



Bardwell, Keith Sheridan

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Keith was born on May 4, 1924, in Westmount, Quebec. His parents are Arthur Lyle (March 4, 1895 – January 7, 1969) and Enid Jean Fee (February 28, 1892 – May 27, 1981). They were married in Westmount on February 17, 1923. Arthur is a sales manager.

They have 2 sons: Keith Sheridan and William Donald, who was 15 years old in May 1945.

The father was awarded the Military Medal in World War I, a medal for exceptional bravery.

Keith attends school from age 6 to 19. He attends High School for 4 years after Public School, did not make it to 4th year and stopped to please his parents. He doubled in grade 8 and grade 11. Chemistry is his favorite subject.

In 1941 Keith is an assistant analyst in the laboratory of Aluminum Co. of Canada at Shawinigan Falls. In 1942 he works for Beauharnois Light Heat & Power. He then drives a car.

On September 24, 1942, Keith enlists in the Non-Permanent Militia, the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Montreal Regiment. On April 12, 1943, he passed Class III as a driver. From 11 to 24 July 1943 he participates in a summer camp.

On July 30, 1943, he reports for active duty in Montreal South, actually straight out of school.

Keith has blue eyes and blond hair. He is 1.86 m tall and weighs 70 kg. He has a scar on his left hand. He suffers from varicocele (swelling of the scrotum) on the left. In 1931 he had pleurisy.

At school he played football and baseball. Keith can also ski. He has many friends and likes going to movies and dances. His hobby is chemistry, because he is busy in the National Reserve he no longer has time for this.

Keith is registered in Montreal South on July 30, 1943 and placed in #4 District Depot.

He is described as a man with a good attitude towards the military. He's stable. Keith would like to join an armor department, but there are too many applications for that. He wanted to be a driver, is also content to serve as a driver in the infantry. It is estimated that he will become a good driver, possibly driver-mechanic. Advice: infantry, driver.

On August 6, 1943, he is transferred to #48 base training camp in St. Johns. On September 8, 1943, a report states that he is a top man in the pack. On 7 October 1943 he arrives in Farnham at A12. From December 4 he will follow a Driver I/C course in Woodstock. He was first admitted to the hospital there from December 5, 1943 to January 6, 1944. He passed Driver I/C Class III on January 22. He remains in Woodstock for mechanic training. There is no data in the records that he succeeded.

On 14 March 1944 he returns to A12 in Farnham. On 24 May 1944 it is reported that he had completed 8 weeks of advanced training. Keith meets all requirements, is committed to the military and suitable for overseas as a Driver I/C.

On May 28, 1944, he arrived at the Transit Camp in Windsor, Nova Scotia, from Farnham. He boarded the boat on June 2, 1944 and arrived in England on June 11, 1944. There he is assigned to 4 CIRU, an infantry reserve unit. On August 19, 1944 he becomes Driver I/C on a carrier. Keith arrives in France on September 2, 1944. He was assigned to the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada on September 26, 1944.

On October 11, 1944, Keith is promoted to A/Corporal.

October 13, 1944 is known as "Black Friday". Lieutenant Colonel Withaker calls it in his book (see source) "the day of the betrayal of the "civilian in uniform", the young volunteer of the Black Watch who had volunteered for the Canadian army with great enthusiasm".

The Black Watch had already suffered heavy losses. The 1st Battalion suffered more casualties than any other Canadian infantry battalion in northwestern Europe. Disasters seemed to follow the Regiment almost with every battle.

During the Battle of Verrières Ridge on July 25, 1944, there were 97% casualties. Of the 325 men who left the starting line, only 15 came back into their own lines. The others were killed or wounded, and a company of 90 men had only four survivors.

Another 40% were killed 10 days later in Operation Totalize.

A month before Operation Angus, they lost 60 men in 36 hours from September 12-14. In October, the Regiment expected to be fully staffed and resupplied, but that was not to be. The regiment that had lost many

trained men in recent months was replenished with inexperienced infantrymen and was still below original strength.

The order for the attack was given by Major General Foulkes, commander of the 2nd Canadian Army Corps, who was aware of the Black Watch's situation. Lieutenant Colonel Ritchie, commander of the Black Watch of Canada, and Brigade Commander Megill, commander of the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade, had their doubts about Angus' success, but the order was given.

The attack turned into a major drama. The intelligence was not good, the Germans in the area were well organised, were offensively minded, well entrenched and belonged to elite troops. The Black Watch was ill-prepared. The attack was during the day, in an area where the beet foliage provided the only cover. Support from tanks etc. was not possible because of the swampy ground.

In the morning hours, the B and C companies attacked the Germans. The starting point was the Grindweg in Woensdrecht, the goal was the railway embankment on the Kreekrakdam. The attack started at 6.15 am. Within a short time the attack was halted by heavy casualties. The men fell like pins on a bowling alley. A smoke screen could not improve the situation. A number of C Company men managed to reach the railway embankment, they were captured.

25 men from C company returned, from B company 41. Normally a company consists of 130 men.

The companies lost many executives.

At 5 pm the attack was resumed by A Company, supported from the flank by D Company and the remainder of B Company. In one hour the A company lost almost 70 men, 9 men returned unharmed. D Company also lost a few dozen soldiers. The Black Watch had no more company commanders. The losses of the Black Watch are the highest losses in 1 day of the battle of the Canadians in the Netherlands. The Black Watch of Canada counted 145 casualties, 56 killed, 62 wounded and 27 POWs.

Keith belonged to A Company that day. He was killed in action on October 13, 1944, aged 20.

Keith is temporarily buried in Ossendrecht at the temporary cemetery on the current Burgemeester Voetenweg, near the war memorial of Ossendrecht. A reburial follows on May 16, 1945. Keith is buried in the Canadian cemetery in Bergen op Zoom, plot 2, row G, grave 2.

Keith has been awarded the 1939-1945 Star, the French-German Star, the Defense Medal and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp.



Citation:

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