

Bob D'Easum

Bob D'Easum was killed in 1955. He was the only child of well-known author, newspaper columnist and peace activist Lille d'Easum. Now, 69 years later, there is no record of the family, other than Lille and the story below.

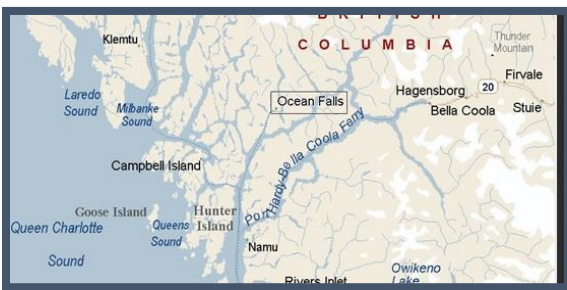
Bob was hired as a pilot for Pacific Western Airlines soon after they were formed in 1946. In the 1950's he was based at Ocean Falls where he lived along with his Cessna 180 Skywagon CF-HTL. Bob had a sense that there was a fault in the aircraft but was unable to describe the problem other than to say that it was not turning up the right take-off rpm and it 'didn't sound right'. When Bob complained to PWA head office maintenance, the engineers were disinclined to give priority to the gut feelings of a pilot, and sounding 'right' was not a technical term in which they put much credence. Bob was told to continue flying the Cessna for his tour of duty and then to take it to Vancouver when they would think about looking at it.

On June 16th 1955, Bob took off from Ocean Falls on a round trip photographic mission. As passengers, he had a three person BC Forest Service survey crew. The aircraft never returned. The waters around Ocean Falls and as far away as Kitimat were searched but no trace of a Cessna was found. Lille, who had some influence, tried to keep the search going, but it was halted, and Bob became another of the lost aviators of the BC coast.

The subsequent accident investigation searched the technical log books for the aircraft to try to determine if Bob had been correct in thinking there was something 'not right' about the aircraft but found nothing of significance.

It is possible that the mystery could have been solved 26 years later, a year after Lille died. In June 1981, a Beaver took off from Klemtu and failed to reach its destination at Ocean Falls. One of the seven passengers aboard was a friend of then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. A search was undertaken which was to continue until the aircraft was found. (Such was the influence of a Prime Minister.) During the search, a side-scanning sonar, a device for searching underwater, was employed. It detected a probable aircraft in the area where the Beaver was flying. A crane was commissioned to lift the crumpled mass of metal from the seabed, but before it was fully recovered, the Beaver was found hanging in the trees near Ocean Falls with all its occupants dead. The heap of metal was dropped back in the water.

Had Lille still been alive, she would, no doubt have made sure the object raised by the crane was recovered and it is possible that the fate of Bob and his passengers would have been uncovered, and perhaps the PWA engineers would finally be able to find out what it was that was 'not right' with the aircraft.



Map showing Ocean Falls and Klemtu

The above story is based on 'Bob d'Easum' in Jack Schofield's book 'Coast Dogs Don't Lie' chapter 6 'Stone Propellers'

