

Royal Canadian Air Force
Flight Sergeant (F/S) William Seaman Grant
(1941 - 1942)

No. 405 "City of Vancouver" Squadron
Moto: "Ducimus" - "We lead"



William Seaman Grant was born on the 17th of September, 1915 in West Saint John, New Brunswick. His parents were Nehemiah Ceman and Ruth Ann (Cronk) Grant. When they were married in Saint John on the 22nd of old railway fireman born in Houlton, Kings County, New Brunswick, was



William enlisted in the RCAF on the (R84623), New Brunswick. While the the standard path for Air Observers training program at an Initial Training Observer School (AOS), one month at a and one month at a Navigation School.

The 10 AOS Schools, located at various civilian agencies under contract to the instructors were RCAF personnel. Students were taught navigating by dead reckoning and visual piloting. They learned how to use magnetic compasses, read aeronautical charts, and how to use the Douglas protractor and Dalton Navigational Computer. In-flight exercises were carried out in the twin engine Avro Anson aircraft.

April, 1914, Nehemiah was a 22 year Maine. Ruth, born at Clifton Royal in 20 years old.

13th of January, 1941 in Moncton locations for his training are unknown, would have included a four week School (ITS), eight weeks at an Air Bombing & Gunnery School (B&GS),

places across Canada, were operated by Department of National Defence and the

What is known is that William Seaman Grant was a Flight Sergeant Observer in 405 Squadron in 1942 when it was at Topcliffe in England. Wing Commander (W/C) L. D. G. Fraser was the Commanding Officer (CO) of the squadron during that time (August - December).

No. 405 Squadron was formed at RAF Driffield, Yorkshire, England, on the 23rd of April, 1941, and was disbanded at Greenwood, Nova Scotia, on the 5th of September, 1945. It was the third RCAF bomber squadron to be stood-up, and the first to be formed overseas. It initially flew the Vickers Wellington MK.II until 1942, and then the Handley Page Halifax Mk.II followed by the Avro Lancaster Mk.I and III.

RAF Topcliffe was opened as an RAF Bomber Command station in 1940 in North Yorkshire, England. At this time it became home to No. 77 Squadron (“Esse potius quam videri” - “To be, rather than seem”), and No. 102 Squadron (“Tentate et perficite” - “Attempt and achieve”), both flying Armstrong Whitworth Whitley heavy bombers.

Canadian bomber squadrons that commenced operations overseas in 1941 were initially attached to RAF Bomber Command Groups. During 1942 three RCAF Squadrons operated for short periods of time out of RAF Topcliffe. No. 419 ‘Moose’ Squadron flew out of there from the 18 August to the 30th of September, No. 424 ‘Tiger’ Squadron from the 15th of October to the 31st of December, and No. 405 Squadron ‘Vancouver’ from the 7th of August to the 24th of October. All these belonged to No. 4 Bomber Group during these periods.

Note

405 Squadron was also at RAF Topcliffe from the 1st to the 5th of March, 1943.

Following the formation of 405 Squadron at RAF Driffield on the 23rd of April, 1941, it flew the RCAF's first bombing operation over Germany ten weeks later, on the 12/13 June. The squadron also flew the RCAF's first four-engine heavy bomber mission when it took part in the first 1000 plane raid against Cologne on the 30/31 May 1942. The first mission would have been with the twin-engine Vickers Wellington MK. IIs, and the mission to Cologne would have been with the four engine Handley Page Halifax Mk.IIs. It is not known if F/S Grant was with the squadron when it flew its first bombing mission, but he was no doubt with the squadron on the first 1000 bomber raid against Cologne.

On the 17th of September, 1942 the squadron was assigned to carry out an operation over Germany and Halifax W7770 LQ-K was one of the squadron's Mk.IIs involved. According to records the crew included: F/S William Frederick Murray (pilot); F/S Charles Anderson Paton (Navigator); Sgt. Ronald Ernest Hayward Barnicoat (Flight Engineer), F/S William Seaman Grant (Observer); F/S Joseph Gordon St. Louis (Air-Gunner); F/S Charles Albert Kitson (Air-Gunner); and P/O Lorne Edward Kropf (Wireless Operator). F/S Grant was 27 years old.

Note

A 405 Squadron chat forum web site titled “RAFCommands Archive: 405 Squadron” accessed 18 January 2018 noted the squadron Halifax lost on the 16/17th mission as being W7770 LQ-E. “RCAF Squadrons and Aircraft,” by S. Kostenuk and J. Griffin, note Halifax W1112 as LQ-E and W7770 as LQ-K.

Halifax W7770 LQ-K took off at 20:52 hours on the 16th of September to bomb Essen. About 15 minutes before they reached Essen the flame damper on the port inner engine burned through and later on, during the bombing run, the oxygen system failed. In spite of these difficulties the pilot proceeded onward and completed the run over the target. They then set a course for the return trip but unfortunately were detected by a Luftwaffe night-fighter near the Belgium-French border. The aircraft was at about 16,000 feet when the night-fighter attacked setting fire to the port wing. The pilot gave the command to bailout but before anyone could react the aircraft exploded, miraculously ejecting P/O Kropf and F/S Barnicoat.

P/O Kropf landed safely, managed to evade the Germans, and with assistance and support from locals and the underground was able to evade capture and was back in England on the 31st of October. F/S Barnicroft was not as fortunate. He was captured and spent 12 days in St. Giles Hospital in Brussels before being sent to Stalag Luft 6, near the town of Heydekrug, Memelland (now Šilute, Lithuania). Luft 6 was the northernmost POW camp within the German Reich.

The Luftwaffe pilot that shot down the Halifax was most likely Oberleutenant Paul-Hubert Rauh (II./NJG 4) who claimed a downing of a Halifax at 00:36 hours on the 17th. The Halifax in which P/O Kropf was the pilot, and F/S Grant was one of the air gunners, crashed about 30 minutes after midnight in Vieux-Reng, three miles north of Maubeuge. Rauh was a Luftwaffe ace at this time, and at the end of the war was credited with downing 31 aircraft, all at night.

Nachtjagdgeschwader 4 (NJG 4) was a Luftwaffe night fighter-wing that had been formed on the 18th of April, 1941, in Metz, France. The unit's mission was to counter RAF Bomber Command's strategic night-bombing offensive. The night-fighter flown by Oberleutenant Rauh would have been either a Bf 110 or Do 217 from II Group. Both were twin engine aircraft.

Note

A web site regarding Luftwaffe Squadrons containing a list of aircraft brought down by by Nachtjagdgeschwader 4 - NJG 4 - "Ciel De Gloire," Pilots in 1942, accessed 18 January 2018, contained the following entry "Date 17.09.42. Pilote: Oblt. Rauh. Unité: 9./NJG4. Appareil: Halifax. Localisation:£ Ostrand Fl.Pl. Maubeuge 4.700 m. Heure: 00.37. (Référence: Film C. 2035/II Anerk: Nr.13)."

Vieux-Reng & Maubeuge

Vieux-Reng is a small community in northern France and is a neighbouring village with Grand-Reng just across the border in Belgium. It is a low lying area with an elevation that varies between 371 and 486 feet. In 2000 the population of Vieux-Renge was 810. Maubeuge is a large town in the Hauts-de-France region in northern France, south-east of Bavay, on the Sambre River, near the Belgian frontier, south of Mons.

Essen

During the war Essen was an important industrial town that was subjected to heavy aerial bombing because of the Krupp works being considered one of the most important industrial targets to be destroyed. In the period 1939 to 1945 the Royal Air Force dropped a total of 36,429 long tons of bombs on Essen. Today, Essen is a city with a population a little over half a million.

Remembrance

Five of the seven man Halifax crew made the supreme sacrifice.

William Frederick Murray from Armstrong, British Columbia, Charles Anderson Paton from Toronto, Ontario, and Charles Albert Kitson from MacGregor, Manitoba, were all 20 years old. William Seaman Grant, from Clifton Royal, New Brunswick, was 27, and Joseph Gordon St. Louis, from Renfrew, Ontario, was 28.

All these buried in the Communal Cemetery of Maubeuge in Northern France. F/S William Seaman Grant is in Row A, 22.

The Survivors

Two crew members, Lorne Edward Kropf and Ronald Ernest Hayward Barnicroft survived the war, as did the Luftwaffe pilot, Paul-Hubert Rauh, that brought the Halifax down.



P/O L. E. Kropf



Sgt. R. E. H. Barnicoat



Oberleutenant Rauh

P/O Kropf was born around 1915. He was raised by his aunt, Miss S. Betzner in Kitchener, Ontario, as his parents had died in the 1930s. He was 27 years old when his aircraft was shot down and he commenced his journey of evading capture and making his way back to England. .

Sgt. Barnicroft was from Weymouth, Dorset, England. He enlisted on the 1st of September, 1936, in the RAF Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR). He was 22 years old when the aircraft in which he was crew member was shot down, and he was captured and became a prisoner of war (POW No. 43079) in Stalag Luft 6 where he spent the remainder of the war.

Oberleutenant Paul-Hubert Rauh was born on the 15th of November, 1913, in Wolkersdorf, Austria. He survived the war, and passed away on the 30th of August, 2005 at 92 years of age.

Postscript

RCAF Operational Squadrons at Topcliffe Air Station 1942-1943

No. 419 'Moose' Squadron - No. 4 Group (18 August - 30 September, 1942).

No. 424 'Tiger' Squadron - No. 4 Group (15 October - 31 December, 1942).

No. 405 'Eagle' Squadron - No. 4 Group (07 August - 24 October, 1942).

01 January 1943 - RAF Topcliffe was transferred to No. 6 Group RCAF.

No. 424 'Tiger' Squadron - No. 6 Group - (01 January - 07 April, 1943).

No. 405 'Eagle' Squadron - No. 6 Group - (01 March - 05 March, 1943).

No. 405 Squadron was on loan to Coastal Command from October 1942 to March 1943 following which it returned to Bomber Command and was assigned to No. 6 RCAF Group only to be transferred to No. 8 (Pathfinder) Group in April 1943 where it remained until the end of the war. It was the only RCAF Squadron to serve with No. 8 pathfinder Group.

Crew of Halifax W7770 LQ-K on the Last Mission.
16/17 September 1942

Name	Rank	Occupation	ID	From	Age
William Frederick Murray	Flight Sergeant	Pilot	R92114	Armstrong	20
Charles Anderson Paton	Flight Sergeant	Navigator	R93473	Toronto	20
William Seaman Grant	Flight Sergeant	Observer	R84623	Clifton Royal	27
Joseph Gordon St. Louis	Flight Sergeant	Air Gunner	R54325	Renfrew	28
Charles Albert Kitson	Flight Sergeant	Air Gunner	R101804	MacGregor	20
Lorne Edward Kropf	Pilot Officer	Wireless Operator	J7931	Kitchener	27
Ronald Ernest Hayward Barnicoat	Sergeant	Flight Engineer	570205	Weymount, Eng.	22

Recognitions for Flight Sergeant William Seaman Grant

(Coat of Arms of Canada)

To Mr. And Mrs. Nehemiah Ceaman Grant
This commemorates the gratitude of
the Government and people of Canada for the life of
a brave man freely given in the service of his Country.
Sergeant Air Observer William Seaman Grant, R.C.A.F.
His name will ever be held in proud remembrance.

Charles G. Power
September 17, 1942. Minister of National Defence for Air.

RCAF Crest

(Observer Wing)

This is to Certify That
Flight Sergeant W. S. Grant
has been posthumously awarded the Operational Wings
of the Royal Canadian Air Force in recognition of
gallant service in action against the enemy.

Dated this Twenty-ninth day of May, 1946.

Robert Leckie
Air Marshall
Chief Of The Air Staff
Royal Canadian Air Force
Headquarters, Ottawa.

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Photos

Recovered from - aircrewremembered.com/murray-william-frederick.html 18 January 2018.

Photo of William Seaman Grant courtesy of Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 62 Peninsula Branch.