

Johnson, Norman Marshall

Age: 25
Nationality: Canadian
Rank: Corporal
Occupation: General Duties
Service No: R/130808

Birth: 2 February 1920,
Montesano, WA,
USA

Home Town: Minburn, Alberta,
Canada

Death: 13 July 1945
Consolidated B-24
Liberator 11121,
hit mountain seven miles
from Bamfield, BC, Canada



Cpl. N. M. Johnson, 25, of Minburn, who was killed recently in the crash of a R.C.A.F. Liberator bomber near Bamfield on Vancouver Island. The airman's wife resides in Brentwood, B.C.

Burial: Commemorated Ottawa Memorial
Buried near Bamfield, BC.

Others: All RCAF: F/O William Edward Davies, pilot; F/O Robert Joseph Martello, 2nd 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; Passengers: Sgt Pamela Bennett, Corporal Nora Johnson, LAC Margaret Mann, LAC Lloyd Tull, LAC Raymond Kitely, Corporal William Hrysko.

Biography

Norman Johnson's parents, Olivius (Ole) Johnson and Augusta Elene Hendrickson, were both born in Norway and immigrated into the USA as children. They married in the USA in 1903 and immigrated into Canada in 1908. Ole was naturalized Canadian in 1910. Norman Marshall, who was born on 2 February 1920, in Montesano, WA, USA, was their sixth and final child. He had two brothers; Edwin, born 1912 and Norman's next of kin on his RCAF records, and Morris, who died in 1913. His sisters were Inez, 1906, Olga, 1908, and Hazel, 1916. His mother, Augusta, died in 1922 and his father, Ole, died in 1926 aged 44. Ole, his wife and children, Ole's parents and at least one brother, lived in Minburn Alberta, and farmed there. Norman had an interest in a family farm, where he was working when he enlisted.

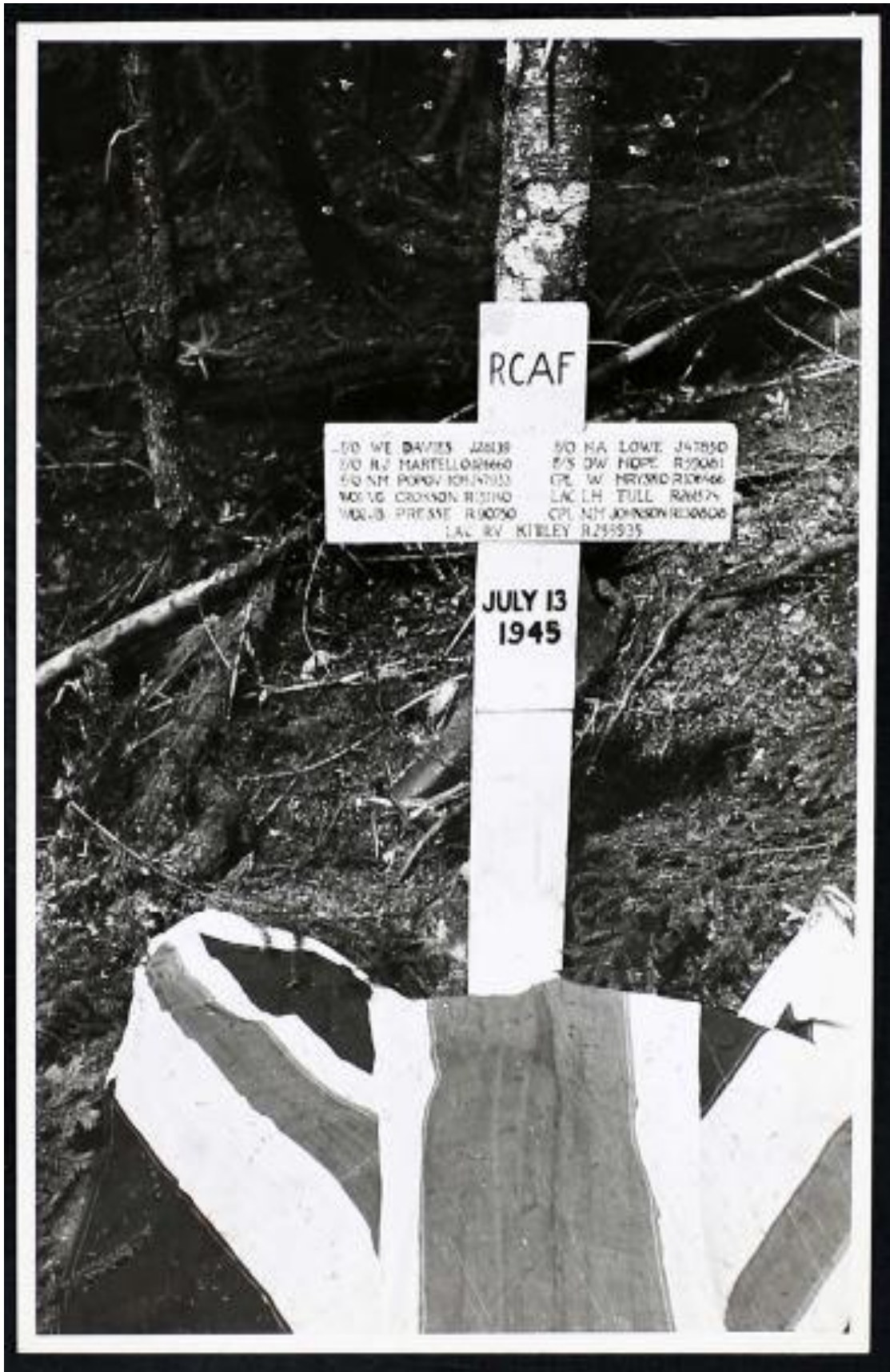
Norman enlisted in Edmonton in October 1941. He had left school at 14 with Grade 8 and was accepted for General Duties. When asked if he had any special qualifications or hobbies useful to the RCAF he made the rather poignant response "not that I know of". After a month in Calgary, Alberta, he was posted to British Columbia and moved around the stations there. His final station was Tofino on Vancouver Island. He was generally considered of good conduct and satisfactory in his duties. He was promoted to Corporal in 1944. On 20 January 1945, he married Viola Lucy Goulding in Victoria, BC. As he was post to Vancouver Island, she moved to Brentwood Bay, close to Patricia Bay. After Norman's death Viola remarried and her name changed to McKnight.

On 13 July 1945, Norman was one of three airmen taken aboard Consolidated B-24 Liberator 11121 at Tofino; bound for Patricia Bay. The pilot had not at first agreed to taking the passengers but relented when told one of them, LAC Kiteley, was travelling for compassionate reasons. Shortly after departure from Tofino the aircraft hit the side of a mountain while trying to reach altitude in fog. There were no survivors.

Norman is commemorated on the Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial in Ottawa and is buried in a common grave with the other men who died with him, beside the wreckage of the aircraft.



Extract From July 1945 RCAF Plaque at
Ottawa Memorial



RCAF

...ED WE DAVIES J28138	S/O HA LOWE J47850
S/O R.J. MARTELLO R26660	S/S GW HOPE R29061
S/O NM POPOV I09147133	CPL W HRYND R20466
MAJ VG CROKSON R23140	LAC LH TULL R26574
MAJUS. PRESTON R20050	CPL NM JOHNSON R230006
LAC RV KIBLEY R255935	

JULY 13
1945

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 B-24 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 trained 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 Kitely 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 locating 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.



Consolidated Liberator





