

# Presse, Joseph Bertrand Raymond

**Age:** 23  
**Nationality:** Canadian  
**Rank:** WO2  
**Unit:** No. 11 Squadron  
**Occupation:** Wireless Operator/  
Air Gunner  
**Service No:** R/90751

**Birth:** 21 January 1922,  
Verner, Ontario,  
Canada

**Home Town:** North Bay, Ontario,  
Canada

**Death:** 13 July 1945,

Consolidated B-24 Liberator 11121  
hit mountain seven miles from  
Bamfield, BC, Canada

**Burial:** Commemorated Ottawa Memorial  
Buried near Bamfield, BC.

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



## Biography

Joseph Bertrand Raymond Presse, known simply as Raymond, was a bi-lingual Franco-Ontarian who lived in North Bay with his Paternal Great Aunt, Marceline Sabourin (n. Leroux). His father had died at the age of 34 in 1926, crushed by a rock fall in a mine in Cobalt. His mother died of tuberculosis at the age of 32 in 1929, leaving seven children between the ages of three to nine, orphaned orphaned. Raymond named his great aunt as next of kin and willed his estate to her. When he died she described herself as his adoptive mother.

Raymond was born on 21 February 1922 in Verner, Ontario the fourth child of Emile Presse and Alma Rivard. Emile was one of many francophones who emigrated from Michigan, where he was born, to Canada to become a naturalized Canadian. Alma was born in Ontario. The three older children were Jean Paul, b. 1919, Georgette, b. 1920, and Blanche, b. 1921. Following Raymond came Rose, b. 1923, Roger, b. 1924, and Joseph Emile Edouard, b. 1926.



In May 1941 Raymond was still a student at Bourget College in Rigaud, PQ, when he applied to join the RCAF. He had taken commercial studies and was an accurate typist with some shorthand. He wanted to be an air gunner and the Medical Officer thought he should make fairly good aircrew, while the Interviewing officer referred to him as a *'good, keen, French Canadian boy'*.

Training for aircrew began at No. 4 Wireless School in October 1941, followed by No. 9 Bombing & Gunnery School in June 1942. On 6 July 1942, Raymond earned his WAG badge and was promoted to Sergeant, after which he went to General Reconnaissance School in Charlottetown and later to No. 31 OTU, where he was found to be an above

average wireless operator, but below average air gunner. Promoted to Flight Sergeant in January 1943 and then WO2 in July 1943, he was posted to Eastern

Command on 14 January 1944 and joined No. 11 Squadron in Torbay, Newfoundland.

In 1945, No. 11 Squadron moved from Eastern Command to Patricia Bay, BC, and Raymond was posted there on May 29<sup>th</sup>. Less than two months later, on July 13<sup>th</sup>, Raymond was one of two WAGs on Consolidated B-24 Liberator 11121 when, on a standard exercise it flew into a mountain near Bamfield, BC, killing all crew members and passengers. Raymond was buried in a common grave with the other airmen killed.



## 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 <sup>nd</sup> 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. 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.





