

Szportan, Walter Leon

Age: 21

Nationality: Canadian (Ukrainian)

Rank: Pilot Officer

Unit: No. 163 Squadron

Occupation: Pilot

Service No: J/38039

Birth: 15 August 1922
Zezewa, Zaleszczyki,
Poland

Home Town: Noranda, PQ,
Canada

Death: 5 February 1944

Crash of Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk 855
South of Galiano Island.
BC, Canada

Burial: Commemorated on Ottawa Memorial,
Ontario, Canada



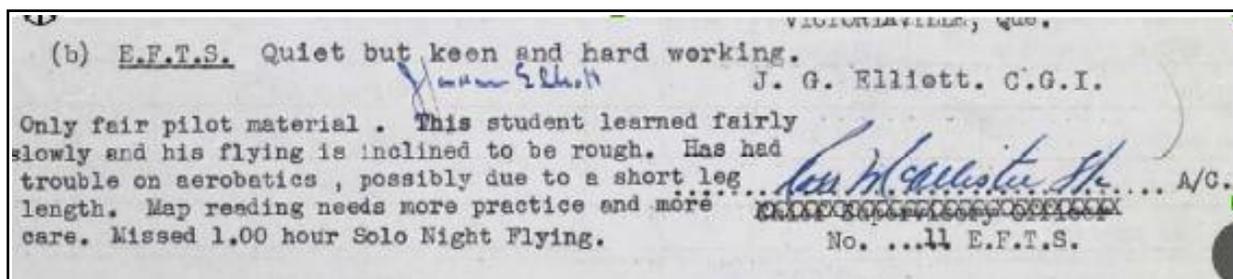
Biography

Walter Szportan was born Wlodzkmiertz Sportzan in Zalescyki, at that time in Poland, now in Ukraine, on 15 August 1922, to John (probably Iwan) Szportan and Marja Prokop. A younger brother, Bohdan, was born three years later. When Walter was eight, he and his brother travelled with their mother to join their father in Canada. John was an operator in the coal plant of Noranda Mines in Noranda, P. Quebec. The family described themselves as Ukrainian.

Walter graduated with grade XI from Noranda High School and spoke fluent English and Ukrainian. He engaged moderately in basketball, soft ball and hockey. After school he embarked on an electrical apprenticeship at Noranda Mines, but left when he enlisted in the RCAF on 22nd September 1941 in North Bay.

When Walter applied to the RCAF, hoping for aircrew, he showed himself to be a personable, reliable, and competent candidate who was quick to understand and clear in expressing himself. He was recommended for training as a pilot. At a later interview, he was reported as athletic, quiet and sincere and was expected to be suitable for a commission after training.

Walter did well in Initial Training School. He was persistent, hard-working, cheerful and eager. He made good progress during the training and was sent on to first Elementary and then Service Training School. In Elementary Training he made rather slow progress:



He must have done better in Service Training and on 12 November 1943, Walter received his Pilot's Wings and his commission as a Pilot Officer. He was by then a good all-round pilot, and was recommended as either a Fighter or a Bomber Pilot. A week later he was sent to Western Air command and joined No. 163 Squadron at Patricia Bay on 11 January 1944.

Less than a month later, on February 5th, Walter went missing in cloud when flying a Kittyhawk in formation exercises. His aircraft and his body were never

found and he is assumed to have died, crashing into the sea south of Galiano Island. Some time after Walter's death his parents left Quebec for Ontario. In 1949 they were living with Daniel Szportan in Wentworth and John was a steelworker.

Details of Crash

On 5 February 1944, P/O Szportan, in Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk 835, was taking part in a

INVESTIGATING OFFICER'S REPORT

On the day this aircraft was reported missing six aircraft were detailed to search the approximate area where it was last reported for a total of 5 hours 35 minutes. On the 6th February, 1944, seven aircraft searched for a total of 31 hours 20 minutes. On the 7th February, 1944, searched for a total of 8 hours 35 minutes. On the 8th February, 1944, searched for a total of 11 hours 30 minutes. On the 9th February, 1944, searched for a total of 1 hour 20 minutes. This makes a total of approximately 56 hours spent by searching aircraft for Pilot Officer Szportan in Kittyhawk 835. Because of this and no further word having been received to date (February 12, 1944) it is the opinion of this Court that Pilot Officer Szportan is missing, presumed dead.

I talked with the fitters and riggers that D.I.'d this aircraft prior to Pilot Officer Szportan taking it up and they are satisfied that the aircraft was fully serviceable. The pilot who flew the aircraft the afternoon previous reported no unserviceability on the aircraft. Thus, it is the opinion of this Court that Pilot Officer Szportan lost control of his aircraft while flying through cloud and in formation and was unable to regain control.

Pilots should obtain sufficient link and instrument time to be thoroughly proficient in order to fly through cloud if the occasion arises.

The Court is of the opinion that Flying Officer Price, as Leader of the formation, was in the right in taking his formation where he did, and his decision to climb through the cloud in order to get back to base was showing good judgment. Flying Officer Price carried out his exercises as authorized to the best of his ability and the weather which he encountered was not forecast, and he made the best of the situation. The approximate course has been drawn by the Court on the map (marked Exhibit "C") from the evidence obtained from the witnesses.



(W.N. Douglas, P/L
Investigating Officer.

formation flying exercise, led by F/O Price. He was the only occupant of his aircraft. During the course of the exercise, cloud was encountered and F/O Price decided to climb through the cloud to return to base. P/O Szportan's aircraft disappeared in the cloud and was never located. Below is the Investigation Officer's report on the accident.

