

# Grundy, David Herbert

**Age:** 20

**Nationality:** Canadian

**Rank:** Flying/Officer

**Unit:** No. 133 Squadron

**Occupation:** Pilot

**Service No:** J/39524



**Birth:** 3 December 1924,  
Kitchener, Ontario,  
Canada

**Home Town:** Kitchener, Ontario,  
Canada

**Death:** 14 January 1945

Curtiss P40 Kittyhawk 726  
sunk in Fraser River  
near Ruskin, BC, Canada

**Burial:** Mount Hope Cemetery, Kitchener,  
Ontario, Canada.

## Biography

David Grundy was still 17 when he applied to the RCAF for aircrew. The grade 12 education he had received at Kitchener/Waterloo collegiate was not quite adequate and he took the pre-aircrew education course, which he covered easily in four weeks; 1/3 of the time allotted. He was a *“keen, eager lad, sport loving, young and full of pep who should be good aircrew”*. David’s preferred sports were horseback riding and swimming.

David started training at No. 5 Initial Training School, Belleville. He did not appear to be very sure of himself, but this was put down in part to his youth. He did well academically when he applied himself, although he had a tendency to daydream. He wanted very much to train as a pilot and was sent from here to No. 20 Elementary Flying School in Oshawa.

Remarks on his performance at this next level of training were lukewarm. He appeared not to take his work seriously enough and was easily satisfied with mediocre results. He had trouble with forced landings and aerobatics and was just average on instruments, due to his poor concentration. Notwithstanding this, he was passed and posted on to No. 1 Service Flying School at Camp Borden.

Either he had matured somewhat by this time, or he was making a determined effort to do well and he was rated *“a keen intelligent type. Very dependable. Neat appearing. Respected by his classmates.”* He earned his pilot’s wings in December 1943. In January 1944, a month after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, David was posted to No. 1 OTU in Saguenay, PQ, and from there, in August 1944, to No. 133 squadron in Patricia Bay.

David was not happy to have been retained for service in Canada and his attitude and dependability were poor. At one point, retiring him from the service was even considered and he was told that future promotion was dependent on his performance improving. He changed to a different flight and proved himself to be an above average fighter pilot and worthy of promotion to Flying Officer. This promotion came after his death.

On 14 January 1945, on a low flying ‘rhubarb’ exercise, David flew his Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk aircraft into the Fraser River, where he drowned, strapped into his seat. No cause of the accident was ever determined.

David was born in Kitchener on 3 December 1924 to Albert Duncan Grundy and Ethel Eva Watkinson. He had an older brother, Derek, who served in the RCNVR, a younger brother, Denton, and two younger sisters, Joyce and Jeryl. At the time of his death, his father was a Flight Sergeant at No. 1 IFS, Deseronto, Ontario, Canada.





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## Details of Crash

On 14 January 1945, four pilots were authorized to take part in a low level exercise to Chilliwack, flying up the south side of the Fraser River. They were to take off at 10:30 am, to fly at 300 feet and to avoid all towns, taking between 40 minutes and one hour in total. Before the exercise, the locations of high tension wires at Ruskin and Mission were pointed out on a map. The leader of the group was F/O Henry Duyns and David Grundy, in P-40 726, was the last to take off. They flew in a wide Vic formation with David to the left of Duyns and the other two pilots to the right.

The formation climbed to 2,000 feet to cross the water and started to come down at Point Roberts. From here, they flew at between 400 and 500 feet, flying at about 200 mph. A few miles west of Mission, F/O Duyns spotted the high tension wires crossing the Fraser and alerted the other three. At this time, David was at the same height as the others and about 50 yards from the leader. At 11:00, before he reached the wires, David dropped down in a shallow dive, his propeller hit the water, the aircraft skipped over the surface before the port wing dipped into the water and the aircraft sank.

F/O Duyns contacted Section Control and reported the accident. He was told to fly orbits until a relief aircraft arrived.

On January 16<sup>th</sup>, the aircraft was raised from the river and David's body was found strapped into his seat with his parachute and dinghy still in place. He had a bruise on one arm and shallow lacerations to his scalp.

Possible reasons for David's loss of control suggested were: carbon monoxide poisoning, alcohol consumption, an unsuccessful attempt to fly under the high tension wires, or mechanical or structural problems with the aircraft.

The autopsy dismissed the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning and found the cause of death to be drowning. Evidence of the other pilots, who were with David the evening before the crash and for up to an hour before the flight, dismissed the possibility of alcohol being involved. David was sufficiently experienced to have easily flown under the high tension wires had he so wished and examination of the wires showed no sign of damages. Examination of the aircraft after salvage showed no signs of problems and adequate fuel in the tanks.

The conclusion of the court was that the cause of the accident was loss of control by the pilot, for no known reason, and no recommendations could be made to avoid a similar accident in the future.

