

Mann, Margaret

Age: 30
Nationality: Canadian
Rank: LAW
Unit: No. 6 OTU
Occupation: Chef
Service No: W/302037 RCAF (WD)
Birth: 30 November 1914,
North Vancouver, BC,
Canada



Home Town: North Vancouver, BC,
Canada

Death: 13 July 1945

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

Burial: Commemorated Ottawa Memorial
Buried near Bamfield, B

Others: All RCAF: 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 Lloyd Tull;
Corporal Norman Johnson; LAC Raymond Kitley;
Corporal William Hrysko.

Biography

From Wikipedia:

At the beginning of the war, Canadian women began pressing for the right to be allowed to join the war effort. This, along with manpower shortages, led to the air force conceding that women could help the war effort by taking over many men's duties with the aim of freeing up men for work that was directly related to combat. The Royal Air Force suggested that the RCAF form its own women's unit much like the RAF Women's Auxiliary Air Force. In June 1941, the government formally decided to allow the enlistment of women in the armed services. The 1941 *order-in-council* authorized "the formation of a component of the Royal Canadian Air Force to be known as the Canadian Women's Auxiliary Air Force, its function being to release to heavier duties those members of the RCAF employed in administrative, clerical and other comparable types of service employment."^[2]

Margaret Mann enlisted in the Women's Division of the RCAF just before her 27th birthday on 7 November 1941. She had worked as a kitchen help in a hospital, as a cook in a private house, and held St. John's Ambulance certificates for First Aid and Home Nursing. For seven months prior to enlisting she was with the Canadian Women's Training Corps, North Vancouver.

Margaret applied to be either a hospital assistant or a cook. She was described as:

"Capable, willing, able to accept responsibility. Good previous experience. Could be used as a hospital cook".

In January 1942, Margaret was sent to the RCAF School of Cookery in Guelph, Ontario for about six weeks and then served as a cook at Claresholm, AB, and Victoria and Patricia Bay; both on Vancouver Island, BC. In June 1943, Margaret was promoted to temporary Corporal, then in October she qualified as a chef and, for reasons not specified, reverted to LAW. She was posted to No. 6 OTU Comox on 30 October 1944.



Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division
Badge

Margaret Mann was born in North Vancouver, BC, on 30 November 1914; the youngest child of John Mann and Catherine Helen Stevenson. She had one brother, Ernest, and two sisters, Catherine and Florence.

On 13 July 1945, Margaret was one of three women in the RCAF in Comox taken as passengers on Consolidated Liberator 11121. The aircraft flew from Comox to Tofino and shortly after takeoff from Tofino, heading to Patricia Bay, flew into the side of a mountain killing everyone aboard. Margaret is buried with the other two women, Pamela Bennett and Nora Johnson, in a common grave beside the wreckage.

Plaque from Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial, Ottawa, Ontario



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 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 departure 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 17th 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.





