



Name: Kunzelman, Wilbert Jacob Ludwig Reg.nr: C102818

Wilbert was born on September 23, 1922 in Neudorf, Saskatchewan. His grandfather was of German descent and naturalized as a Canadian in 1905.

His parents, George (51) and Ida (44) were married on December 30, 1919 in Killalee, Saskatchewan. They lived in Mission City, British Columbia.

Wilbert has 1 brother, Gilbert (13) and 5 sisters: Irene (21), Kathleen (18), Gladys (16), Lennette (10), and Ida (8). Sister Lydia died on October 29, 1919.

Ages as of September 28, 1945 are in parentheses.

Wilbert was the oldest child. He was born on his parents' farm (fruit) and lived there for 15 years.

Wilbert dropped out of school at 18, grade 12, after 4 years of High School in Saskatchewan. He passed the Senior Matriculate, he graduated from school with a diploma, the education was completed.

In 1941-1942 he worked with wood pulp at Campbell & Holmes in Fort Frances, Ontario.

In 1942-1943 he worked for 9½ months with a drill drill on the construction of a dam in Dabeau, Quebec, at Dufresne Engineering Co.

On February 11, 1943, out of patriotism and a sense of duty, he enlisted in the Canadian army in Ottawa.

Wilbert is 1.65m tall and weighs 71 kg. He has blue eyes and dark brown hair. He has a scar, he had an operation on his appendix in 1934.

From medical reports:

February 11, 1943: a short, stocky, quiet, stable man. Pleasant guy, seems a bit shy.

Good learning ability. Can do good physical work. Interested in surveying. Possibly Genie.

June 26, 1943: has signed up for paratrooper. Physically no problem. He is slow, plodding, without imagination and agility and therefore not suitable. Very suitable for the infantry.

July 12, 1943: Training completed. Suitable for sniper.

August 4, 1943: a bit shy.

Wilbert is interested in sports, he played ice hockey and baseball in his High School days. Not often after that. He plays steel guitar (by ear) and accordion. He also likes fishing.

Wilbert first arrives in Ottawa at #3 District depot. On February 27, 1943 he arrives at the basic training camp in Ottawa. On April 23, 1943 he follows the advanced training at A11 Infantry training camp in Borden. He arrives in England on July 23, 1943 where he first receives basic training again. On 11 August 1943 he was assigned to the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, RHLI. On 5 July 1944 he arrived in France.

Information from J. van Doorn:

D-Company, under the command of Major Louis Frogett, had dug in near the Rijzendeweg on 16 October.

Zuehlke (pp. 322-323, own translation):

Woensdrecht 17 October: The morning brought no relief from the danger of snipers firing on D and C Companies. Whitaker decided to fight fire with fire and ordered Lieutenant J.A. Williamson to release the snipers in his reconnaissance platoon. Williamson sent three men, Corporal Joe Friya and Privates Wilbert Kunzelman and J.S. Whitehead - who quickly managed to drive off the snipers to relieve the pressure

18 October: After their earlier success, in which the pressure of snipers had been relieved, the intrepid team of Friya, Kunzelman and Whitehead went into action again around 14:00. Friya ambitiously led the others on a patrol 100 yards ahead of D Company, with a Sherman tank standing by to provide fire support. The team surprised and captured eight paratroopers and thought they had killed about the same number. The outing had gone so well that they decided to go again, only to get caught in a firefight this time. Friya's sten gun jammed and he was shot in the foot. Major Frogett saw the trouble the men were in and came to the rescue, helping Friya get back. Whitehead provided cover. Back in the Canadian lines, everyone realized that Kunzelman was missing. His body was discovered the next day. Friya was awarded the Military Medal for this action.

Whitaker (p. 174):

More brave deeds were performed in these days of lurking danger. The German infiltrations brought the enemy frighteningly close to the Rileys' front line. In an attempt to relieve the pressure, Lieutenant Williamson of the reconnaissance platoon sent three snipers: Corporal Joe Friya and Privates Heinz Kunzelman and J.S. Whitehead. The results were astonishing, according to Williamson: "They discovered a few Germans in shallow trenches less than 100 yards away and decided to attack them on their own. They dived into the trenches right in the middle of the Germans, shot a few with their pistols and drove the rest off."

Corporal Friya (who received the Military Medal) was shot in the foot. With the help of Frogett, he and Whitehead managed to get back.

Kunzelman, however, was missing and probably killed; no one ever heard from him again.

Wilbert was initially listed as Missed in Action on October 19, 1944. On August 14, 1945, he was officially declared KIA. On September 18, 1945, Wilbert is officially reported as KIA, killed in action, 22 years old.

Wilbert is temporarily buried at Korteveen, near the Korteweg. The grave is about 200 meters from the road, in the corner of a field. A reburial follows on November 13, 1945 at the Canadian cemetery in Bergen op Zoom. Wilbert is buried in plot 12, row H, grave 6.

Wilbert has been awarded the 1939-1945 Star, the French-German Star, the Defence Medal, the War Medal and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp.



His brother Gilbert is his heir. Father is executor.



Bronvermelding:

https://www.ancestry.ca/interactive/9145/44485_83024005548_0262-00043?pid=112940&treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=KBH1&phstart=succesSource

https://nl.findagrave.com/memorial/12724490/wilbert-j_-kunzelman

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2641926/kunzelman,-wilbert-j.-l./>

<https://books.google.nl/books?id=QrL5gRhvkB0C&pg=PA321&lpg=PA321&dq=Wilbert+Kunzelman&source=bl&ots=i5N-IrHxNP&sig=ACfU3U0QnMcb-8na1mVBwjahnO4dy4Hlg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiZ7a2j7fLpAhUQC-wKHRBYC2QQ6AEwAnoECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q=Wilbert%20Kunzelman&f=false>

Slag om Woensdrecht: bevrijding van de Zuidwesthoek red: J. van Doorn, J.S. Bos. ISBN 90-802126-2-8

De strijd om de Schelde W. Denis Whitaker&Shelagh Whitaker ISBN 90 6045 390 5

Zuehlke, M - Terrible Victory ISBN 978-1-77162-030-7

De Eerste Dam. De gevechten voor de toegang tot Zeeland van Merksem naar Woensdrecht - Robert Catsburg, ISBN 978-9081789370, pagina 441-442.

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