

Crosson, Victor Gilbert

Age: 21
Nationality: Canadian
Rank: WO1
Unit: No. 11 Squadron
Occupation: Wireless Operator/
Air Gunner
Service No: R/151140
Birth: 11 November 1923,
Toronto, Ontario,
Canada
Home Town: Huntsville, Ontario,
Canada
Death: 13 July 1945



Consolidated Liberator 11121
hit mountain seven miles from
Bamfield, BC, Canada

Burial: Commemorated Ottawa Memorial
Buried near Bamfield, BC.

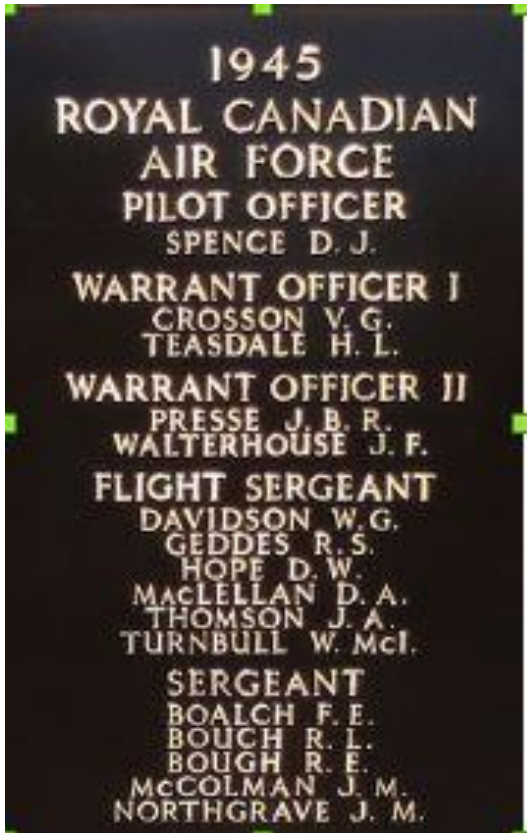
Others: F/O Robert Joseph Martello, 2nd Pilot; F/O Nicholas Maxwell Popovitch, Navigator; F/S Donald William Hope, F/E; F/O Harry Alexander Lowe, WO; WO 2 Joseph Bertrand Presse, WAG.

Biography

In November 1941, Victor Crosson was a fit, young eighteen year old, if somewhat overweight at 184 lbs for his 5 ft 8½. He was keen to join the RCAF as soon as possible and hoped to become aircrew. His education (grade 10) and classification test were adequate for a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner (WAG) but not sufficient for him to be thought suitable for a commission. The Medical Officer described him:

“candidate was 18 yesterday, anxious to get into service as WAG cooperative and of average intelligence, should make good aircrew material when he lost some weight”

After leaving school at 17, Victor had several short term, unskilled jobs and had been in the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion Algonquins in Huntsville for a few months. He was taken on strength on 17 April 1942, five months after applying and began WAG training in June. He was at No. 1 Wireless School in Montreal and No. 4 Wireless School in Guelph until February 1943, when he earned his wireless operator's badge. From there he was posted to No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School in Fingal, Ontario until April 1943, earning his WAG badge and a promotion to Sergeant in March 1943.



After WAG training, Victor went to No. 1 AOS in Malton from April to October 1943 and while here, only 19 himself, married 18 year old Dorothy Maude White in Gravenhurst on June 19th. They had one child, a son, Danton Wayne on 26 February 1945.

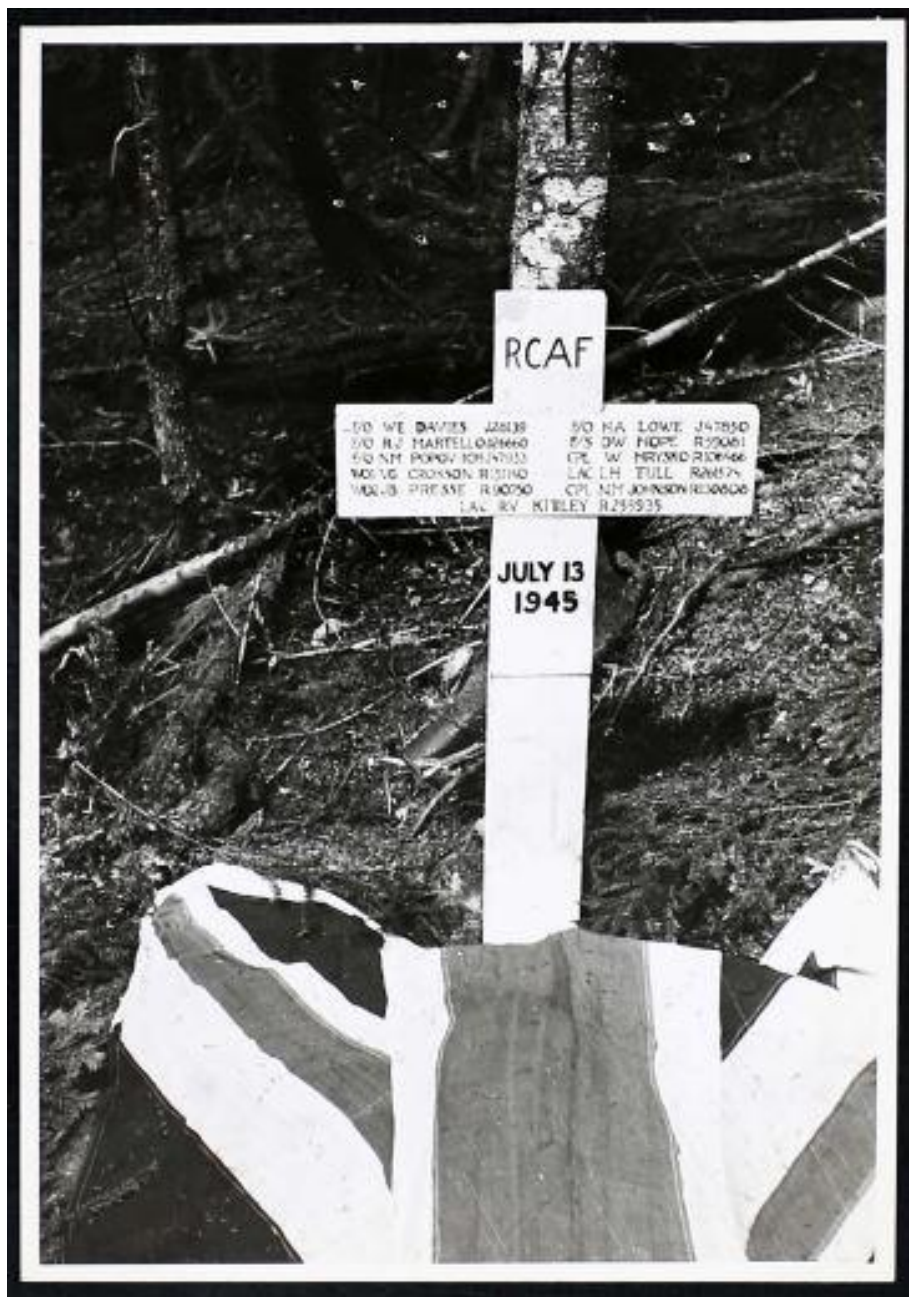
Victor's final training was with No. 32 OTU, in Debert, Nova Scotia, until January 1944. From here he went to No.119 Squadron in Sydney, followed by Dartmouth and Gander, Newfoundland, and on 24 April 1945, was posted to No.

No. 11 Squadron, Patricia Bay, BC.

Victor was born in Toronto, Ontario, on 11 November 1923, to David Crosson and Lillian V. Ferguson. He was one of nine children plus a half sister, b.1915, the oldest child of the family. His brothers, David, Kenneth, Leonard and Marvin (only eight in 1945) were all younger than Victor. Two sisters, Margaret and Leona, and his half sister, Irene, were older and two, Audrey and Evelyn, were younger. The family lived in Huntsville.



On 13 July 1945, Victor was the youngest member of the crew of Consolidated Liberator 11121 on a standard exercise. The aircraft hit the side of a mountain while flying in fog, killing all crew and passengers aboard. Victor is buried in a common grave near the crash site, and commemorated on the Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.



Details of Crash

On Friday 13 July 1945, F/O William Edward Davies took off from Patricia Bay station at 08:51 on a standard exercise. He was flying Consolidated Liberator 11121 with a crew of six, all members of RCAF No. 11 Squadron in Patricia Bay:

F/O Robert Joseph Martello	2 nd Pilot
F/O Nicholas Maxwell Popovitch	Navigator
WO 1 Victor Gilbert Crosson	WAG
F/S Donald William Hope	F/E
F/O Harry Alexander Lowe	WO
WO 2 Joseph Bertrand Presse	WAG

Davies had flown this exercise once as second pilot but this was his first time as first pilot. He was a qualified first pilot both day and night on Liberators. He had been trained at USAAF Field, Smyrna, Tennessee, had been with No. 11 squadron about a year, and was fully certified for instrument flight. The second pilot and remaining crew members were also fully qualified.

The exercise was an ordinary cross country flight used to familiarize pilots with the aerodromes in the immediate area, as well as giving Navigators a chance to familiarize themselves with the coast of Vancouver Island. The route was from Patricia Bay to Comox, via Abbotsford and Boundary Bay, followed by Comox to Tofino via Port Hardy, and ending with Tofino to Patricia Bay. Before leaving Patricia Bay, the pilot filed a flight plan to Comox. There were no passengers on this leg of the trip.

At Comox three passengers were approved for the flight: Sergeant Pamela Bennett, Corporal Nora Johnson and LAC Margaret Mann. A fourth passenger, LAC Lloyd Tull, was reported to have boarded the flight just before take off. Before leaving Comox the pilot filed the flight plan to Tofino.

At Tofino it was arranged that three more passengers would be taken on board: Corporal Norman Johnson, LAC Raymond Kately and Corporal William Hrysko. The weather report at Tofino showed extensive fog banks to the south and west. The aircraft took off at 4:43 pm and the pilot planned to be at 10,000 feet at Ucluelet, which indicated that he planned to cross the island at high altitude rather than follow the coast where the fog lay. At 4:46 pm the aircraft made contact reporting to be at 49°05N 125°45 W, still, after 13 minutes, within the

vicinity of Tofino airfield.

This was the last contact made with 11121 and when it failed to arrive at Patricia Bay at its ETA, search procedures were instigated.

The wreckage of the aircraft was found four days later on 17 July 1945 about seven miles east south east of Bamfield, BC. It took ground searchers four days to reach the crash site where they confirmed there were no survivors.

At the inquiry into the crash, F/O W.G. Skerik, Air Search Rescue Officer at Tofino, gave the following information:

“I was on the first rescue party to reach the crash of Liberator 11121. The position of same was 48°48N, 124°58.30W. I estimated the track of Liberator 11121 prior to the crash to be 77°T.

I identified the body of Cpl. N.M Johnson by a wallet on his clothing, Cpl. Hrysko by his wallet, F/O Martello by his wallet, F/O Popovitch by his identity bracelet, F/O Davies by a belt buckle, initial ‘D’ and by a ring initialled ‘W.E.D.’, and an RCAF watch serial No. 1165702, F/S Hope by his identity discs. Seven bodies were found which could not be identified, one of which was definitely a woman and one probably a woman. The other five were definitely identified as men.

I searched the slope for about 300 yards below the point of impact for evidence of anyone jumping etc. But nothing was found.”

Due to the difficulty in reaching the crash site the bodies could not be brought out for burial and two graves were dug by the wreckage, one for men and one for women. The chaplain accompanying the search party conducted a funeral service and crosses were erected over the graves. Coinciding as closely as possible with the funeral service a memorial service was held at Patricia Bay in front of a Station Liberator, conducted by the Station Chaplain and attended by all available officers and airmen of No. 11 Squadron.

In 1982 airmen from Comox Base erected a more permanent cairn and bronze plaque, which were dedicated in an official ceremony in 1983.

The conclusion of the inquiry into the crash blames the pilot, in that, contrary to

orders, he flew into cloud instead of finding a route through the breaks in the overcast to reach his planned altitude. While in the cloud he flew into the side of a mountain ESE of Bamfield. The Tofino Base was also found at fault for allowing the pilot to take off for Patricia Bay in the weather conditions that afternoon.

