

France, Albert

Age: 29
Nationality: Canadian
Rank: WO II
Unit: No. 32 OTU
Occupation: WAG
Service No: R/113446

Birth: 9 December 1913,
Coal Creek, BC,
Canada

Home Town: Nordegg, Alberta,
Canada



Death: 19 September 1943

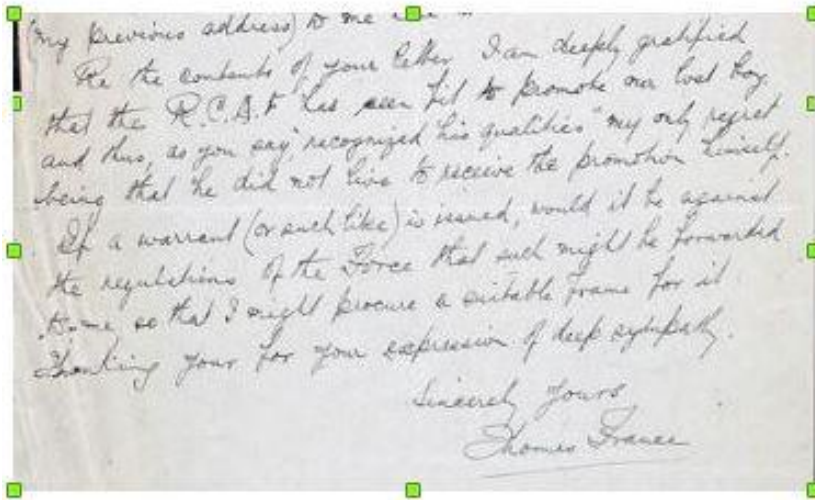
Crash of Handley Page Hampden AJ993,
Cape Flattery, WA, USA

Burial: Commemorated on Ottawa Memorial,
Ontario, Canada

Others: F/S John Haythorthwaite Bateman, WAG, RCAF; Sgt. Albert Sidney Dobie, Navigator, RAFVR; P/O Harry Haig Frost, Pilot, RCAF.

Biography

Albert France's widowed father had a long series of communications with the record office after his youngest son's death. Mainly they were concerning



finances and repeated thanks for the sympathy and consideration shown him. One letter is particularly poignant and concerns the fact that Albert, a Flight Sergeant at the time of his death, had been promoted to Warrant Officer II but notification of it came after his death.

Albert was a diminutive 5' 3½" 117lbs. He had a grade 10 education with some further studies in mathematics and science at night school. From the time he left school in 1929 until he enlisted in the RCAF in 1941, he worked as a box car loader and operator in a coal mine.

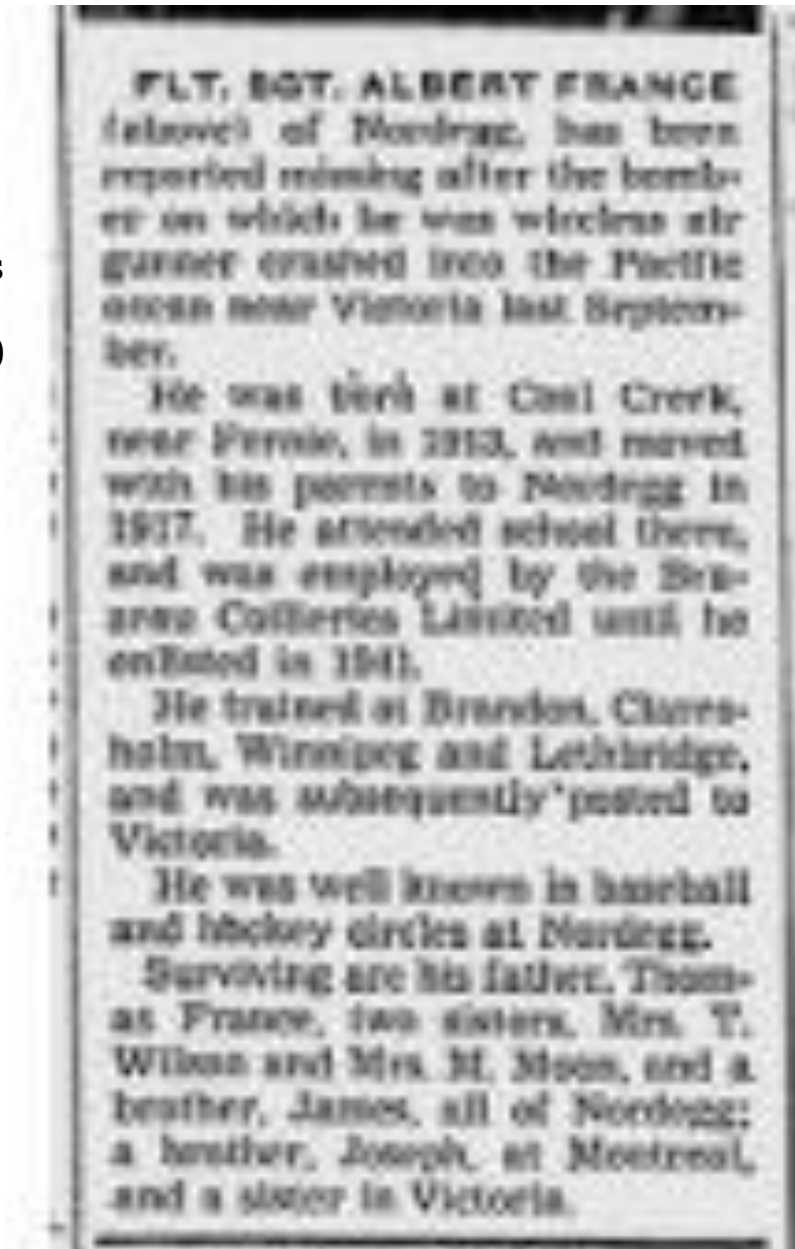
In his Medical Report Albert is described as alert, quick and intelligent. He was anxious to get into the service and had applied for flying duties, specifically wireless operator/air gunner (WAG). The medical officer believed he could have been considered for a pilot if his night school classes could bring his education level up to grade 11.

Albert was recruited at Edmonton in July 1941 and sent to Brandon for Initial Training, after which he was sent first to wireless training and then for armament training. He was an average pupil at wireless school, completing the course with 75% and at 35th out of 69. He received his wireless operator's badge in June of 1942. Albert proved only fair in armament training. He passed, but was last in his class and although reliable, he was a slow thinker of moderate ability and displayed some timidity. He was awarded his WAG badge in July 1942.

A year after receiving his WAG badge Albert was sent to No. 32 OTU in Patricia

Bay. Two months later, on 19 July 1943, he was WAG on Handley Page Hampden AN993 when it crashed into the sea off Cape Flattery, killing all crew members. No bodies were ever found and Albert, in absence of a grave, is commemorated on the Ottawa Memorial.

Albert France was born on 9 December 1913, in Coal Creek, BC, to Thomas France, an Irishman, and Eunice Oakley, who was born in Manchester, UK. Thomas and Eunice already had six children; Sarah (1895) Harry (1896), James (1898), Elizabeth (1900), Joseph (1902) and Thomas (1912). After Albert, another daughter, Eunice, was born in 1914. Brother Thomas died when he was 10 in 1922, Albert's mother died in 1934, and brother Harry died in 1939. Albert never married.



Details of Crash

On 19 September 1943, the pilots and crew of six Handley Page Hampdens were briefed for a navigational exercise taking them across Vancouver Island and down the coast to Washington. They were advised that they were flying toward bad weather but it was probable that they would have completed the exercise before the weather deteriorated. They were told not to fly in cloud, and that in the event of encountering bad weather, they should return to base.

By 7:25 am the aircraft were taxiing out for take-off. The Meteorological Office called to warn that the bad weather was expected sooner than had been originally thought, but it would still probably be after the exercise was completed. Given that the pilots had been warned to turn back if there was a problem, it was decided that the exercise could continue.

At 8:45, it was reported that a Hampden was down in the sea. Information from Hampden AN131 indicated that Hampden AJ993 had crashed at 8:12 am at 48° 27'N 124° 48' W. A Westland Lysander and a Supermarine Stranraer were immediately dispatched to the scene. Number 2 Group HQ were called and told the position so that they could contact Naval Patrol boats and effect a sea rescue. The search failed to find any sign of the 4 crew members. A dinghy and one wheel were recovered by an American Patrol boat.

Five Hampdens turned back at the first sign of bad weather and returned safely to base. The Navigator of Hampden AN131 had witnessed the crash of AN993. At the time 131 decided to turn back, 993 was about one mile ahead and also turned back. 993 turned steeply to starboard, levelled out and began a shallow dive down from about 1,000 feet. The pilot tried to pull out of the dive, the nose came up steeply, the port wing dropped and the aircraft turned over onto its back and made a steep dive, about five degrees to the vertical, into the sea. Hampden 131 circled the spot but saw no wreckage.

The previous day, a pilot flying AN993 had reported the gyro artificial horizon instrument in the aircraft had an intermittent fault. This was referred to the Instrument Section, who could find no error and the inspection of 993 before the fatal flight also found no problems.

The officer in charge of the Instrument Section stated that in his opinion the pilot making the complaint had not waited sufficient time for the gyro horizon to

completely erect itself after completion of a normal turn. The Sperry Gyroscope Company, makers of the instrument, warned that a turn error exists during and immediately after a manoeuvre involving turn and that the gyro horizon corrects its error within two minutes of the turn. In a period of less than 24 hours, five gyro horizons had been reported as unserviceable by pupil pilots. On examination and testing by staff pilots, they were found to be in working order.

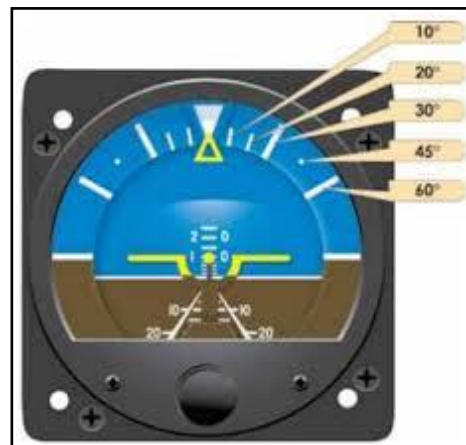
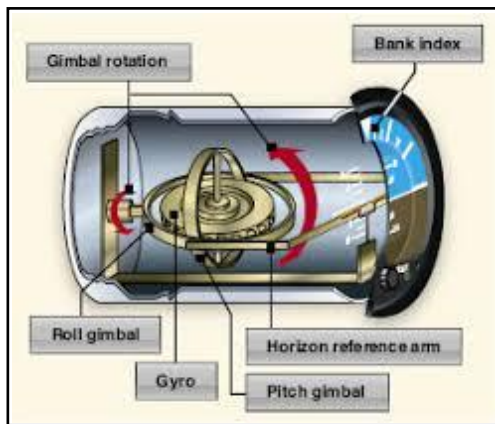
Hampden AN993 crew members were:

F/S John Haythorhwaite Bateman	WAG	RCAF
Sgt. Albert Sidney Dobie	Navigator	RAFVR
F/S Albert France	WAG	RCAF
P/O Harry Haig Frost	Pilot	RCAF

Pilot Officer Frost was deemed to be fully competent to fly this aircraft under the weather conditions encountered. Had the Meteorological Forecast predicted the bad weather reaching the route during the course of the exercise, the flight would have been cancelled.

All four crew members were killed in the accident and no bodies were ever recovered.





Artificial Horizon Instrument