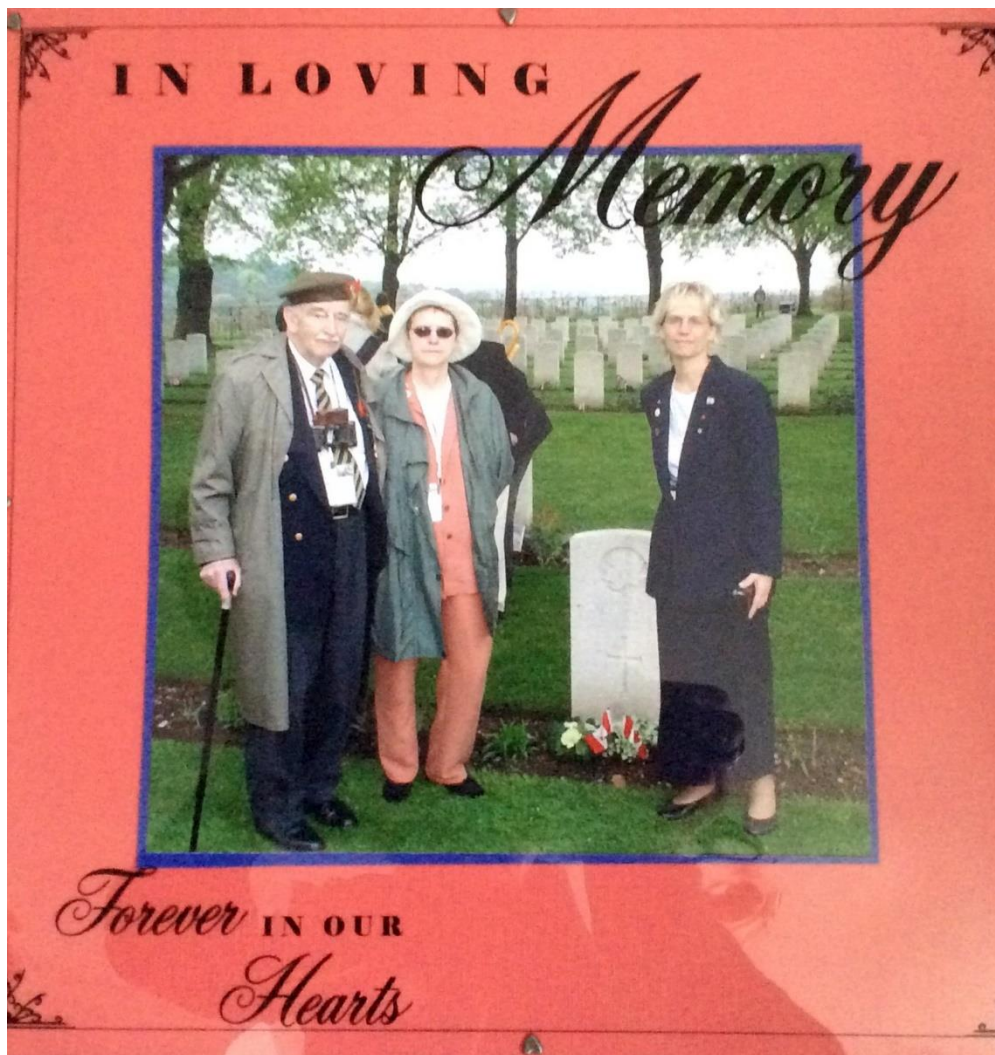
Stacey: The Victory Campaign, Official History of the Canadian Army



*January 2015.*

*Photo Alice van Bekkum.*





2005 - 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary Liberation of The Netherlands. Picture from scrapbook visit Angela to her Dad's grave.