

Piercy, Howard Shurvin

Age: 21

Nationality: Canadian

Rank: Sergeant

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Wireless Operator/
Air Gunner

Service No: R/129632

Birth: 27 May 1921
Hamilton
Ontario, Canada

Home Town: London, Ontario,
Canada

Death: 14 March 1943

Crash of Handley Page Hampden P5433
Saanich Inlet B.C., Canada

Burial: Commemorated on Ottawa Memorial

Others: P/O Allan William Hunt, pilot, RAAF; P/O Reginald Keith
Manttan, Navigator, RAAF; P/O Grant Leroy Hall, W/O,
RCAF.



Biography

Howard Shurvin Piercy was the only child of an American father and a Canadian mother. From shortly after his birth until 1927 the family lived in Ohio. In 1927, Howard's father deserted his family, and his whereabouts from then on was unknown to his wife. Howard and his mother returned to Canada, and she obtained a divorce and remarried. Howard grew up believing his father to have died in 1925.

Howard was a musical boy who played the guitar. He applied to the RCAF in London, Ontario in late 1941, when he was working for his stepfather, a merchant, as a truck driver. His education was limited, not equivalent to junior matriculation and when he was tested in Science and Mathematics he failed the Mathematics. However, he had some mechanical aptitude and experience, he was found to be likeable, intelligent and keen and was of an athletic build and physically fit. It was thought he was fair aircrew material and was best suited to WAG. With his experience and education he was not suitable for commission.

At a subsequent interview, the Interviewing Officer saw him as a *“bright lad, keen to be a pilot. Appears to be alert and observant and possesses intelligence”*. He believed Howard could make good pilot material with more education and possibly be commissioned at a later date. The Medical Officer also reported him as suitable for a pilot or observer.

Early in his RCAF career Howard had one slight transgression when he was found asleep at 1:00 am in the pilot's room while on sentinel duty. Otherwise his record is clean.

Howard attended No. 4 wireless school from May to November 1942. He earned a score of 80% and passed 39th out of 112. He received his Wireless Operator's badge in November 1942 and continued into the Air Gunner course. His assessment at the end was:

“A hard working student, very serious about his work, very co-operative and can be depended on.”

He received his Air Gunner's badge on 21 December 1943, and was promoted to sergeant, not yet ready for a commission. In January 1943, Howard was posted to No. 32 OTU at Patricia Bay, B.C. On 16 March 1943, Howard was reported missing, believed drowned, when Handley Page Hampden P5433 flew into the sea. His body was never recovered.

Howard was born in Hamilton, Ontario, on 27 May 1920, to Howard William

Piercy and Ethel Shurvin. When Howard was 12 his mother remarried Chancey Smith. He had no sisters or brothers and did not marry.

Details of Crash

On 14 March 1943, Handley Page Hampden P5433 carried a crew of four; two Canadians and two Australians:

Allan William Hunt	P/O RAAF	Pilot
Reginald Keith Manttan	P/O RAAF	Navigator
Grant Leroy Hall	P/O RCAF	Wireless Operator/Air Gunner
Howard Shurwin Piercy	Sgt RCAF	“ “

The purpose of the flight was to practice low flying over water at night.

The aircraft was seen to crash into the water in Saanich Inlet. The cause of the crash was not apparent. It was suggested an earlier accident with this Hampden could have had some bearing on it, but this was dismissed. The only body recovered was that of the pilot.



